

# The role of cohesion policy in supporting the just transition

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The European Parliament adopted by 519 votes to 99, with 48 abstentions, a resolution on the role of cohesion policy in supporting the just transition.

The ambitious goal of transitioning to a carbon-neutral economy by 2050 at the latest is likely to generate considerable economic, environmental and social benefits, but this transition may also exacerbate existing disparities between regions and disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

## *Targeting areas affected by job losses*

Parliament called on the Commission to facilitate the creation of **special economic zones under the Just Transition Fund (JTF)** in regions affected by site closures, until the majority of local job losses are replaced by new jobs in the region. **Priority access to funding** should be granted first to directly affected localities near regions where jobs have been lost, provided that the direct or indirect consequences of these job losses qualify for the JTF.

Members called for a **swifter planning decision-making process**, accompanied by specific measures, financial instruments, and incentives in these areas, including temporary and targeted tax incentives for businesses and investments, provided they do not jeopardise the stability of the single market. They also called for island regions to be included among the areas eligible for reduced tax rates under the insular JTF economic zones.

## *Education, training of workers and apprenticeships*

Parliament called for funding within the JTF to **promote access to training and apprenticeship opportunities**, particularly for women, young people and marginalised communities. In this regard, it stressed the need to prioritise investments at all levels of education and training in affected areas, including by integrating green and digital skills, literacy and basic numeracy skills, as well as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills into training programmes.

The resolution stressed the importance of specifically allocating resources to **innovative teacher and trainer training**, as well as to developing digital teaching skills, which are essential to prepare workers for industrial transitions. It called for measures to improve teachers' **salaries and working conditions** in order to attract qualified teachers to the education system and prevent their departure, particularly in areas undergoing transition.

Highlighting the fundamental role played by the automotive industry in the Union, Members considered it essential to integrate the **automotive sector** into the scope of the just transition.

Parliament proposed the creation of a **regional mechanism for monitoring and evaluating** the impact of apprenticeship schemes, involving all stakeholders – local authorities, employers, educational institutions, and young people. It called for a portion of cohesion funds to be specifically allocated to renovating the homes of the poorest households and the least energy-efficient buildings.

## *Quality jobs plan*

Parliament highlighted the measures needed to ensure a just transition that creates quality jobs:

- take into account the specificities of workers and communities, by creating **seasonal employment** solutions;
- combat **youth unemployment** by promoting access to affordable housing, transport and education, as well as the inclusion of younger generations, particularly those from low-income households;
- complement the financing of higher education and training boards to ensure the **retraining or reskilling** of workers who are considering changing their professional profile or who have lost their jobs, particularly women and those over the age of 50;
- develop a **roadmap** for quality jobs developed in collaboration with social partners, to guarantee a just transition for all;
- approve without delay the '**social contracts**' concluded for sectors of the economy undergoing a just transition process;
- facilitate the creation of a social training program for **older unemployed workers**, particularly women and the long-term unemployed.

### *Governance, social justice*

Parliament called for measures to ensure maximum use of energy transition funds, including by **simplifying administrative procedures**, establishing support and advisory mechanisms to help local authorities access and successfully use the necessary investments, and increasing pre-financing for local authorities. Members stressed the importance of providing specific technical support from the JTF to **regions, local authorities and community groups** from the early stages, in order to strengthen their bottom-up planning capacity and help potential beneficiaries develop high-quality, high-impact projects.

Members called for the creation of greater synergies between the public and private sectors. They stressed need to develop an enhanced community benefit model, tailored to each just transition region. They also requested that the JTF support and preserve the cultural and industrial heritage of the affected territories by promoting the development of sustainable tourism.

Parliament called on the Commission and Member States to **examine the timescales** for the closure of key energy players in the EU, and to mitigate the impact of these closures, ensuring 'social justice in transition' for workers. It stressed the important role of Member States in promoting social dialogue and collective bargaining at sectoral level.

Lastly, regretting that the Commission did not propose a stand-alone Just Transition Fund (JTF) in its recent proposals for the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), Members called for **the JTF to be continued** through a JTF II, for the post-2027 programming period.