



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta
National Economic & Social Council

Progressing a Just Transition Approach in Ireland

Accelerate ESB/IIEA Energy Conference

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Key Points of Presentation

“The scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human well-being and the health of the planet. Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future.”(IPCC, 2022)

- ▶ About the National Economic and Social Council (NESC)
- ▶ Context of climate and biodiversity emergencies as complex societal challenges
- ▶ Governance for transitions
- ▶ Principles of a just transition
- ▶ NESC just transition advice
- ▶ Just transition governance: No blueprint
- ▶ A just transition approach in Ireland
- ▶ NESC’s project on climate and agriculture
- ▶ Conclusions

Recent Publications

NESC (2021) Collaboration on Climate and Biodiversity: Shared Island as a Catalyst for Renewed Ambition & Action

NESC (2020) Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition Approach in Ireland

Moore, J. (2020) Approaching Transition

Mercier, S. (2020) Four Case Studies on Just Transition

The National Economic and Social Council

- ▶ Advises the Taoiseach & Government on strategic policy issues relating to sustainable economic, social and environment development in Ireland.
- ▶ Council members from unions, business, community and voluntary, environmental groups, farming sector, government departments and independents.

Climate and Biodiversity Emergencies as Complex Urgent Societal Challenges

- ▶ Societal, economic and environmental considerations and potential impacts.
- ▶ Commitment to Paris Agreement and keep global warming below 1.5.°
- ▶ Unequal impacts from climate policy and from climate change impacts will increase complexity.
- ▶ Achieving a transformation of the scale necessary in a relatively short period of time is a considerable political challenge, requiring policies that share both the burden as well as the benefits and opportunities, but also protect the most vulnerable.
- ▶ Requires societal support – justice, equity, fairness, inclusion.

Multiple Transitions Require Appropriate Governance

- ▶ **Complex governance is needed** for transitioning to net zero, digital, biodiverse circular economy and society.
- ▶ **Involves Participatory and Inclusive Process**
 - ▶ OECD Guidelines for Citizen Participation Processes
 - ▶ Collaborative governance
 - ▶ Social Dialogue

The delivery of a just transition requires **a long term considered and driven approach** and policies and practices have to be **underpinned by appropriate governance, involving** multiple stakeholders (c.f. NESC, 2020; EC 2020).

Fairness and solidarity are defining principles of the European Green Deal.

Starting Point: Principles of A Just Transition

A just transition approach explicitly names principles, goals and values and facilitates societal engagement, while also seeking to ensure that the costs and benefits of the transition are equitably shared.

NESC approaches a just transition as: *one that seeks to ensure transitions are equitable and participative in process and outcomes at national, regional and local levels.*

- ▶ Rooted in trade union movement; ILO (2015) Guidelines
- ▶ Multiple terms-Just transition, climate justice, environmental justice, social justice
- ▶ Procedural, distributive, restorative environmental justice
- ▶ Learning from just transition coal and fossil fuel initiatives (e.g. Germany, Canada, Australia)
- ▶ NGOs, unions, research e.g. Just Transition Alliance Joint Declaration

NESC Advice- Addressing Employment Vulnerability

The transition to a low-carbon and digital Ireland must be just.

This needs "a purposeful, participative and multi-faceted approach to governance; appropriate social protection for those at risk from transition impacts; supportive arrangements and sectoral measures, and inclusive place-based development and investment".

'Just transition will necessitate resolute action by all of government, setting out priority actions, the sequence of interventions and timeframes for implementation, as well as consideration of what resources are needed to meet this challenge of economic and societal transformation.'

President Michael D. Higgins (2020) on the NESC report

NESC -Moving from Principles to Practice

- Purposive and proactive planning and governance at national, regional and local areas involving wide range of actors;
- Participative social dialogue as part of public governance that considers costs and benefits and champions the principles of fairness, justice, equality and social inclusion;
- Focus on decent jobs, training and social protection for those at risk;
- Place-based regeneration of local communities and infrastructure facilitating bottom-up local action; and
- Fair, inclusive and equitable outcomes in which no-one is left behind.

Just Transition Governance: No Blueprint

Countries are ‘learning by doing’ through structures and dialogue

- Scotland established a national governance structure to advise government; and Just Transition Commission(s).
- New Zealand’s Just Transition Unit offers a centre of governmental expertise
- Northern Ireland’s recent climate legislation provides for the establishment of a Just Transition Commission.
- Canada’s Task Force on Just Transition for Canadian Coal Power Workers and Communities.
- Wales-Plans to form a Just Transition Advisory Group

EU/International

- Paris Agreement
- Silesia Declaration
- Just Transition Fund (EU JTF)
- Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs)
- EU COUNCIL (2022) RECOMMENDATION on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality

Ireland

Midlands

- Just Transition Commissioner
- National Just Transition Fund
- Midlands Regional Transition Team;
- Midlands Implementation Plan;
- Bog rehabilitation scheme

Nationally- a just transition approach is being embedded to climate policy.

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Key Elements

A Just Transition Approach in Ireland

Ireland is committed to a just transition approach in climate policy.

Climate Action Plan (2021) Seeks to align just transition with climate policy framework.

A shared understanding that the transition is fair, just, and that the costs are shared equitably.

Process of ensuring that individuals and communities have a voice and a role in informing and shaping these supports (Government of Ireland, 2021).

- National Dialogue on Climate Action
- Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action
- Statutory Just Transition Commission
- Embedding in Rural policy, Local Authorities, Taxation & Welfare Commission

Sectoral Approach: NESC Climate and Agriculture

- ▶ Bringing a just transition lens and process to agriculture, including a focus on those who may be affected from transition.
- ▶ What kind of just transition governance will be required for this sector?
 - ▶ What structures and functions (e.g. oversight, forward-looking, problem-solving, flexible, proactive) might be appropriate?
 - ▶ Which policies, practices and processes (e.g. scrutiny, monitoring, research, participative process; capacity building & supports) will help support the sector?
 - ▶ What specific outcomes (e.g. investment, compliance & enforcement, review, policy change recommendations) might be feasible?

Conclusion: Towards a Just Transition

- ▶ Just transition as a framework is under development in countries across the world- moving from principles to practice.
- ▶ This requires a bespoke collaborative and inclusive approach with appropriate governance and resources.
- ▶ Potential to learn from the Midlands and EU as well as internationally.
- ▶ This provides Ireland with a leadership opportunity.
- ▶ The Council's latest project will seek to engage widely to further understand what a just transition approach can bring to agriculture.