

The aim of the project "Let's get green! Social partners' joint action to enhance worker involvement in the company-level implementation of the European Green Deal" was to raise awareness of the rights of workers to participate in consultations and discussions on the changes needed to implement the European Green Deal and to develop worker involvement in companies representing the metal sector across the EU and candidate countries, achieved by raising awareness and improving the ability of worker representatives to exercise their rights to information, consultation and participation in the context of the company-level implementation of the European Green Deal, until the end of the project.

In the project's final phase, we allowed all employees and entrepreneurs to be assisted by advisors on green transformation issues.

From the contacts and questions asked, it is apparent that most people still do not know what the green transition is. They lack basic knowledge about climate neutrality, emissions and how to reduce them through everyday action. Most of those interested in counselling are employees who fear losing their jobs due to the introduction of the Green Deal Directive. They fear for their future, especially those who have been involved in the metal sector for years. As can be seen, employees are not properly informed about the energy transition of companies; they are not invited to discussions and are certainly not involved in preparing the strategy. This is a mistake because it is impossible to carry out an effective transformation without the direct participation of employees. It is with their understanding that any action will be possible, not hampered but supported.

The questions relating to companies focused on the possibilities of obtaining funding, i.e. the activities of the Just Transition Fund and the practices of implementing environmentally friendly change in a socially responsible way. Questions also focused on training opportunities for employees.

From the questions asked, the following report has been produced showing those most frequently asked.

1. What is the European Green Deal?

The European Green Deal is a package of policy initiatives that aim to put the European Union on the path to environmental transformation and, ultimately, climate neutrality by 2050. It supports the transformation of the EU into a just and prosperous society with a modern and competitive economy.

Rapidly advancing climate change and environmental degradation are now key challenges of today's world. Halting progressive change requires radical, wide-ranging and large-scale action.

The European Green Deal presents a roadmap for a sustainable EU economy by turning the challenges of climate change into opportunities in all policy areas and making the transition just and inclusive for all. The European Green Deal aims to increase resource efficiency by moving towards a clean, closed-loop economy, reversing biodiversity loss and reducing pollution. The European Green Deal covers all sectors of the economy, in particular transport, energy, agriculture, construction and the steel, cement, ICT, textile and chemical industries.

The European Green Deal implies the implementation of a series of measures to transform Europe into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy characterised by the following:

1. zero net greenhouse gas emissions in 2050,
2. decoupling economic growth from resource consumption,
3. an equal standard of living in all regions.

2. What are the key issues addressed by the European Green Deal?

The European Green Deal is the economic development strategy of the European Union. It aims at a profound green reconstruction of the European Union's economy. It is set to become the first climate-neutral area within three decades from the world's third-largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. The European Green Deal seeks to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from energy, transport, industry and agriculture and to increase the uptake of gases from the atmosphere by forests and soils through, among other things, increased protected areas.

The most important objective of the Green Deal is to remodel the economy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Europe by 2050 at the latest. The aim is also to guarantee food security and simultaneously reduce the negative environmental impact of agriculture. This includes greenhouse gas emissions, about 10 per cent of which are attributable to agriculture alone, as well as the use of pesticides, antibiotics and fertilisers, which pollute the environment, destroy pollinator populations and increase the risk of antibiotic-resistant pathogens. The Green Deal also aims to halt the biodiversity crisis, including the rapid shrinking of wildlife populations and the destruction of natural ecosystems.

3. What is climate neutrality?

Climate neutrality is such a reduction of CO₂ emissions in industry, transport and energy and actions to offset emissions that cannot be reduced by increasing removals. A climate-neutral economy requires concerted action in seven areas: energy efficiency; renewable energy; clean, safe and networked mobility; competitive industry and a circular economy; infrastructure and interconnections; bio-economy and natural carbon sinks; carbon capture and storage to address remaining emissions. The intensive development of energy, technology, transport, agriculture and other areas of the economy has resulted in a huge amount of harmful greenhouse gases entering the atmosphere on a regular basis. One important aspect is the gradual shift from using fossil fuels for energy production. As many energy systems have relied on raw materials such as coal for many years, these measures require the modernisation of this sector based on using low-carbon sources. These include:

- solar energy (solar thermal);
- wind energy;
- hydropower;

- geothermal energy;
- nuclear energy.

Implementing the above solutions will enable an energy mix that will radically reduce greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. Achieving climate neutrality is possible, but it requires broad, intensive and consistent action to which the entire international community will be committed. Indeed, each and every one of us can contribute to protecting our planet.

4. What does a just transition mean?

The European Green Deal calls for a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and for Europe to become a climate-neutral continent by 2050. The priority is for this process to take place in a way that is safe for society and, at the same time, beneficial for the economy.

The European Green Deal should aim to be implemented in a way that ensures a just transition to a climate-neutral economy. The principles of a just transition include decarbonisation, supporting regions affected by the transition, and supporting workers affected by the closure of plants or their operations due to the energy transition. The basis of any just transition is to have effective and well-targeted labour and welfare policies that are mutually reinforcing; the challenge is to adapt them so that they serve to support workers adequately and do not lead to the reproduction or creation of new inequalities. The zero-carbon transition addresses all areas of the economy, i.e., energy, transport, industry, and agriculture. The Just Transition Fund is an important pillar of the European Green Deal and its just transition. The Fund aims to prevent social exclusion and the unfair distribution of transition costs between social groups and countries with different energy mixes. It also aims to fund measures to mitigate the social, economic and environmental impacts of change in achieving climate neutrality goals. One of the key areas for JTF support is an investment in modern technology, digitalisation, and automation. More than 100 regions in the EU, not only coal regions but also those that depend on the carbon-intensive industry, have the chance to benefit from the funds. This Fund currently stands at EUR 17.5 billion. Its purpose, and the compulsory prerequisite for obtaining funds from it, is to provide subsidies for the regions most affected by climate change, where the economic diversification of territories through retraining and active integration of workers and job seekers is necessary.

5. What are the risks of the Green Deal for workers?

A potential threat to workers from implementing the Green Deal appears to be a reduction in their workforce due to the automation and digitalisation of a given plant. Increased efficiency and optimisation of processes may also generate costs for the employer, which may subsequently reduce the company's human resources.

6. What will be the benefits of the Green Deal for workers?

The European Green Deal aims to improve the well-being and health of people in general and, therefore, workers and future generations. Workplaces adapted to the challenges of the future and the acquisition of skills for the transition are some benefits employees will certainly feel. In addition,

the tools employers have at their disposal will allow some solutions to be used on employees' private grounds. Subsidising or crediting employees' energy sources may be mutually beneficial to achieve the green transition. Special financial and practical support from the Just Transition Mechanism will assist employees and trigger the necessary green investments. Another advantage will be developing sustainable economic activities and job creation due to the green transition. The changes resulting from implementing the Green Deal will increase employment in new and transitioning sectors. In turn, some workers can retrain or be assisted in their job search.

7. How can I contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

Climate protection is one of the most urgent needs associated with the running of our planet. Each of us can contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by making even small changes every day.

Instead of driving a car, you can use public transport, a bicycle, a scooter, or a skateboard. Carpooling with other employees also significantly reduces emissions.

Change to energy-efficient light bulbs.

Turn down the radiators when you leave the house.

Turn off unnecessary lights and switch devices off when you are not using them.

Don't put warm food in the fridge, and don't open it for too long.

Don't throw away broken equipment to buy new; check if you can fix it first.

Don't buy clothes you don't need; their production is extremely harmful to the environment.

Recycle your waste - you will be helping to reduce air pollution as well as energy and water consumption.

Turn off the water when brushing your teeth.

Use reusable bags.

Don't print everything if you don't have to.

Surround yourself with plants, and participate in tree planting campaigns, but don't destroy growing trees - you will contribute to improving air quality in your area.

8. How will the EU's Green Deal and Climate Neutrality Directive directly affect current industrial jobs in the context of a just transition, as we currently have threats to plants with high CO₂ emissions - including steelmaking in particular, but also ceramics, cement and chemical plants?

We need to support workers in industries particularly threatened by the constraints of the green transition through better training and deeper links with higher and vocational education, including investment in the training and retraining of workers, as well as in the teaching of specialised disciplines such as geology, metallurgy and mining, even at the undergraduate level.

The energy-intensive industries, especially those related to metal production, face the greatest challenges. Significant technological problems stand in the way - in the metallurgical sector, there is no cost- and engineering-intensive alternative to fossil fuels. The sectors have been hit by, for example, the high cost of carbon permits and the lack of compensation mechanisms to offset the costs incurred by European producers and enable competition with non-EU companies. This causes some factories to stop working and limits the development of human resources in the plant. Meanwhile, the electrification of production is also hampered as electricity prices continue to rise. An opportunity for these sectors is to invest in low-carbon energy sources or to undertake the use of hydrogen in their operations.

9. What does the circular economy mean, and who is affected by it?

A circular economy properly manages raw materials and products, so they are used as long as possible. This will make it possible, among other things, to reduce food waste, minimise waste production, recycle and reduce the consumption of raw materials by taking into account the so-called product life cycle - design, production, consumption, recycling and reprocessing. The circular economy affects us all. Examples include second-hand clothes shops, community or charity shops, recycling waste, setting up home composting facilities, donating surplus food to institutions for distribution to the needy, reusing beverage bottles - glass and plastic or recycling packaging waste.

10. What are the benefits and risks of the Green Deal for us and our country?

There is no doubt that climate change is a major challenge, not only for our country. They are influencing an increase in the average global temperature, leading to melting glaciers and rising sea and ocean water levels. In addition, we are seeing a greater intensity of weather events such as hurricanes, cyclones, droughts and floods.

The benefits for us, and all EU countries, are clean air, a clean planet and the ability to function undisturbed in symbiosis with nature.

Changing the energy system in Poland requires major investments amounting to hundreds of billions of zlotys. The transition away from coal will take place in a multi-stage process to ensure that all those employed in the mining industry have a stable job until retirement and to switch from coal-based energy and heat generation to emission-free sources, including above all renewable energy sources. The energy market in Poland must evolve to meet the growing electricity demand and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. Guaranteeing energy security in the country requires a significant increase in investment in adapting the indigenous energy networks and the structure of electricity production to EU standards. It is necessary to increase the use of renewable sources based on photovoltaic systems and wind technology (in the form of wind farms erected on land and sea). Unfortunately, energy projects are long-term projects, usually carried out over several years, and the unstable materials market, the unpredictable price levels of steel, copper and other construction raw materials, plus high inflation, affecting, inter alia, labour costs, do not facilitate the transformation of the energy market in Poland. Added to this are the difficulties common in the energy industry, in the availability of highly qualified staff who specialise in specific areas of the electricity industry.

Despite all these difficulties, it is worth taking steps towards clean air now until it is too late.



WITH SUPPORT FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

UNION OF EMPLOYERS OF VOJVODINA, SERBIA - ADVISOR'S REPORT ON SUPPORT TO REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER ASSOCIATIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GUIDELINES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE "LETS GET GREEN" PROJECT

The Union of Employers of Vojvodina - a partner in the EU project "Let's get green" hired me as an external expert to support the representatives of employees and employers in the implementation of the European Green Agreement in the company through the use of the Guide for employers and employees in the metal sector, which is one of the results of this project.

I gained expertise in this area as an employer who implements clean technologies in my company and through my involvement in projects in this area.

Within the project "Let's get green", as an advisor I provided advisory services on the use of mechanisms for involving employees at the company level for the successful implementation of the European Green Agreement in the metal and steel sector, but also in other activities. This publication, i.e. a guide for employers and employees, represents a great contribution and is extremely important for spreading awareness and knowledge in this area among both employers and employees.

At the beginning of December, we published this Guide on the UPV Facebook page, as well as a link to the project website.

We shared this document in our organization and in the Balkan countries: Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, North Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, Slovenia...

For the survey "Let's get green" - collecting questions about the EU Green Deal, a total of 5 group emails were sent.

Information about the project was sent to the following organizations:

1. Serbia:

The Employers' Union of Serbia

Local offices of the Union of Employers in Ruma, Pančevo, Zrenjanin, Bačka Palanka, Bač Ruma, Pančevo, Zrenjanin, Bačka Palanka, Bač

The Chamber of Commerce of Serbia

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Vojvodina

The Regional Chamber of Commerce Novi Sad

The Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia

The Independent union of metal workers of Serbia

The Independent Trade Unions of Vojvodina

The Independent Trade Unions of Novi Sad and its municipalities

The United Branch Trade Unions "Nezavisnost"

The United Branch Trade Unions “Nezavisnost” – Trusteeship for Vojvodina

2. Montenegro

The Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro

The Union of Employers of Montenegro

The Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro

The Confederation of Trade Unions of Montenegro

3. Croatia

Croatian Chamber of Economy

The Croatian Employers' Association Zagreb

The Croatian Employers' Association Osijek

The Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia

The Trade Union of Metal Workers of Croatia

The Independent Trade Unions of Croatia

4. Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Chamber of Economy of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Chamber of Commerce and industry of Republic of Srpska

The Association of Employers of the FB&H

The Union of Employers' Associations of Republic of Srpska

The Confederation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Srpska

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Bosnia and Herzegovina

5. North Macedonia

The Economic Chamber of North Macedonia

The Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia

The Business Confederation of Macedonia

6. Albania

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Albania

International Chamber of Commerce in Albania

The Council of Employers Organisation of Albania

The National Chamber of Crafts Albania

The Union of Albanian Business

7. Greece

The Greece Regional Chamber

The General Confederation of Greek Workers

The Federation of Greek Industries (SEB)

8. Slovenia

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia

The Employers' Association of Slovenia - ZDS

The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia

Confederation of New Trade Unions of Slovenia (KNSS – “Neodvisnost”)

9. Bulgaria

The Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Association of the Organizations of Bulgarian Employers (AOBE)

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Bulgaria

The Union of machinists of Bulgaria

10. Turkey

The Istanbul Chamber of Commerce

The Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (TISK)

The Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions

DISK Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey

HAK-IS Confederation of Turkish Real Trade Unions

We did this via email by sending a link to the project website to the Guideline. In countries with a similar speaking area, we forwarded the text in Serbian or Croatian language. I then asked for feedback and possible questions so that I could advise both employees and employers.

I also had live meetings with partners from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. I also presented this document at the meetings in North Macedonia and Greece and we discussed the topic. As part of the UPV organization, I held a meeting with employers where I presented this Guideline and possible further steps in implementing this document.

Through oral communication as well as through online questions that arrived via the link provided on the project website, I determined what was the subject of interest of both employers and trade union organizations.

A great lack of information was shown both by the company and by the employees (apart from the fact that everyone has heard of the term Green Deal but without understanding what it represents). So the basic question was:

What is the idea of the Green Deal and how will it affect the operations of business entities?

And then the questions were from the following areas:

1. What laws regulate the framework of the green economy in Serbia?
2. What are the funds that we can turn to in order to finance the acquisition of new clean technologies, equipment, machines (EU national funds)?
3. Are there funding programs for training employees to work with new clean technology?
 - Are there institutions that offer these services through state funds, which could be used by employers for general education of employees about the transition itself and the importance of the green economy?
4. Employers accept to pay taxes and levies for the transition of business to the green economy, but they wonder if there is a transparent way of insight into the spending and purpose of budget funds for these purposes...how will they be able to see the result/benefit of allocating their funds?
5. Will I be able to hire an expert for employee training and in what way through some funds? Who should I contact?
6. Will I be able to hire a professional person or organization for a better understanding of the entire process and the needs of the company and employees?
7. What kind of help will employees who have been in this industry for a long time and who end up getting fired after 25 years of work experience get?
8. Which ministry will be in charge of issuing the digital product passport and how much will it cost us?
9. Who will we be able to turn to for the needs of new suppliers of raw materials?
10. Is it known what the state's incentive will be for help with the purchase of new vehicles for transport with zero emission of harmful gases?

11. Will we have help finding a new technology that is ideal for our needs?....

I note that the most questions are from the domestic area, and then from the immediate environment, which is normal considering the position and rating that the Union of Employers of Vojvodina has in its country and the region.

The guideline appeared at the right time for implementation in the Republic of Serbia.

Recently, the EU is embarking on an unprecedented transformation of the economy towards clean technology, which is the fastest growing investment sector in Europe (it doubled in value from 2020 to 2021 alone). The European Union recognizes that other countries - Japan, India, Great Britain, Canada, the USA, China - have already advanced in the development and application of clean technologies and announces its intention to join the trend and determine its place in reglobalisation.

Ursula von der Leyen sent a message to businesses about the predictability and transparency of business conditions in the new industrial transformation of Europe. That's what investors want to hear, and they're keeping a close eye on all cleantech markets, benchmarking their own competitive abilities.

The European Union lists the key sectors for achieving the goal of zero emissions of harmful gases (wind, heat pumps, solar energy, hydrogen, storage) and undertakes to create favorable business conditions for companies from these sectors - simple and accelerated issuance of permits, simple tax relief models, easier financing and simpler access for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Capital for industrial transformation will be provided from the future Sovereignty Fund which will finance structural solutions for increasing resources, for extreme research innovations and strategic industrial projects.

The Critical Raw Materials Act will support countries that are vital to the production of key technologies, such as wind power generation and hydrogen storage.

The law will encourage the processing of raw materials to solve the problem of monopolies in the production of lithium, as the monopoly held by the three states has raised prices and threatened competitiveness.

For the announced transformation, the Union will need a huge increase in skills and qualified workers, so there is no doubt that the market of 27 countries will continue to be a magnet for workforce from the immediate environment.

It is extremely important that the domestic public is familiar with the European plan because the EU is our biggest and most important economic partner.

Although Serbia is not a member of the EU, the European industrial transition plan is an important guide for Serbian business people and the workforce.

Our competitive position is significantly lower (because Serbia is not a member of the EU), but this does not mean that companies from Serbia will not be able to join the new European plan.

The situation is similar with the workforce. The industrial transformation of Europe will be a magnet for professional and qualified workers from Serbia. This means that Serbia will have the challenge of

how to preserve its personnel or will have to compensate by importing workforce with similar or lower qualifications from the near or far European periphery...

This is exactly the summary of the most frequent answers and conversations with representatives of the business sector and representatives of trade unions in the country and the surrounding area ... Most of the questions refer to the measures of support they expect from their national and European funds, both financially and educationally. There is an impression that such support measures are insufficiently transparent and unattainable for all economic entities.