



JOINT STATEMENT

FROM THE SOCIAL PARTNERS

OF THE EUROPEAN SECTORAL

SOCIAL DIALOGUE ON GAS



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The European social partners in the gas industry EPSU, Eurogas and IndustriAll Europe are committed to together achieving carbon neutrality in the European Union by 2050. We recognise the vital role the gas sector will play in achieving our climate objectives and the opportunities that new gas technologies offer for the European workforce to have quality, stable and non-seasonal jobs. Europe leads in these fields today and we should ensure we make the most of this opportunity for all Europeans. While the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic hits the European economy and industry hard, the European Social Partners in the gas sector are determined to pursue their commitment to the transition to decarbonised and renewable gases and providing quality employment in Europe.

Around 60% of the EU's energy came from imported sources in 2018. To preserve and strengthen the security of energy supply, gas networks should be maintained and adapted to alternative decentralised supply opportunities. The gas storage capacity is already well-developed, and should be expanded if necessary to improve resilience.

We welcome the decision by the European Commission to mainstream the fight against climate change into all the actions that the EU will undertake in the five years to come, and underline the importance of ensuring a Just Transition that guarantees quality jobs for Europe's people and that no regions are left behind.

The Commission estimates that additional investment of up to €260 billion per year will be required to meet the current climate and energy targets by 2030. This will not be possible without a massive increase in public investment in the expansion of renewable and decarbonised energies, storage facilities, thermal renovation, public transport, or research and development, nor without socially fair implementation of the energy and climate legislation. The EU-wide efforts towards recovery from the COVID-19 crisis must also be aligned with the efforts towards the energy transition, and place citizens at the heart of any strategy providing regional economic impetus.

The Just Transition has been at the heart of the European and international debate for quite some time. It is recognised as a core objective of the Paris Agreement and was defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in its Just Transition Guidelines in 2015¹. The European social partners align with the ILO's vision of Just Transition as:

1. The mainstreaming of sustainability across sectors, focusing on local businesses and the diversification of activities and using regulatory, financial and fiscal incentives;
2. The development of solidarity mechanisms to support the sectors and regions most affected by the transition, including adequate social protection and training programmes for the affected workers;
3. The implementation of rigorous socio-economic impact assessment and the development of detailed long-term strategies for achieving climate neutrality within the EU by 2050;
4. An effective social dialogue, strong collective bargaining, and the participation of social partners that will help design long-term strategies to anticipate the changes at all levels (European, national, sectoral and company level).

Such elements will become even more important to tackle the challenges ahead in a socially fair and future-oriented way.

The main purpose of the European Green Deal is to help all Europeans make the necessary shift in the way we live, consume and produce. To make this shift happen, it is crucial to ensure that the transition is socially fair and affordable for all European citizens and workers. The Green Deal must be an opportunity to reduce disparities between European citizens and across European regions. The energy transformation must not be viewed solely as a technological issue, but as a profoundly social and political challenge.

Therefore, we urge the Commission to place the social dimension at the core of the Green Deal. We believe that the EU can achieve its transition to a sustainable economy

¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_432859.pdf

while securing employment, decent living conditions, and access to energy for all. To this end, it is crucial that the Commission fully assesses the social and employment impacts of all the Green Deal initiatives, starting with the 2030 Climate Target Plan.

We welcome the establishment of a Just Transition Mechanism and underline the importance of involving the social partners in the design of the Territorial Just Transition Plans, to better take into account the needs and opportunities for transition in specific sectors. At every level of decision-making, sectoral social dialogues between representatives of the employees and employers are essential as they are a forum for discussions and anticipation of these changes.

We welcome the ambition of the European Commission to push for a more comprehensive Industrial Strategy. The core objective of EU industrial policies should be to provide the EU with its own means to achieve carbon-neutrality. Europe has the capacity to become a leader in renewable gas and decarbonised energies, resilient infrastructure and decarbonisation technologies, in particular gaseous technologies and carbon capture, utilisation and storage for energy-intensive industries. The deployment of these energy systems and technologies will not only support the transition of energy-intensive sectors, but also guarantee high-quality, non-seasonal jobs in the gas sector. This requires that European regulatory and financial frameworks support investments in gas infrastructure, regulatory harmonisation and standardisation of rules on gas terminology and quality, while supporting the production and integration of renewable and decarbonised gases.

The European Social Partners in the gas sector are determined to shape the transition of the gas sector by analysing the challenges and the needs of the sector and its workforce and defining common solutions within a joint project.

We highlight the need for the Just Transition Mechanism and the Industrial Strategy to be consistent and complementary in order to ensure that the transition succeeds in keeping integrated carbon-neutral industrial value chains and quality employment in Europe. Beyond protecting the most vulnerable parts of society and regions from the being adversely impacted by the transition, the mechanism should also aim at preserving and boosting the industrial base in the regions that are likely to be the most affected.

We support the creation of industrial, research and development alliances to create synergies and pool resources to accelerate the development and market uptake of the technologies that Europe will need to preserve its industry and jobs. The social partners

in the gas industry should be involved in the alliance on clean hydrogen and the alliance for low carbon technologies.

Equally crucial is the reorganisation of education to better raise awareness on the urgency, the challenges and opportunities associated with reaching climate neutrality. The EU and Member States should also support professional training to equip future employees with the right skills to be part of the new European energy sector .

Moreover, it is important to implement policies and programmes that take into account the significant gender dimension of environmental challenges and opportunities. Gender-sensitive policies to promote gender equality and fair working conditions in the gas industry should be considered.

The next five years will be critical for the future of Europe. Only by striving for a transition that is just for all and where sustainable businesses and quality green jobs can thrive will the EU live up to the expectations of its citizens.



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