

# Delivering a Just Transition for All

28th EEAC  
Annual Conference

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DUBLIN CASTLE, IRELAND



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Eacnamaíoch agus Shóisialta  
National Economic & Social Council

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# Joint Foreword

The European [Green Deal](#) commits the European Union to a transformation to a sustainable, inclusive, thriving net zero economy and society. Ireland's [Programme for Government: Our Shared Future 2020](#) shares that ambition.

The 28th Annual Conference of the European Network of Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) focused on how the principles of justice, fairness, equality and equity of a just transition can act as a lever and guide to shape policies and practices to deliver the transformation required.

The conference was hosted online by one of the two Irish EEAC member organisations—the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). Its recent work [Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland](#) (NESC Report No: 149, March 2020) sets out a vision for Ireland in 2050:

*Our vision for Ireland is to become a resilient, sustainable, thriving net zero economy, environment and society, using innovation and collective preparedness to shape the future we want to achieve. It is a vision for an Ireland where the State plays its part in ensuring mission-oriented actions to achieve a high-quality jobs economy, and productively addresses employment vulnerability as part of a just transition.*

This vision framed discussions at the conference as speakers from Ireland, the European Union and other regions focused on the opportunities and challenges involved in making such a vision and ambition a reality in member states. The conference was also framed by, and was deeply aware of, the extraordinary response to the pandemic and the impact this was and could have on the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The conference included a truly inspiring and motivational keynote address titled '[Delivering A Just Transition For All](#)' by the President of Ireland, Uachtarán na hÉireann, Michael D. Higgins. We are very grateful for this contribution. The conference included a mix of keynote speakers, panel discussions and spotlight sessions with experts, academics, community groups, government, councils and policymakers.

The conference was hosted in extraordinary circumstances. Due to the pandemic and the restrictions on social interaction and travel, the entire event was transferred online and hosted online over three days from 27-29 October 2020. It was an exciting and unique conference, which took place in the midst of transformative change. It provided a forum for a diverse mix of European and Irish advisory councils, their stakeholders, international experts, policymakers and practitioners to reflect on what a just transition means, and to share perspectives, experiences and practices on how it was shaping policy and practices. It also provided space to develop a common understanding and concrete strategies for making progress towards the wider just transition, a low-carbon economy, and the fulfilment of the central promise of the 2030 Agenda—to '[leave no one behind](#)' and '[reach the most vulnerable first](#)'.

An enormous effort was required to successfully host a conference of this scale. We would like to thank Martin Fraser and Elizabeth Canavan, Department of the Taoiseach and Chair and Vice-Chair of NESC; the Organising Committee in NESC: Dr Jeanne Moore, Sinéad Nic Coitir, Edna Jordan and Paula Hennelly. We would also like to thank Michiel de Vries of the EEAC Secretariat for his contribution to the organisation of the conference. Thanks also to Spotlight Session Chairs: Dr Damian Thomas and Professor Sinéad O'Flanagan, NESC Council member and NESC Secretariat member Dr Cathal Fitzgerald. Our thanks to the professional services of the digital marketing company, Verve, in supporting us to host this event online.

We would like to acknowledge the support, and indeed input at the conference, of the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications and Minister for Transport, Eamon Ryan T.D. and for his Department's financial support for NESC's work on sustainable development, including this conference.

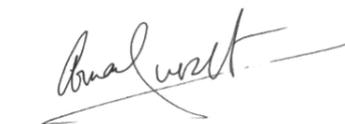
The Conference was enthusiastically supported by EEAC members and we would, in particular like to thank the Chairs of the Spotlight Session: Professor Anna Davies, Jan Verheeke, Dr Luc Boot, Dr Nathalie Boucquey and Dr Hannah Janetschek and their relevant councils.

Finally, we would like to thank environmental scientist Dr Cara Augustenborg for effectively facilitating this event and Sinead Mercier for her work as conference rapporteur and author of this report.

We look forward to welcoming you to Barcelona in October for the 29th Annual EEAC Conference.



**Dr Larry O'Connell**  
Director of NESC



**Arnau Queralt Bassa**  
Chairman of the EEAC Network

# Delivering A Just Transition: Conference Insights

In November 2019, the [European Parliament declared a climate emergency](#), asking the European Commission to adapt all its proposals in line with keeping global warming below a 1.5°C target. In response, President Ursula von der Leyen unveiled the [European Green Deal](#) (EGD), a roadmap for Europe becoming a climate-neutral continent by 2050. The EGD sets the development priorities of the European Union (EU), including:

- [European Green Deal Investment plan](#)
- [Circular economy action plan](#)
- [EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030](#)
- [Farm to Fork Strategy](#)
- [Just Transition Mechanism](#)
- [European Industrial Strategy](#)

The EGD takes inspiration from trade union and environmental campaigns in the United States, which proposed a Green New Deal response to the 2008 economic crash. This in turn was inspired by the 1930s New Deal response to the Great Depression, based on Keynesian economics as opposed to austerity.

A major plank of the EGD is a new EU Climate Law which sets a legally binding climate-neutral EU target by 2050. The EGD also raises the 2030 interim target from a 40 to a 55 per cent cut in emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. In October 2020, the [European Parliament](#) increased this 2030 target to 60 per cent. To address the social, economic and environmental impacts of the transition, the EGD proposes a [Just Transition Mechanism](#) and Just Transition Fund to support adaptation for the worst-affected workers and communities. The EU's Covid-19 recovery plan follows the EGD in its aim to lay the foundations for a sustainable and climate-neutral Europe, allocating **25 per cent of the EU's budget to climate action**.

Against this backdrop the 28th EEAC Annual Conference set out to explore the implications and practicalities of 'Delivering a Just Transition for All'. However, what is meant by a 'just transition'? The working definition used during the conference, was that used by [International Institute for Sustainable Development](#), namely:

*A just energy transition is a negotiated vision and process centred on dialogue, supported by a set of guiding principles, to shift practices in energy production and consumption. It aims to minimise negative impacts on workers and communities with stakes in high-carbon sectors that will wind down, and to maximise positive opportunities for new decent jobs in the low-carbon growth sectors of the future. It strives to ensure that the costs and benefits of the transition are equitably shared.<sup>1</sup>*

The keynote speech at the conference, by the President of Ireland, pinpoints the just transition approach as originating from the trade union movement (Box 1).

<sup>1</sup> IISD (2018), Real People: Real Change: Strategies for Just Energy Transitions, 2..

## BOX 1:

### 'Delivering a Just Transition for All'

Keynote Address from the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins

The President Michael D. Higgins praised NESC's recent report and foundation for the conference [Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland](#) (March 2020) as equivalent in significance to the seminal 'Whitaker Report' and its connection to Ireland's First Programme for Economic Expansion 1958 to 1963:

*We have available to us in NESC No. 149 a methodology and a process that can speed our efforts [to tackle Covid-19 and climate transitions], combining the fruits of consensus and meticulous research as a basis for policy advice. The challenges identified by the report endure beyond the current crisis, and I repeat my sincere hope that this valuable work, with its commitment to the principles of equality, participation and protection of the marginalised, is made central to our future thinking...*

*...Covid-19 has resulted in huge suffering and tragedy around the globe, but it has occasioned a near-widespread agreement on the necessity of public spending, and of a fundamentally new socially, economically and ecologically sustainable future. For us in Ireland, the NESC report is surely an invaluable departure point for deliberative dialogue on how we can best do this with the most favourable outcome for all. It offers a solid framework for ongoing discussion, but also the necessary action that can garner public support from all concerned.*

hosting a conference on the topic of a 'Just Transition for All' amidst the current response to the pandemic:

*It is difficult to overstate the importance of this conference, given that it is taking place as we continue to deal with a pandemic that is having such devastating personal, social and economic consequences. Your conference represents the taking of a unique opportunity to engage, in terms of adequacy and courage, with the theory, empirical research, policy and practice relating to one of the most critical challenges in contemporary public policy: how are we to ensure, within principles of inclusivity, that we move towards a net-zero economy and society across Europe, towards such a transformation as will result in regenerated soils, protected biodiversity and oceans, and a thriving circular economy—adjustments, all of which are so urgently necessary if we are to avoid ecological catastrophe.*

The President also highlighted the importance of

The concept of a just transition is rooted in the response of the union movement and frontline communities in the 1980s and 1990s to the closure of polluting industries due to globalisation, and environmental regulations. Their aim was to build a bridge between environmentalism, occupational health and safety, and labour rights.

In 2015, the International Labour Organization (ILO) translated this approach into the following key principles for a 'just transition' in the paper *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*, which were negotiated by over 160 governments, employer organisations and unions:

- strong social consensus on the goal and pathways to sustainability;
- policies that respect rights at work;
- recognition of the strong gender dimension of environmental challenges and opportunities, and consideration of policies to promote equitable outcomes;
- policy coherence across economic, environmental, social, education, training and labour portfolios to generate an enabling environment for the transition;
- anticipation of impacts on employment social protection for job losses and displacement, skills development and social dialogue, including the right to organise and bargain collectively;
- the need to take into account the specific conditions of countries, including their level of development, economic sectors and sizes of enterprises—no 'one size fits all' solutions; and
- the importance of fostering international co-operation among countries (ILO, 2015).

These principles formed the basis of the reference to just transition within the preamble of the December 2015 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) *Paris Agreement*, which requires parties when implementing the agreement to take 'into account the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities.'

This was followed in 2016 by the UNFCCC Technical Paper *Just Transition of the Workforce, and the Creation of Decent Work and Quality Jobs* and the 2018 *Silesia Declaration*, signed by Ireland and the European Union at COP24 in Katowice. The Silesia Declaration further commits parties to integrate the social and climate justice aspects of the Paris Agreement, as it reaffirms:

*...that the Paris Agreement emphasizes the intrinsic relationship that climate change actions, responses and impacts have with equitable access to sustainable development and eradication of poverty.*

and highlights:

*...that the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as its Sustainable Development Goals, confirm the need to tackle environmental, social and economic problems in a coherent and integrated manner.*

This report of the 28th EEAC Conference outlines discussions on approaches to just transition, and the wider implications of better integrating climate and social justice goals, ensuring no one is left behind, and reaching the most vulnerable first.

NESC's most recent Council report, *Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland* (March 2020), is the foundational research basis for the EEAC 28th Annual Conference 'Delivering a Just Transition for All'. This NESC report sets out the following vision for Ireland in 2050:

*Our vision for Ireland is to become a resilient, sustainable, thriving net zero economy, environment and society, using innovation and collective preparedness to shape the future we want to achieve. It is a vision for an Ireland where the State plays its part in ensuring mission-oriented actions to achieve a high-quality jobs economy, and productively addresses employment vulnerability as part of a just transition.*

The conference revealed a number of insights into what a just transition approach might look like, and how it might be put into action. This report is structured around these insights:

- **Insight 1:** Vision and Definitions of Justice;
- **Insight 2:** Shared Resources and Systems-thinking;
- **Insight 3:** Social Dialogue and Participatory Processes;
- **Insight 4:** Change and Resilience; and
- **Insight 5:** Towards the Elements of a Blueprint

A copy of the programme can be seen [here](#). Information on the Spotlight Sessions can be seen [here](#). **Appendix 1** provides a summary of each of the sessions.

## Insight 1: Vision & Definitions of Justice

A key insight from the conference was that vision builds up from co-created concepts of justice, while also protecting worst-affected regions.

If the just transition approach, including the Agenda 2030, was to achieve its aim of 'leave no one behind' and 'reach the most vulnerable first', then participants noted that we must expand our whole approach to achieving a just and low-carbon economy. In part, this was because it has become clear that visionary ambition was required to deliver the transformative economic and social changes required by facing climate change, the biodiversity crisis and now the Covid-19 pandemic. As Dr Larry O'Connell said in *Session A: Just Transition—Principles and Mission*, 'we are giving to ourselves a very daunting task: the transition means a deep radical change in the way we live, consume, produce and transport energy in our buildings and transport patterns in every walk of life'.

In *Session F: 'What Next for Just Transition Mission, Process & Practice in the context of Covid-19*, Dr Edouard Morena (University of London) argued that Just Transition must be built from the grassroots up.

There was a collective sense, expressed in part by Sandrine Dixson-Declève (The Club of Rome) in the same session, that a transformational moment had arrived due to a convergence of tipping points: Covid-19, inequality, climate and biodiversity – with the first caused by the last two.

There was a sense that lessons could be learned from past transitions and that major change presented an opportunity. It was argued that if the Covid-19 pandemic was a test run for the major changes required, it also showed that there were serious inequalities and fault-lines in our societies and economies that would shape, and be shaped by, any response. Many speakers, from Dr Patrick Bresnihan (Maynooth University) to Stefano Grassi (European Commission) and Sharan Burrow (ITUC) highlighted how the pandemic had exposed deep veins of sectoral and planetary interconnectedness, as well as severe structural faults.

In *Session F*, Dr Edouard Morena (University of London) described Covid-19 as leading to 'an acceleration of history' that both highlighted and continued to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities that would also influence the impact of climate change. In his keynote address, President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins reiterated a point made Dr Larry O'Connell (NESC) that a just transition approach could be used to 'build back better' from the Covid-19 crisis:

*We have seen, it has been empirically demonstrated, how the poor have suffered, and continue to suffer, disproportionately during the Covid-19 crisis, with the distributive effects more favourable to the already privileged and well-off. We now need a just recovery. We must not allow this regressive trend, which has manifested in such tragic personal and social consequences, to continue as we embark on the difficult journey to transform our societies and economies towards ecological sustainability. 'Just transition' allows us the opportunity to break the cycle of disadvantage by ensuring that those most vulnerable to economic turbulence are protected.*

Though marked by great loss and suffering, the pandemic and climate change had given us an opportunity to make a fundamental shift in how we order our economies, societies and cities. Visionary ambition was required, guided by a utopian process that foregrounds justice, co-creation, dialogue, protection and inclusion of the most vulnerable, with an overarching aim of 'leave no one behind'. Differing visions

of the economy and society that we were working towards were offered, such as the vision, outlined in Session A: Just Transition—Principles and Mission by Sharon Burrow, of using a just transition to build ‘a new social contract’ that was ‘uncompromising on net zero’ and on jobs and social justice. Eamon Ryan TD, Minister for the Environment, Climate Action and Communication and Minister for Transport, outlined a vision of an Ireland where every person had a warm home, with access to green public space, and where young rural workers were paid well for high-nature-value farming and high-quality retrofitting.

### Definitions of Justice

To facilitate this visionary ambition, however, there was a need for clear definitions and indicators of what constitutes justice, justice for whom, and according to whom? The general view from the sessions was that ‘justice’ in vision and process must be co-created with vulnerable groups, rather than imposed from the top down. In Session F, Dr Raphael Heffron (University of Dundee) offered key principles of distributional, procedural and cosmopolitan justice as a framework to guide the transition to a low-carbon economy.

A justice framework could also assist in legitimising concerns and providing a platform to debate questions of power, democracy in society and inclusion that fundamentally shape climate policy choices. Tamara Metze (Wageningen University and Research) in particular outlined the clash of different perspectives on justice in Session D.2: *State-citizen Interplay for Achieving a Just Transition: Lessons from the Netherlands*. It was recommended in this session to foreground those most affected by an environmental policy choice, in order to bring to light concerns which could not previously be expressed due to a lack of integration between social and climate policies in the Netherlands.

Tamara Metze argued that energy conflicts, such as debates over renewable energy, should not be dismissed as ‘annoying’, but examined in a justice framework. This would allow local conceptions of what constitutes ‘justice’ to be integrated into public energy policy. This need for a justice framework was reiterated in Session C.2: *Advising on a Just Transition*, in which Mike Hemsley (UK Committee on Climate Change) referred to the findings of the UK Citizen’s Climate Assembly in 2019 that ‘the transition, including for workers and energy bill payers, must be fair, and perceived to be fair.’ This need for fairness in the transition reflects citizen concerns about the handling of two previous transitions in the UK that, while beneficial for the climate, were not perceived as just or fair: first, the closure of the coal mining industry and, secondly, the major increase in renewable energy achieved through subsidies paid through a levy on energy bills which disproportionately affected low-income households who could not afford their own solar panels, etc.

Sharan Burrow’s call in Session A: *Just Transition—Principles and Mission* for a strong definition of ‘just transition’ and ‘climate justice’ in the Irish *Climate Change and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2020* was echoed in Session C.2: *Advising on a Just Transition* by Dr Anna Davies and Mike Hemsley, from the respective Irish and UK Climate Change Advisory Councils. Fears were raised that there was a danger of being well-meaning in seeking ‘justice’ and ‘fairness’, but this could become a form of a ‘whatever you like’ approach to just transition and public participation that undermines trust and legitimacy in the process. To avoid such pitfalls, it was recommended that governments and actors foreground inclusivity and meaningful participation of those worst affected, as well as the principles outlined in signed agreements, such as the Paris Agreement and the Silesia Declaration. Placing such work on a statutory footing was also recommended. In Session D.3: *Finance for a Just Transition*, the discussion highlighted the ability of law and human rights to provide sound frameworks and parameters for justice, as well as accountability. Underpinning these definitions was a need for rigorous data collection that could tell decision-makers who exactly was vulnerable to climate change and how.

Finally, the need for discussions of ‘justice’ to be underpinned by rigorous data collection was reiterated in Session C.3: *A Just Water Transition*. Various conceptions of ‘justice’ in the context of water were discussed in this session. However, there was a lack of data on who was most vulnerable in Europe to climate change and water stress, and how those vulnerabilities interact with water infrastructure investment and policy choices in other areas such as agriculture. The need for access to essential basic services such as water and sanitation had been highlighted by the pandemic. However, it was unclear who exactly was suffering from water shortages, and why. These vulnerabilities needed to be explored in order to inform policy on water infrastructure, procedural justice and diplomacy in sharing water resources.

Failing to take the time to align social and green objectives could lead to climate policies with unintended unjust consequences. In Session D.2, Tamara Metze (Wageningen University and Research) stated that the vulnerabilities of citizens from lower socio-economic backgrounds were not acknowledged in decision-making or campaigns on Dutch energy policy, and there were no procedures for their meaningful participation. As these vulnerable groups could co-design the definition of ‘energy justice’, Dutch energy policy was leading to distributional and procedural injustices such as these groups being unable to ‘financially participate in energy co-operatives/own solar’ and ‘they suffer most from raising energy prices’. Annemieke Nijhof (Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure) reiterated in this session the need to examine power dynamics, to listen, and to resist the urge to stigmatise those who disagree, even if the exchanges become emotional.

Session B: *Learning from Just Transition Practices and Institutions* revealed that the Scottish Just Transition Commission was already putting into practice an intertwined, holistic conception of social, economic and climate justice. The commission’s representative, Charlotte Hartley, said it took as its basis that the just transition must tackle existing injustices such as housing, energy poverty and welfare. A systems and equity-based approach was an important baseline for such engagement as sometimes, ‘because of the existing levels of injustice, just transition isn’t on the agenda’ for the lives of workers and their communities. The need for climate and transition policy to integrate climate, social and economic justice was also clearly expressed by youth participants David Poland (NYCI), Youth 2030, writers Tegan Forde and Laura Woulfe and, to a lesser extent, by Evan van Genuchten of the Dutch Youth Climate Movement. As Laura Woulfe says in her flash fiction piece ‘Tended’:

*In this new strange world, we’re expected to last longer. I know you feel the pressure to bloom earlier because it’s warmer, and you’re expected to hang on to your leaves longer because it’s warmer. It sometimes feels like it’s hotting up for me too; expected to do it all, have a great job and a family. Keep going, longer and longer, until I’m 66 because I can’t afford a pension, there’s pressure on me too.*

## Insight 2: Shared Resources & Systems Thinking

By focusing concerns on the most vulnerable, and prioritising dialogue with the worst affected, it was noted that a just transition approach both enabled and required systems-thinking.

There was concurrence among those at the conference that, as societies, we needed to find new, integrated ways of thinking about environmental and social challenges. Governments, investors and civil society were beginning to understand that there were social dimensions to actions taken to protect the climate or environmental activities.

A climate policy must be acted upon in a holistic manner, rather than bereft of its social and cultural context and implications. A just transition approach, accompanied by Agenda 2030, could help bring into light these previously unaddressed, intersecting concerns—making for better policy.

This misalignment between social and green objectives was most evident in the sessions on Session D.3: *Finance for a Just Transition* and Session D.2: *State-citizen Interplay for Achieving a Just Transition: Lessons from the Netherlands*. In the former, Myriam Vander Stichele noted that there was a need to develop integrated green and social ‘do no significant harm’ objectives to guide institutional and private investment to ensure it was consistent with the objectives of the European Green Deal, and not made at the expense of social and workers’ rights. The EU had not developed a social taxonomy alongside the green taxonomy, and it had not required that green investments avoid undermining social rights. To avoid unintended consequences, Myriam Vander Stichele advised that definitions of investment activity should be underpinned by strong foundational documentation such as the [OECD’s Due Diligence Guidance and Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#), the UN’s *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, the ILO Labour Conventions, and the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

However, this new integrated perspective, and the entrepreneurial approach required to build on it, was being confined by overly stringent restrictions and a lack of state support. In Session D.1: *Sustainable and Resilient Regions*, speakers concurred that providing a just transition in the Midlands required the development of what the Irish Just Transition Commissioner, Kieran Mulvey, called ‘a new rulebook’ in Europe and Ireland. There was enormous potential inherent in affected regions like the Midlands, where communities were essential ‘agents of change, not victims of change’, whose skills and knowledge can be repurposed for better opportunities, according to Dr Robert Pollock (Platform for Coal [and Carbon Intensive] Regions in Transition) in Session B: *Learning from Just Transition Practices and Institutions*.

To harness this, the ground must be prepared for experimentation. The Covid-19 pandemic and climate change had dramatically upended many old economic metrics and traditional restrictions on support mechanisms such as state aid, and, according to Kieran Mulvey, the ‘just transition in its broadest sense should be facilitated not restrained by outdated rules that applied to another economic era’. For this new rulebook, a number of recommendations were offered throughout the conference, such as developing broad economic strategies that integrate local work into a national ‘structural reorientation’ response, as recommended by Rudiger Ahrend of the OECD.

Many speakers took the European Green Deal as a framework for this ‘new rulebook’ approach to the transition, particularly its mention of new wellbeing indicators and ‘doughnut’ economics. In Session A, Stefano Grassi and Sharan Burrow remarked that the European Union had played its own role in unjust transitions such as the Eurozone crisis, austerity and the decline of industrial regions. The European Green Deal, and its prominence in the EU’s Covid-19 recovery package, was seen by both speakers as a positive development that could help refocus the agenda towards social and environmental progress as well as growth. Systems-thinking in the European Green Deal was also highlighted in Session C.3: *A Just Water Transition* as being key to fitting together and developing an approach that addresses the complex range of issues that cause and shape water stress and accompanying injustices.

## Insight 3: Social Dialogue & Participatory Processes

The conference noted that transition needed to be done in the spirit of partnership rather than top down. It should be guided by the principles of Agenda 2030 which prioritised engagement with the most vulnerable in decision-making processes. This involved valuing heritage, current local community development structures, and current skillsets and traditions. Could we uncover existing skillsets in workers and their communities and local region through skills audits? How could we recognise that a cultural loss had occurred and build a response that would resonate with local, regional and national institutional contexts?

The need to rebuild trust in government and democracy after previous failed transition management was raised often during the conference as a fundamental reason for the emergence and popularity of the just transition principle. It was stated a number of times that, if governments did not involve communities, councils and workers at the base of their work, the transition would not work. As stated by the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, in his keynote speech:

*I strongly support the Council’s call for the establishment of a meaningful social dialogue and deliberative process, which should be framed in the wider context of discussions with regard to how we embed the just economy and society, now so urgently needed, and indeed desired by the citizenry. Social dialogue and real, inclusive democratic consultation with all social partners should be a fundamental principle of any just-transition approach.*

Co-designing the transition was discussed as being important, particularly in Session E: *Participatory Processes for a Fair and Inclusive Transition*. As not everyone would benefit from the low-carbon transition, we would need to ensure that those affected by this vision of a low-carbon future were truly heard. As Arnau Queralt-Bassa (Chairman, EEAC Network) said, ‘We must ensure that we are talking with people, not above or about them’. Dialogue and co-design, according to Luke Murphy (IPPR), could bring about a better-designed transition that did not lead to delays and public blocking of proposals. Greater social involvement and dialogue was ‘not a barrier but a pre-requisite’ to a faster transition and to avoid greater injustices.

Such bottom-up involvement was a difficult task due to the many intersecting layers of the transition. As Elif Gunduzyeli (CAN Europe) set out, an energy transition alone could have layers of injustice: first, those affected by rapid decarbonisation; secondly, those whose livelihoods are affected by climate change (such as farmers or beekeepers); and third, communities affected by high-carbon industrial activities and past injustices such as the loss of lands and homes due to open-cast mining. Mike Hemsley, Luke Murphy and Tamara Metze all added in the concerns of those being affected by renewable energy policies—such as high energy costs on the vulnerable, and the imposition of renewable energy infrastructure on rural regions to service urban areas. In this manner, a just transition could require humility, recognising that past mistakes had been made but that there would be lessons learnt in moving forward.

In managing and understanding these cross-cutting concerns, there was a need for transition management approaches to be steeped in institutional and cultural context. In including affected communities, Dr Fergus Green in Session B: *Learning from Just Transition Practices and Institutions* indicated that the institutional politics and cultural and social histories of a region could be more important than economic factors such as jobs or funding: ‘We are often dealing with regions with a particular identity tied to a legacy industry or economic culture. There are social relations bound up with particular ways of working in that relationship, routines and traditions.’

To direct these assets towards new transitions, government agencies and teams working on just transition could include staff skilled in the social aspects of change, such as anthropology and social psychology. In Session C.1: *Just Transition, Vulnerability, and Policy Responses*, Professor John Tomaney (University College London) also highlighted the importance of cultural and institutional context in shaping community engagement, resilience and new opportunities for a region. Even if past transitions had gone badly, creating distrust in ‘left-behind places’, such as the North of England and Wales, long-standing community forums could be redirected into building regional solutions to current injustices, and future changes.

## Insight 4: Change and Resilience

In Session D.1: *Sustainable and Resilient Regions*, heritage and culture was discussed as a “well of strength” from which to draw, leading to resilience and the ability to build new opportunities in cultural identity, tourism, cultural significance, local and regional self-confidence and respect. Irish Rural Link, Kieran Mulvey (Just Transition Commissioner) and Offaly Local Development Council noted the rich local history of the Midlands, built around the Bord na Móna communities, ESB houses, good jobs and community cohesion. Brendan O’Loughlin (Offaly Local Development Council) stated that a coherent collective identity must come from the bottom up, building on living, proud cultural identities that said ‘we are people of the bog—bog men’, emulating the title of the famous book *Bog Men Be Proud*. This past heritage and regional expertise enabled the building of new ideas that were solid and rooted in old foundations, ensuring that new companies were not simply thrown into the region without local resonance or connection—something that Kieran Mulvey warned against.

While there was no blueprint in delivering a just transition, different practical ways to build resilience to transitions emerged from the discussion. The transition would be profoundly disruptive for some specific regional communities that were uniquely reliant on certain industries, such as peat extraction in the Midlands. However, as outlined in Session C.1: *Just Transition, Vulnerability, and Policy Responses*, creating the overall conditions for a ‘good and green jobs’ economy could protect these communities and provide the means of achieving the aims of a just transition. Overall, strong underpinnings in social welfare, education, supports for enterprise, strong mechanisms for institutional community and worker dialogue provided solid, resilient foundations from which individuals, communities, regions, states and global economies could develop a flexible, sound response for whenever the wave breaks upon them.

There was a need to embrace the inevitability of change and develop strong regional and national mechanisms that could harness it for opportunity. There was a need to learn that past transition management approaches had resulted in communities feeling abandoned. The need to develop better transition management approaches was not only underpinned by moral arguments, but also because we had learnt that such treatment of specific social groups had wider societal impacts. Examples were given throughout the conference, whether an increase in hard-right votes in rust-belt areas such as Appalachia in the United States, or the Brexit vote in the North of England and Wales.

In Session C.1, Dr Cathal FitzGerald (NESC) outlined learnings from NESC’s Council Report No: 149 *Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland* (March 2020), which proposed ‘continuous pre-emptive workforce development’ as a means of building resilience. For individuals, this would mean reskilling and continuous pre-emptive education; for states, delivering high-impact, targeted funding to affected regions, and, for businesses, building and fostering resilient enterprises, with state support. Other forms of resilience proposed at the conference were: a universal social floor such as a global minimum living wage; universal basic services; and income and participatory processes founded on equality, in terms of gender; workforce and community inclusion. Creating these overall conditions was important in Ireland, as companies are facing an increasingly dynamic and unpredictable environment, according to Rowena Dwyer (Enterprise Ireland) including Brexit, digitalisation, climate change and now Covid-19. Long-term planning for economic change by states, and long-term research and development to predict change and harness opportunity were highly recommended in this session.

In Session D.1: *Sustainable and Resilient Regions*, it was remarked that accepting opportunity and loss in Ireland’s transition meant continuing to develop new ways of seeing peatland. Under Bord na Móna’s state-led direction in the 1930s, what was considered wasteland became a resource that underpinned the pride and entrepreneurialism of the new Irish state. Another juncture was facing the State with the need to halt peat harvesting and turn to peat rehabilitation and carbon sequestration. These shifts highlighted the importance of anticipating change, systems thinking, systems design and institutional learning from past experience—key themes of the conference raised by Dr Sinéad O’Flanagan of NESC, Dr Robert Pollock and Just Transition Commissioner Kieran Mulvey.

While economic transitions – including the low-carbon transition – had wider implications for society, it was proposed that this should not forestall social dialogue and targeted supports to prevent or mitigate immediate negative impacts on affected regions, businesses and workers. This was due in part to its origins. Dr Edouard Morena highlighted in Session F that, unlike many other concepts in climate discourse, such as green economy, green growth and sustainable development, just transition was uniquely bottom-up. It was a concept rooted in the lived experience of workers and their communities in regions that suffered from past unjust transitions, entering into international climate negotiations through trade union efforts. For example, two-thirds of Enterprise Ireland’s enterprises are based outside Dublin, and all of them recorded net growth in 2019, with the exception of the Midlands region. In Session C.1: *Just Transition, Vulnerability, and Policy Responses*, Rowena Dwyer (Enterprise Ireland) attributed this lack of growth to the phase-out of peat-harvesting and power production in the Midlands. The closures were having a wider knock-on impact on supply chains and regional businesses.

In Session A, Youth 2030 called on NESC and EEAC policy-makers to ‘help save’ communities, such as the Midlands, that are worst affected by the phase-out of carbon-intensive activities. Representative David Poland (NYCI) stated: ‘[I], like many others, am finding it harder and harder to see a future for myself in my own homeplace’. These fears about the present and future reflect the need for a targeted policy response in low-carbon transitions, where cessation of peat or other fossil fuels would have a severe employment impact on specific mono-industrial or resource-reliant regions. If a robust, place-based and targeted ‘just transition’ response was not developed for a disproportionately affected region, the results could be starkly unjust. This was shown by Professor John Tomaney (University College London) in his description of the UK’s shift away from industrial manufacturing and coal production in the UK to a service and financial sector-based economy.

## Insight 5: Towards the Elements of a Blueprint

The conference highlighted that just transition was a combination of very practical worker, firm and community-based supports—the ‘nuts and bolts’—as well as an overarching process of how to get to ‘the World We Want’ required by the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Though there was no standardised template, recommendations for a just transition approach from the conference broadly include:

1. **A clear, coherent vision and pathway forward.**
2. **Guiding principles and processes** based on clear definitions of what constitutes justice, just transition and the SDG principles of ‘leave no one behind’ and ‘reaching the most vulnerable first’.
3. **An inclusive, deliberative and iterative process,** and institutions to deliver that vision.
4. **A targeted focus on workers and their wider communities** within an understanding of institutional context and place. As warned by both Rudiger Ahrend (OECD) and Stefano Grassi (European Commission), ‘the worst you can do is face the transition unprepared or unmanaged’. Every territory and region needs a clearly designed strategy. It needs to look at possible options and have a wide array of policies and instruments that can be mobilised to help a territory find an alternative pathway to growth away from reliance. This can involve reskilling, support for SMEs, new sources of energy, energy efficiency in buildings, and renovating schools.
5. Principles and processes must be **co-designed with the most vulnerable affected** workers and communities, and be accompanied by rigorous data collection in order to build indicators against which progress can be tracked.

6. **Public-sector investment is a primary important driver of transition.** . Private-sector investment is also important. All financial investment needs to be guided by clear taxonomy, standards and strong legal definitions that integrate social, climate and biodiversity objectives. Funding must be dedicated, long-term and targeted at affected regions. It must also be easy to access for different actors, support skills and potential in the region, create a comprehensive package that offers jobs to those who have upskilled and retrained, and it must be free from unnecessary constraints that hinder the entrepreneurialism and dynamism of communities.
7. **Good personnel restructuring processes** that are well defined can lead to an orderly phase-out for workers. For example, options for workers to be redeployed and retrain on similar good pay and conditions; a bridge to a pension; income and skills support; redeployment support; reinvestment and renewal for surrounding communities; R&D support for businesses, and targeted funding to support employers.

# Appendix: Overview of Conference Sessions

This appendix provides an overview of the conference sessions:

## Day One

**Session A:** Just Transition—Principles and Mission

**Session B:** Learning from Just Transition Practices and Institutions

## Day Two

**Session C:** Levers to Drive a Just Transition

1. Just Transition, Vulnerability, and Policy Responses
2. Advising on a Just Transition
3. A Just Water Transition

**Session D:** Levers to Drive a Just Transition

1. Sustainable and Resilient Regions
2. State-citizen Interplay for Achieving a Just Transition: Lessons from the Netherlands
3. Finance for a Just Transition

## Day Three

**Session E:** Participatory Processes for a Fair and Inclusive Transition

**Session F:** What Next for Just Transition Mission, Process & Practice in the context of Covid-19?

Keynote Address by the President of Ireland, Uachtarán na hÉireann, Michael D. Higgins

## Day 1 – Tuesday, 27 October 2020

### Opening Session A

#### Just Transition—Principles and Mission: What is a fair, inclusive and equitable green transition and why do we need it?

##### Welcome:

Dr Cara Augustenborg, Moderator

##### Speakers:

Dr Larry O'Connell, Director, NESC: NESC's Just Transition Work;

Mr Eamon Ryan T.D., Minister for Climate Action, Communication Networks and Transport;

Stefano Grassi, Head of Cabinet to the European Commissioner responsible for Energy; European Green Deal—Green Transition;

Ms Sharan Burrow, ITUC: Just Transition

This session recognised above all that we were living in the throes of significant existing transitions—a low-carbon, digital, industrial transformation away from heavy industry and a global pandemic—but were more than ready to 'bounce back better and build back better'. There was recognition of the great challenge we faced in preparing for a major transformation. Yet, the session was hopeful. As Stefano Grassi (European Commission) pointed out, Ireland and Europe had faced momentous challenges before and turned them into opportunity.

The session discussed:

- How could we as a society—nationally, regionally and globally—engage in a significant transformation towards not only a low-carbon society, but a just one? ?
- How could we learn from past transitions and find ways to enact the principles of equality, equity and social inclusion that underlie a just transition?
- Did Irish, European and international transition policies reflect justice?
- Last but not least, as Stefano Grassi highlighted, what was justice and fairness in the transition?

These questions required translating the 'highly admirable though challenging idea of leaving no-one behind' into concrete work and processes. On this, Dr Larry O'Connell (NESC) had six key reflections from NESC's landmark research into just transition: a vision for the low-carbon society was critical; there was no blueprint or all-seeing wisdom; we were entering uncharted waters and continuous rigorous review was needed to keep the 'light at the end of the tunnel' in sight; context was critical; the importance of place in supporting viable but vulnerable enterprises with targeted high-impact funding processes; and the need for participatory processes.

Minister Eamon Ryan broadened out the concept of just transition to incorporate public and active travel, ending fuel poverty, the public realm, the 'double dividend' of energy efficiency, which resulted in warm homes and the employment benefits of a national retrofit scheme. Marginal West of Ireland farming would have to pay better, and be used as a tool to fundamentally reshape the country as we coped with climate change. As well as good jobs, there were opportunities for the management of flood risks and reducing nitrogen and ammonia pollution.

A just transition was one of the primary elements of the European Green Deal according to Stefano Grassi. From the European Commission's perspective, President Ursula von der Leyen had made climate change a priority, setting an objective of a climate-neutral EU by 2050 as the only credible way to achieve Paris. The transition to a low-carbon economy was not just a policy or a moral imperative; it continued on a daily basis, driven by market forces and the dynamics of price which are bringing cheaper renewables. Stefano Grassi stated that we need to seize the opportunities provided by climate change, to be prepared and aware, and to be able to run with and pilot it. All speakers noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had provided unprecedented opportunity, as well as exposing long-existing fault-lines in the economy and how we value work. According to Sharan Burrow (ITUC), 'Covid now makes those fractures look like craters. It has been blown open that business as usual has not been working for people'. In the Irish context, changes were recommended by Sharan Burrow to the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2020* to incorporate a strong definition of just transition.

The pandemic had also drawn just transition into the mainstream of economic and social policy discourse, as noted by Dr Larry O'Connell, and there was a need for 'analytical empathy' with those affected by policy. There were also past and parallel transitions that we must learn from. Stefano Grassi gave the example of the Eurozone crisis and the EU single market precipitating closures of heavy industrial sectors across the EU due to global competitiveness. Sharan Burrow noted that 'just transition is a recognition of past harms, and a way out of our corresponding crises'. These crises included climate change, global inequality, biodiversity collapse, the lack of a global wage or floor of social protections, and a loss of faith in democracy and traditional institutions due to past mismanaged transitions. She also noted the intergenerational injustice in younger people inheriting this mess of institutional failure and climate breakdown: 'This is a battle of the generations, so let's make sure that this is a transition that indeed has people at the heart'. The role of just transition is in guiding a new social contract. If the social contract broke down in the 1980s, then it must be rebuilt using a just transition that would include the following:

- full employment that created a new job for every one lost in the transition;
- a global floor of labour-market protections;
- social dialogue in the design of the transition;
- gender equality for women;
- investment rather than austerity;
- due diligence in supply chains;
- potentially breaking up the big tech companies;
- a new approach to state debt; and
- creating liveable cities for a global population of 7–9 billion.

**Artistic Interlude:****Contribution from Youth 2030**

The fear that current and past injustices would not be resolved, or would be repeated, was also evident in the closing presentations given by Youth 2030, the Young People's Committee of the National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI). Youth 2030 representative David Poland outlined their *Youth Manifesto on Climate Justice*, and stated that young people had been the leaders on climate action. For Youth 2030, just transition meant an intertwining of high-quality work, social justice, environmental protection, and fulfilment of the desire to see a future for oneself in one's home place. The SDGs and the European Green Deal were presented as a framework to achieve these intertwined goals of inclusive dialogue with those affected: 'climate action, decent work, reduced inequalities, economic growth and affordable, cleaner energy'. The key overarching message communicated from Youth 2030 was:

*...one of unity in facing the challenge ahead, while keeping our social justice focus on the climate crisis. This needs to be ingrained with a strong commitment of making a just transition a reality as soon as possible. Young people are imagining the future they want, and yes, it is one of green jobs and low emissions, but dig deeper and we envision a much fairer society with reduced inequalities. An economy with low-carbon public transport, home heating, retrofitting and electric vehicles sounds appealing but needs to be affordable for everybody. Policies must not exacerbate regional inequalities that already exist, since most people in carbon-intensive industries can be found in regions that are already under-invested.*

Youth 2030 called on delegates and policymakers to build an effective response to the difficulties being faced by young people in the transition, particularly those growing up in regions worst affected by the phase-out of carbon-intensive activities. David Poland spoke of growing up with the view of the Bord na Móna power stations from his back garden, and Bord na Mona's singular importance in providing local jobs, prospects and continuous apprenticeships. With the closure of the stations, David Poland said he, 'like many others, am finding it harder and harder to see a future for myself in my own home-place'. He asked for help from those in power to save their communities. The video contributions from both David Poland and Youth 2030 can be viewed in full [here](#).



**Figure 1:** The artistic contribution from Youth 2030 was poetry accompanied by a video of a young girl representing 'Just Transition', walking through landscapes: rural, urban, exploited and wild.

**Just Transition is her name,  
follow her now and leave no one to blame.  
Young people, old people, businesses and sectors,  
she talks to you to warn you before it festers.  
Urban and rural, everyone alike,  
she's calling you now,  
come and take your mic.  
...  
Smiling she begins, noticing communities listen,  
she calls on us to act now and end this division.  
Learn from this we must and never ignore future signs,  
it will be because of her,  
just transition,  
that extends this world's deadlines.  
Just Transition is her name,  
we must carry on forward with her,  
with the clear absence of shame.**

## Day 1 – Tuesday, 27th October 2020

### Session B

#### Learning from Just Transition Practices and Institutions

##### Panel Discussion:

**Dr Cara Augustenborg**, Moderator

**Dr Robert Pollock**, Platform for Coal [and Carbon Intensive] Regions in Transition Secretariat: Learning from Coal Intensive Regions to Date

**Dr Fergus Green**, Utrecht University: Just Transition Lessons from Australia

**Ms Charlotte Hartley**, Scottish Just Transition Commission: Insights from the Role of a Just Transition Commission

In this session, an expert panel shared their views and lessons from just transition practices and institutions across the European Union, Scotland and Australia. Key learnings included: there was no 'silver bullet' to the just transition, and there was a need for a systems approach that saw the issue from many angles. Though there was no standardised template, best 'just transition' practice broadly included a coherent vision, an inclusive deliberative process and a targeted focus on workers and their wider communities within an understanding of institutional context and place.

The contributors agreed that the just transition principle was generally centred on skills and workers, but the focus on communities broadened the conversation beyond the energy sector. Just transition was one of the primary elements of the European Green Deal. As part of the transition, the European Commission had established the EU START Programme to provide guidance to 'mono-industrial' regions in the EU worst affected by the phase-out of highly polluting fossil fuels from the energy system. Regions visited by the EU START programme included Silesia in Poland and the Midlands in Ireland, which was reliant on peat harvesting. In his presentation, Dr Robert Pollock (Platform for Coal [and Carbon Intensive] Regions in Transition Secretariat) outlined the key learnings collected during the EU START programme, as follows:

*Comprehending institutional context was a precondition of effective practice:* Power and agency were dispersed in different ways at different levels. The institutional context in which you were working and where you were working needed to be understood. This was reiterated by Dr Fergus Green who stated that best 'just transition' practice recommendations could be given, but they were steeped in institutional context. For example, an interesting example of a just transition approach was found in Germany, but Dr Green attributed Germany's successes to it being a negotiated democracy with proportional representation and a corporatist structure for organising interest groups. This institutional structure facilitated longer-term compromises over government formations and policy. In contrast, Australia's competitive democracy incentivised competition and lacked co-operative institutions to facilitate dialogue. This undermined the procedural, co-operative nature required for a just transition.

*The need to plan ahead—develop a long-term phased pathway plan to promote longitudinal comprehension and flexibility:* Dr Pollock recommended a short, medium and long-term vision as the sequencing of actions, and flexibility was important due to the fluid and rapidly changing nature of transitioning environments. In Scotland, the Just Transition Commission had highlighted the need to create clear short, medium and long-term just transition plans for each sector. Charlotte Hartley recommended that work on pathways be jointly owned by members and trade bodies in each sector, and jointly led by government.

*Affected localities needed to be the focus of support and engagement as agents of change:* Communities were essential 'agents of change, not victims of change', whose skills and knowledge could be repurposed, according to Dr Pollock. In including affected communities, Dr Green noted that cultural and social aspects of a region could be more important than economic: 'We are often dealing with regions with a particular identity tied to a legacy industry or economic culture. There are social relations bound up with particular ways of working in that relationship, routines and traditions.' Government agencies and teams working on just transition needed to have staff qualified in anthropology, social psychology—people skilled in the social aspects of change. Legacy assets could be repurposed through new investment and technology. These assets could be endogenous (in terms of local people's skills and heritage) and exogenous (physical infrastructure such as power plants).

## BOX 2:

### Importance of Institutional Context in a Just Transition:

Presentation by Dr Fergus Green (Utrecht University)

**Germany:** Seen as having an ‘excellent’ approach to just transition processes. However, this was attributed to it being a negotiated democracy with proportional representation and a corporatist structure for organising interest groups. This institutional structure facilitated longer-term compromises over government formations and policy.

**Australia:** In contrast, Australia’s competitive democracy incentivised competition and lacked co-operative institutions to facilitate dialogue. This undermined the procedural, co-operative nature required for a just transition.

*Hazelwood Power Station in Latrobe Valley, Victoria:* Government’s plans to close down Australia’s most polluting power station, Hazelwood, did not come to fruition due to a political backlash against climate action and a heavy pro-coal lobby. In November 2016, however, its owner ENGIE unilaterally announced plans to close five months later rather than invest in planned health and safety upgrades. When the closure was announced, the Victoria Labor government established:

- a funding package of €145m
- a new regional authority to manage the wider transition, the Latrobe Valley Authority; and
- support for workers in reskilling and education.

This was a politically impossible transition prior to the closure when government climate policy was the driver. However, the regional Victoria state government was able to use an opportune event to close the station and take steps towards a ‘just transition’ approach.

*Western Australia:* In Colley, South Perth, government was undertaking a just transition process for phasing out three remaining coal stations and mines concentrated in the area. The government won broad stakeholder support for the phase-out. A critical factor was renewable energy capacity, which was rapidly expanding due to falling costs. This made existing coal capacity uneconomical and led to the inevitability of the phase-out. For this region, the question was therefore not about whether there would be a phase-out, but when and how. This provided the government with space to construct a just transition for the region.

**Inclusive deliberative process and social dialogue:** In managing relationships between those in power, Dr Robert Pollock said there was a need for ‘analytical empathy’ and to understand unique situations. Learnings from the Just Transition Commission recommend ‘an ongoing, broad way to bring people from communities and sectors together to discuss the issue’ of climate change and just transition as ‘this is the only way to generate the buy-in for the level of change needed’. Charlotte Hartley noted that a systems and equity-based approach was an important baseline for such engagement as sometimes, ‘because of the existing levels of injustice, just transition isn’t on the agenda’ for the lives of workers and their communities. Dr Pollock noted that eNGOs Greenpeace and Bankwatch had played positive ‘catalysts for change’ roles in facilitating multi-actor dialogue in the coal-reliant Juve Valley in Romania.

**Effectiveness of plans and assistance was determined by the capacity of recipients to absorb support, and their involvement in the co-creation of that support:** This included the need to build resilience to exogenous change such as periods of austerity, and cultivating the ability of communities to change endogenously during situations such as current uncertainty. As observed by Dr Pollock, the relationship between exogenous and endogenous change was ‘difficult to choreograph, but essential for transition’. Local and regional plan-making could assist with this.

**Systems approaches are still embryonic yet critical for managing multi-actor complexity, policy coordination, collaborative, inclusive and inquisitive approaches:** Both Charlotte Hartley and Dr Pollock agreed that government needs to ‘smash apart the siloes and think in cross-cutting ways’. What facilitated transition was joined-up government, at local, regional, national and EU levels, according to Dr Pollock. What helped to build a systems approach in Scotland’s Just Transition Commission was that it fed into the work of three different government departments and it recognised that Scotland’s starting position for the just transition already had several injustices in labour, housing and levels of poverty. According to Charlotte Hartley, the Just Transition Commission’s commitment to a just transition meant it saw its role as addressing ‘existing injustices as well as potential ones that arise from transition’. Scotland was building wellbeing principles into the transition as a result.

**Take advantage of ad hoc opportunities:** If just transition policy was to get off the ground, proponents needed to take advantage of ad hoc opportunities that arose, particularly if driven by non-climate or non-government forces. Dr Fergus Green gave the example of the shock announcement of the Hazelwood Power Station closure in Latrobe Valley (as noted in Box 2).

**Equity:** The importance of equity was emphasised in the learning from the Scottish Just Transition Commission, according to Charlotte Hartley. The commission was seeking to build equity into all policymaking so that benefits were shared and did not unfairly burden those least likely to be able to pay, and at the greatest risk of being affected as the economy is changing.

## BOX 3:

### Scotland's Just Transition Commission:

Presentation by Charlotte Hartley (Just Transition Commission)

The Just Transition Commission was founded in September 2018 and represented a multi-disciplinary group of 12 people. Each session has held a public engagement event so as to educate the public.

For the commission, the commitment to a just transition needed to address Scotland's existing injustices in labour, housing and levels of poverty, as well as potential ones that arose from transition. The three overarching learnings from the Just Transition Commission were to:

- Plan ahead for sectors, such as jointly owned and created just transition plans facilitated by government in a coordinating role.
- Engage in an ongoing, broad way, with relevance to people's current difficulties, bringing people from communities and sectors together to discuss the issue.
- Build equity into all climate plans and policies so that benefits and burdens were shared fairly. The importance of equity in the transition was considered by Charlotte Hartley to be one of the primary learnings from the commission's work so far.

In February 2020, the commission published its [interim report](#) and called for further data collection. When the Covid-19 crisis hit, the commission was tasked by the Cabinet Secretary to apply a just transition lens to the concept of a green recovery from the pandemic. This report, published in July 2020, recommended that all funding commitments for the green recovery included the condition that they would set Scotland on the pathway to net zero.

## Closing Session

### Artistic Interlude:

Sonic Pollinators

You hear patterns evolve and dissolve and  
you hear a new kind of 'harmony'.  
Sonic pollinators surround you...

Karen Power

The closing session was accompanied by an artistic piece —, **Sonic Pollinators** composed by [Karen Power](#) and performed by both Karen and the Quiet Music Ensemble, assisted by Julie Spollen, Offaly Beekeeping Association and Offaly County Council, with sounds recorded in Clara Bog, Lough Boora Discovery Park and Birr Castle Gardens. According to composer Karen Power, *sonic pollinators* aimed to capture, represent and juxtapose the real and imagined, or reimagined, place, time and uniqueness of Offaly and its pollinators through music/sound. Dr Cara Augustenborg introduced the piece by highlighting the importance of the arts and culture in the transition to a low-carbon economy:

'These explorations encourage empowerment and expression so let's support these conversations, critical thinking and the benefits that arts and culture plays in supporting opportunities for inclusion, social connections, equity and spatial identity. Now more than even I think it's clear sustainable communities need cultural engagement, critical and artistic thinking.'

This piece revealed the need for listening, for taking into account different perspectives and the natural world—as strange as they might seem. For the performance, each member of the orchestra was given an 'individual aural part'. During the performance they heard this part through one ear and in the other ear, listening to each other and the aural scope, the tape part which the audience also heard:

'... the idea being that there always some element of listening going on in space. Fundamentally I believe that by creating this kind of active listening environment, it puts us all... composer, performer, audience on the same level, and invites us all to communally listen... and this for me seems to creates a very special environment.'



## Day 2 – Wednesday, 28 October 2020

### Session C: Levers to Drive a Just Transition

#### Group 1:

Just Transition, Vulnerability and Policy Responses

#### Lead Council:

Dr Cathal FitzGerald, NESCC

#### General aim of the session:

*Redirecting Europe's economy, society and environment in a sustainable direction would require comprehensive transformation. This transition provided large opportunities, but also came with significant social and economic challenges for affected communities. Therefore, a just transition in Europe necessitated relentless action by policymakers to maximise quality alternatives and opportunities for those workers, firms and sectors who are vulnerable. Research by NESCC, 'Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland', examined this issue in depth.*

*The aim of this session was to explore the vulnerability associated with low-carbon transition, with a focus on practical advice for policymakers in how to respond. Specifically, the emphasis was on how to ensure continuous, pre-emptive workforce development, the building of resilient enterprises, and the delivery of high-impact targeted funding to support transition.*

#### Chair:

Dr Damian Thomas, NESCC

#### Key contributors:

**Prof. John Tomaney**, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, Bartlett School of Planning, University College London;  
**Ms Rowena Dwyer**, Enterprise Ireland, and  
**Dr Cathal FitzGerald**, NESCC.

While there was no blueprint in delivering a just transition, different practical ways to build resilience to transitions emerged from the discussion, as well as learnings from past unjust transitions in the UK. In this session, discussion focused on what type of work and what type of conditions are necessary for a just transition. The transition would be profoundly disruptive for some, such as specific regional communities that were uniquely reliant on certain industries, such as peat extraction in the Midlands. However, it was proposed that a proactive 'just transition' approach could be applied in all cases of regional economic transition, not just the transition to a low-carbon economy. Creating the overall conditions for a 'good and green jobs' economy was a means of achieving the aims of a just transition.



Figure 2: NESCC Council Report 149: Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland (March 2020)

Creating these overall conditions was important to do in Ireland, according to Rowena Dwyer (Enterprise Ireland), as companies were facing an 'increasingly dynamic and unpredictable' environment due to the threats of Brexit, technological development, digitalisation, climate change and now 'an existential challenge of survival in the form of Covid'. These dynamics were 'stretching and transforming' how they do business, requiring long-term planning, targeted policy responses and support from government to build company resilience 'to absorb changes and recover functionality'.

Similar learnings from the landmark NESCC Council Report 149: *Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland* (March 2020) and its accompanying Secretariat Paper 19: *The Transition to a Low-Carbon and More Digital Future: Supporting the Needs of Vulnerable Workers and Enterprises* were communicated in the session by Dr Cathal FitzGerald (NESCC). This included a commitment to an overall 'destination vision' of a 'resilient, sustainable thriving net zero economy where we use innovation to shape what we want'. In achieving that vision, states had a 'line of sight where vulnerability would fall' in terms of disproportionate impacts on particular regions and sectors, but focusing on generating a 'good jobs' economy 'is a way to protect the overall employment base from transitions'. This overall commitment to a good and green jobs economy could be given practical effect through a combination of worker, firm and community-based supports.

## BOX 4:

### Unjust Transition – Spatial Injustice in the United Kingdom:

Presentation by Professor John Tomaney

In the 1980s, the United Kingdom underwent a transition from a carbon-intensive, heavy industrial manufacturing, steel and coal-reliant economy to a new economy largely based on finance. Traditional industrial activity was focused in the north of England and Wales, while growth in a new financial services sector was focused by government in the south of England, particularly London. National management structures were unwilling to engage in managing the transition, providing alternatives or rejuvenation for affected industrial areas. Any interventions made were done centrally; local authorities, regions and communities were not the core producers of solutions.

Professor Tomaney stated that the Conservative government at the time accepted the processes of de-industrialisation, including the physical dereliction and, to an extent, social disintegration that accompanied it. For example, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said affected communities needed to 'shape up and respond to market signals'. However, the imbalance was not created by market forces alone. The financial services sector in Canary Wharf, for example, was supported by government investment in Canary Wharf Development Corporation, and the provision of public transport including an extension of the London Underground and light rail.

This imbalance in investment created spatial injustices:

- **A regional North-South inequality divide in the United Kingdom:** From the 1990s there was a sharp acceleration in regional inequality, when in other countries it was narrowing or was stable. This disparity was not only economic, but showed up in other social indicators such as health conditions.
- **Major cultural loss:** It was often overlooked that this process had major cultural impacts. There was a sense of loss in certain communities, as old ways of life were gone in an instant. For Tomaney, this suggested that transition is not simply an issues

'of cash nexus; how to invest, compensate, transfer resources'. A holistic response was needed when communities feel they are being damaged by these processes, especially if not managed correctly. They themselves must be involved in planning their transition in a way which maintains the integrity of their communities.

- **Lack of resilience:** The imbalance in investment and support and the central retention of decision-making undermined local and regional resilience, with lasting effect. This left communities 'ill-equipped to deal with the transition away from industrial manufacturing, or other transitions in the aftermath, such as Covid-19'. Lasting disparity in health, social and economic indicators has led to a higher Brexit vote and more deaths from Covid-19.
- **Endemic injustice and distrust:** There was a cohort of 'left behind places' in the UK, where people feel left out as the economy moved on and a sense of injustice has built up that is now difficult to address. The state supported new financial services employment in the south-east, while supporting decline in the north. This spatial injustice was never adequately addressed and made itself felt in the high Brexit vote.

The experience of the UK had many lessons in the shift to a low-carbon economy. Many regions in Europe are heavily dependent on old carbon-intensive industries. There was a great risk that, if we mismanaged the transition, we would see the replication of what has happened in the UK. This not only involved moral issues of leaving the vulnerable behind, but would also fuel political extremes as we struggled to bring society with us. In pockets of de-industrialised areas across Europe, we were already seeing a populist backlash against traditional liberal democratic politics. The political costs would be high if we got the process wrong.

While economic transitions—including the low-carbon transition—had wider implications for society, it was proposed that this should not forestall targeted supports to prevent or mitigate immediate negative impacts on affected regions, businesses and workers. For example, two thirds of Enterprise Ireland’s enterprises were based outside of Dublin, and all of them recorded net growth in 2019, with the exception of the Midlands region. Rowena Dwyer (Enterprise Ireland) attributed this lack of growth to the phase-out of peat-harvesting and power production in the Midlands Bord na Móna and ESB power stations. The closures were having a wider knock-on impact on supply chains and regional businesses. This reflected the need for a targeted policy response in low-carbon transitions, where cessation of peat or other fossil fuels would have a severe employment impact on specific mono-industrial or resource-reliant regions. If a robust, place-based and targeted ‘just transition’ response was not developed for a disproportionately affected region, the results can be starkly unjust. This was shown by Professor John Tomaney (University College London) in his description of the UK’s shift away from industrial manufacturing and coal production in the UK to a service and financial sector-based economy (Box 4).

The session outlined a number of practical methods of building resilient foundations from which individuals, businesses, communities, regions and states could develop a flexible, effective ‘just transition’ response to most economic transitions. Drivers of a just transition drawn from the NESC report were described by Dr Cathal FitzGerald as ‘continuous pre-emptive workforce development’ for individuals through reskilling and continuous pre-emptive education, accompanied by high-impact, targeted regional state funding that builds and fosters resilient enterprises.

Lessons from companies coping with Covid-19 and Brexit, developed by Enterprise Ireland, included: help for companies to identify their skills needs and connect these gaps with third-level institutions and the wider education and training system; longer-term skills identification and ‘horizon-scanning’ from policymakers, accompanied by upgrading education and training and company requirements; finally, an ongoing review of the apprenticeship system that will assist with retraining, reskilling and flexible on-the-job training. Other practical solutions outlined in this session included immediate supports for affected workers such as secure pensions and a bridge to a pension, income and skills support and redeployment support, reinvestment and renewal for communities themselves, and a regional dedicated fund with specific priorities and a participative, place-based process of social dialogue where these supports can be co-designed with those affected.

Dr FitzGerald posed the question that, rather than agonising over just transition mechanisms, would a dedicated fund for specific priorities in a particular region be a response? If it had the resources, the State could ring-fence funding geographically and sectorally, bringing in firms in a participative place-based process to develop a response aligned to an overarching vision of a green and good-jobs economy. If guided by these principles, Ireland’s Just Transition Fund could be an example of this practical ‘shortcut’ to a regional just transition approach.

Professor John Tomaney suggested that cultural elements were also very important in a transition. The cultural and institutional context could heavily influence a transition’s success, and shape community engagement and resilience. Regions such as the industrial centres in the north of England had particular traditions and cultural underpinnings due to these existing forums, cultural resonances, and traditional ways of co-operating could be turned to ownership over a green agenda. Professor Tomaney also highlighted the importance of these spaces as forums for communities and workers in ‘left-behind’ places such as the north of England and Wales to develop regional and indigenous solutions to both previous unjust transitions and future changes.

The importance of multi-layered data collection was also highlighted in this session. With the transition in the UK, overall GDP increased. However this growth was concentrated in the South East of England while Northern England and Wales dropped in growth, and other wellbeing indicators such as health and poverty were negatively impacted. Modelling for low-carbon transitions in Ireland and internationally almost exclusively relied on the impact of carbon pricing or a carbon tax which didn’t encompass the much wider implications of transition. Assumptions by government that automation and fossil-fuel phase-out would lead to job losses in the transport sector were based on quantitative models. However, qualitative interviews with industry experts and operatives by NESC found no evidence for this. Rowena Dwyer also noted the need for policymakers to take on long-term research in earnest as companies are so focused on short-term survival that they could effectively prepare for prospective transitions.

## Group 2: Advising on a Just Transition

### Lead Council:

Professor Anna Davies, Irish Climate Change Advisory Council

### General aim of the session:

*Early action on a just transition could minimise the negative impacts and maximise positive opportunities. The Paris Agreement on climate change included just transition as an important principle. Just transition was not a fixed set of rules, but a vision and a process based on dialogue and an agenda shared by workers, industry and governments that needed to be negotiated and implemented in their geographical, political, cultural and social contexts. This session aimed to examine:*

- *How advisory bodies on climate change were approaching and integrating just transition principles in their policy advice;*
- *Any lessons learned about advising on a just transition; and*
- *The challenges of balancing this with the necessity of climate action.*

### Chair:

Professor Anna Davies, Irish Climate Change Advisory Council

### Key contributors:

Ulla Blatt Bendtsen, Team Lead International Affairs, Klimarådet and Mike Hemsley, Team Lead Carbon Budgets, UKCCC.

This session examined how advisory organisations were approaching a just transition in their advice on climate change. The Covid-19 crisis had also brought about a challenge and renewed boost for climate advisory councils; as Professor Anna Davies (Irish Climate Change Advisory Council) highlighted, it raised the importance of expertise and trust, and trust in expertise. However both the broader concept of a just transition, and the transition itself to a low-carbon economy, were still in development. Lessons from elsewhere could be brought to the table.

One useful guide, according to Mike Hemsley (UKCCC), was the four key learnings from the [Scottish Just Transition Commission Interim Report](#), published in February 2020:

- 1. Plan ahead as unplanned transitions tend to be unjust;**
- 2. Engage people in decision-making processes;**
- 3. Bring equity into the heart of climate-change policies; and**
- 4. Start now.**

Professor Anna Davies pointed to guidance from the European Green Deal, the Just Transition Platform and the NESC report [Four Case Studies on Just Transition: Lessons for Ireland](#).

While advisory bodies were integrating aspects of a just transition approach, much more needed to be done. A key issue that influenced the just transition approach taken by advisory bodies on climate was that there were differing conceptions of ‘justice’ and ‘fairness’ in the transition. Professor Davies pointed to the establishment of the Just Transition Commissioner in Ireland as a positive development, including the commissioner’s [April 2020 Interim Report](#) which set out plans for the regions, including managing immediate worker and community impacts, and creating opportunities in the region. However, the report lacked ‘concrete targets, metrics and processes for evaluating “justness” in the distribution of funds under the Just Transition Mechanism, and government had not backed the report’s proposals with extra, dedicated and ongoing funding. There was a need to have clear definitions of climate justice and just transition in legislation and policy in order to guide implementation. Professor Davies pointed to countries such as Scotland and New Zealand that had developed definitions of just transition which to shape legislation on climate action. Ulla Blatt Bendtsen gave a positive example of just transition efforts from the harbour town of Esbjerg, Denmark where her family were from. Esbjerg was first reliant on fishing, then oil and gas. Due to government prioritisation of offshore wind and a publicly funded retraining programme, oil and gas workers were being transitioned from platforms to climbing windmill towers.

All three advisory bodies on climate change had a mandate to ensure climate goals are achieved in a 'cost-effective' manner. Differing interpretations of 'fairness' and 'justice' influenced what constitutes cost-effectiveness. For the Danish Council on Climate Change, carbon goals must be achieved in a cost-effective manner, with consideration for competitiveness and business development; healthy public budgets; employment; maintaining welfare, and social balance. These requirements led the council to propose a tax on greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions equivalent to €200 per tonne. Cost-effectiveness ensures 'justice' and 'fairness' in this context alongside a border adjustment scheme in order to stop carbon leakage which could undermine action and lead to unfairness for domestic businesses.<sup>2</sup> The scheme could also be combined with a tax on consumption, based on the carbon content of imports into the country. This was similar to what the European Commission was advising on an EU level. The UK Climate Change Committee (CCC) tried to assess cost-effectiveness in terms of long-term impacts through a range of different lenses—regions, workers, consumers, fuel poverty—so that the worst transitions were not left for future generations. Fairness was very much on the mind of the CCC, particularly due to the findings of the UK Citizens' Climate Assembly in 2019 that 'the transition, including for workers and energy bill payers, must be fair, and perceived to be fair'.

Mike Hemsley gave examples of two previous transitions in the UK which, while beneficial for the climate, were not perceived as just or fair. First, the closure of the coal-mining industry, which led to negative impacts concentrated in particular regions, alongside emissions reductions in the energy sector. Secondly, the major increase in renewable energy as a proportion of the energy system was achieved through subsidies paid through a levy on the bills of ordinary households. This had since been judged to have been an unfair policy choice as 'energy is an essential service' and the policy costs disproportionately affect low-income households. Subsidies were introduced for households to benefit from renewables, such as solar panels on roofs, but this also benefited those with resources, at a disproportionate cost to low-income households.

The lack of data and information on who was vulnerable was raised by all participants. This had implications for the imbalance of benefits and losses that come with transition. Proactive local engagement was seen as very important for addressing this in the Irish and UK contexts. Disproportionate burdens must be alleviated, whether through carbon border adjustment taxes to prevent impacts on competitiveness, employment and businesses, as in Denmark; fairer renewable energy support schemes in the UK, or direct funding supports in the Irish Midlands. Professor Anna Davies pointed out the need for data collection and analysis to create metrics that would establish whether a just transition was underway or not according to distributional and procedural justice.

<sup>2</sup> Carbon leakage is when production moves outside of a country to avoid its environmental regulations/taxes.

**Table 1: Features of European advisory bodies on climate change**

	<b>Danish Council on Climate Change (Klimarådet)</b>	<b>UK Climate Change Committee</b>	<b>Irish Climate Change Advisory Council</b>
<b>Composition</b>	Independent advisory body established under the Climate Change Act 2014.  9 members from academia, supported by a secretariat of 22 staff.	Independent advisory body established under the Climate Change Act 2008.  14 experts from academia, government, civil society and business sectors, supported by a secretariat of 35 staff.	Independent advisory body established under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. 11 members, 4 of whom are ex-officio members (members of representative bodies).  The role of the Just Transition Commissioner was established in November 2019 and is separate to the Council. See presentations by <b>Anna Davies</b> and the Just Transition Commissioner in <b>Session D.1.</b>
<b>Target</b>	Advise on how to achieve a 70% reduction in emissions by 2030 and net zero by 2050.	Advise on how to reach an 80% reduction on 1990 emissions levels by 2050, recently upgraded to net zero by 2050.  Will be advising that the 6th carbon budget between 2030-2037 should achieve an 80% reduction by 2035 rather than 2050.	Advise on how to reach 80% reduction on 2005 levels by 2050, upgraded to net zero by 2050 under the Climate Action Plan 2019.  The Just Transition Commissioner is to advise on how to justly transition the Midlands away from coal and peat as required by the Climate Action Plan 2019.
<b>Guiding Principles</b>	Climate goals shall be met in a cost-effective manner considering: competitiveness and business development, healthy public budgets, employment, maintaining welfare, and social balance. The most cost-effective and fair instrument was agreed to be a GHG tax across all sectors that will increase to €200 per tonne	Mandate of cost-effectiveness, assessed in terms of long-term impacts through a range of different lenses (regions, businesses workers, consumers, fuel poverty) so that the worst transitions are not left for future generations.  Also, in the context of Covid-19, and previous UK transitions not having been fair, the UK Citizens' Climate Assembly emphasises the importance of fairness and the need for it to be integrated into policy for policy to succeed	Mandate of cost-effectiveness. Fairness and just transition.  For the Just Transition Commissioner, no clear guiding definition of 'just transition' in legislation or policy, although ILO, UNFCC and NESCC guidelines were used in practice by the commissioner

**Group 3:****Group 3. A Just Water Transition****Lead Council:**

**Wim Van Gils**, SAR Minaraad, Flanders in conjunction with CADS, Catalonia

**General aim of the session:**

*Across Europe, climate change was having a major impact on the water cycle, varying from region to region and from sector to sector. Without adequate management of these impacts on water, the most vulnerable would be affected the most. To this end, the implementation of water policies (such as the Water Framework Directive–WFD) and adaptation measures were pivotal, however costly. Nevertheless, successful implementation of the WFD would lead to fairer and effective adaptation policies and therefore was worth the investment. In this session, options for member states to ensure a just water transition were to be explored, against the background of the Green Deal and the EU's recovery policy.*

**Chair:**

**Jan Verheeke**, Secretary of the Minaraad (Environment and Nature Council of Flanders).

**Key contributors:**

**Nihat Zal**, European Environmental Agency;  
**Stephanie Lyons**, OECD.

The European Green Deal called for the fulfilment of the Water Framework Directives in the transition. This session discussed how future planning, preparation, sharing burdens, action and working together in a systems approach were required for the just distribution of water resources, facing into an uncertain and climate-changed future. Systems-thinking was highlighted as being key to fitting together and developing an approach that addressed the complex range of issues that cause and shape water stress and accompanying injustices. The European Environment Agency (EEA) [State of the Environment Report 2020](#) showed that we have already reached a 'tipping point', according to Nihat Zal (European Environment Agency), and 'it is almost impossible' to keep on with business as usual. In this systemic approach to the transition from 'business as usual' to a low-carbon economy, we would need to address and prepare for the following challenges: growing urbanisation; population; migration; climate-change impacts; natural scarcity; natural capital, and technological improvements (but also the rebound effects of technical improvements where efficiency gains spur increased resource use). Other impacts were global shifts in economic and geopolitical sphere

that affected the sharing of resources, and more diverse values and lifestyles that affected consumption patterns.

European Union integration and co-operation in the low-carbon transition would have implications for water, said Nihat Zal, as it was not evenly distributed across the continent. Water quality in Europe was getting worse, and there was increasing stress on resources. Regulating large seasonal variations in freshwater resources was a 'challenge for EU co-operation' that would intensify with climate change. The differentiated impacts of climate change were already being felt, with severe drought in the spring and summer in southern Europe, and rising precipitation and floods in autumn and winter in northern Europe. However, drought was also affecting northern countries (such as Sweden in 2018). Coping with drought/deluge patterns in southern/northern Europe would require cross-border co-operation that would not only involve infrastructure but may also require addressing consumption patterns that contribute to drought and pollution. Nihat Zal gave the example of the watermelon, popular in Denmark but grown in Spain. The watermelon, a water-hungry crop, was grown in the summer. Spain increasingly suffered from summer droughts, which agricultural production methods intensified. Denmark's consumption patterns were contributing to Spain's droughts and difficulties in fulfilling the requirements of the Water Framework Directive. The importance of EU water diplomacy instruments to combat the externalisation of water use and food production to third countries was also raised in the Q&A. Measures had been developed in Australia for federal states to share water resources on the basis of equity between states and stakeholders such as indigenous groups. This approach could be looked to for the European context according to Stephanie Lyons (OECD).

Both speakers outlined that the benefits and burdens need to be shared adequately. These burdens were not only human, but should also be seen in terms of burdens on the environment, infrastructure and the economy. In terms of water abstraction, around 250,000 cubic hectares of water per year was needed to maintain socio-economic life in Europe, according to Nihat Zal. The use of this water was unequal. Agriculture was described by Nihat Zal as the 'main pressure' on water systems, followed by electricity, households and other sectors. The agriculture sector used water most when it was in shortest supply, during the spring and summer, and it was also a primary source of pollution.

Systems-thinking must also be used when allocating benefits and burdens. Water policy coherence measures should explicitly consider water equity considerations, according to Stephanie Lyons. One example of systems-thinking raised was developing policy coherence by aligning the Common Agricultural Policy with the Water Framework Directive. While agriculture was the 'main pressure' on water in Europe, according to Nihat Zal, it was also 'providing food security for the EU', a creator of 45 million jobs and made the EU 'a global leader in agricultural exports'. Agriculture could also be a source of positive contribution to water protection; for example, through holistic methods such as natural climate solutions, said Stephanie Lyons, as outlined in the July 2020 OECD report [Nature-based solutions for adapting to water-related climate risks](#). Another example was that, to cope with climate change, countries could build dams and reservoirs to store water for drinking, irrigation, transport and floods protection. However, this infrastructure was described by Nihat Zal as the main significant pressure on surface water bodies. Another example was water desalination as a response to water pressures; this had major impacts on the environment due to the use of fossil fuels in the process, and the release of brine into wetland and marine habitats.

Data gaps, and the need for further research and study, were raised throughout the session, particularly in terms of integrating water protection with the relatively new requirements of a just transition approach. Stephanie Lyons stated that there was a 'knowledge gap' on the state of current water resources and infrastructure which was a 'fundamental uncertainty in identifying investment needs', as outlined in the OECD's May 2020 report [Financing Water Supply, Sanitation and Flood Protection](#). It was known that there was a backlog on investment, but the specifics of how that affected people and the justice implications were not known. Broad assumptions could be made, however, that already vulnerable groups are, and will be, worst affected by insufficient investment in infrastructure and a lack of preparation. To inform a justice approach, data was needed on who was most vulnerable to water stress and climate change, and where, when and how they will be vulnerable. Improvements had been made under the Water Framework Directive, and it had recently been judged to be fit for purpose by the European Commission. However, a robust methodological approach must be developed to assess why exactly improvements have occurred, such as the decline in phosphate and nitrates in some member states. Data was broadly available on how regions are affected by pollution, water stress and climate change at a physiological level—

collected and analysed by the EEA. Data was also available on how much countries spend on water infrastructure—collected and analysed by the OECD and the European Commission.

Jan Verheeke, Secretary of the Minaraad (Environment and Nature Council of Flanders) raised the variety of 'justice' concepts that could arise in the context of water. Stephanie Lyons raised questions around what principles of a 'just transition' or 'leave no-one behind' might mean in the context of water. Trade-offs would occur in the transition, and an equity framework must be developed to fairly distribute benefits and burdens. The environmental principles of 'beneficiary pays' and 'polluter pays' in the Water Framework Directives could assist with this, but needed to be integrated with social and climate justice principles. The lack of data on who was vulnerable to climate change from a justice perspective, and how, hindered the development of social and climate justice indicators and metrics. Various conceptions of justice in this context were discussed in the session, including: access to essential basic services such as water and sanitation (the importance of which has been made clear by the pandemic); fair, transparent and accountable public spending; the human right to water; intergenerational justice implications of under-investment in water infrastructure; distributive justice in the development of financing mechanisms for water infrastructure; public consultation; structuring financing structures to reflect historical approaches, and community and social norms; and procedural justice and diplomacy in sharing water resources across Europe and third countries. Solutions offered included: policy coherence; design improvements; improved and increasing financing measures; more efficient water use; sustainable water abstraction limits that cap use; and requiring that water policy coherence measures should explicitly consider water equity.

## Session D: Levers to Drive a Just Transition

### Group 1:

Sustainable and Resilient Regions

#### Lead Council:

Dr Jeanne Moore, NESCC

#### General aim of the session:

*This session explored some of the key issues in regional development within a just transition framework. What policies and measures were effective in supporting regions to be sustainable and resilient, using a just transition approach? What institutions and supports structures were required at a national, regional and local level? A key Irish case study was the Midlands, part of the EU's Platform for Coal Regions in Transition. The aim of this session was to draw out lessons of work underway in the Midlands for the development of sustainable and resilient regions.*

#### Chair:

Dr Sinead O'Flanagan, Member of the National Economic and Social Council

#### Key contributors:

**Kieran Mulvey**, Just Transition Commissioner;  
**Rudiger Ahrend**, Head of Economic Analysis, Statistics and Multi-level Governance, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE);  
**Brendan O'Loughlin**, (CEO); and  
**Roisín Lennon**, (RDP Team Leader), Offaly Local Development Company;  
**Seamus Boland**, CEO, Irish Rural Link.

Much of the conference discussed just transition as a broader concept whose principles of fairness, justice and environmental concern can guide the transition to a low-carbon economy. In this session, however, speakers highlighted the immediate disproportionate impact facing the Irish Midlands. The region was heavily reliant on peat harvesting and peat-fired power production, which were to close in a 12-month period due to legal action, as opposed to the originally planned 10-year transition. This would also have an impact on surrounding businesses.

### Artistic Interlude

One Small Change

The One Small Change video, written and performed by the pupils of Cappabue National School, Bantry, West Cork, Ireland.

**One Small Change** is a rap song/video about the climate crisis made by children at a tiny Irish school in West Cork, which has been watched tens of thousands of times on YouTube. As well as the video going viral, the school was crowned the winner of the 2020 Schoolvision contest – a primary school version of the International Eurovision Song contest.

NESCC wishes to acknowledge with thanks the contributions of the pupils of Cappabue National School, and their teachers Norma Healy and Olive Creed.



## BOX 5:

### Responding to Transitions: Presentation by Rudiger Ahrend (OECD)

Regions could respond to a transition either through a compensation approach (defensive, reactive), or through a structural reorientation approach (active). Based on an analysis of previous transitions, the OECD recommended the latter.

A structural orientation approach meant:

- building regional resilience, e.g. upskill and reskill;
- public support & dialogue;
- sustainable investment (not quick fixes);
- jobs that fit affected workers and communities;
- a comprehensive approach that develops local jobs for those who have upskilled and retrained;
- a place-based approach that is more than merely compensation and early retirement for affected workers;
- anticipating change and taking early action;
- specific allocated resources for strategies that build from the strength of a place (not the latest fad);
- multi-layered governance that is linked with broader economic development strategies such as dialogue institutions (rather than relying on certain people knowing each other).

Irish Just Transition Commissioner Kieran Mulvey clarified that, while there was a broader discussion of low-carbon transition in the Programme for Government, focus must be kept on an immediate and targeted just transition response for the Midlands. This was repeated by Brendan O'Loughlin (Offaly Local Development Company) who stated that support has to go where the impacts are greatest (half of all jobs lost will be concentrated in east Offaly) and regional responses have to be 'translated into how we get to communities before they are completely forgotten and die a death unbeknownst to us all'. This call for urgency in the response to regions worst affected by transition in order 'to avoid higher costs and systemic risks later' was reiterated by Rudiger Ahrend (OECD). The OECD had examined the share of jobs at risk from the low-carbon transition and found that, from a national point of view, the losses are 'not that remarkable'. The regional impact, however, was 'substantial', even 'devastating'. The Covid-19 pandemic showed this differential impact in an accelerated time period. The negative impacts of the virus were again concentrated in Ireland's East and Midlands, the same areas predicted as facing the most negative impacts of the low-carbon transition.

A place-based, targeted focus on worst-affected regions was also important as it could lead to a just transition approach that recognises and works with local cultures and heritage. A strong sense of self-identity as a region could benefit the wider Midlands as they face this transition, according to Seamus Boland (Irish Rural Link). Irish Rural Link, Kieran Mulvey and Offaly Local Development Council had found that there was a rich local history built around the Bord na Móna communities. There were the ESB houses, the good jobs, and community cohesion. Brendan O'Loughlin noted that a coherent collective identity must come from the bottom up, building on current cultural identities that say 'we are people of the bog—bog men', with even a famous book titled *Bog Men Be Proud*. Past heritage and regional expertise was important as it could lead to new ideas built on old foundations, assist in promoting the region, and ensure that new companies are not simply thrown into the region without local resonance or connection, which Kieran Mulvey warned against. Seamus Boland noted that today's peatland rehabilitation and other plans for the bogs must bring the same value to the community in jobs, cohesion and quality of life. A particular recommendation from the commissioner was to make the region a central hub for renewable energy and climate through establishing a Peatlands/Climate Centre of Excellence. This was built on the ESB and Bord na Móna strategy of moving from peat into renewables.

## BOX 6:

### Ireland's Just Transition Commissioner

Kieran Mulvey was appointed in November 2019 to deal with the closure of semi-state-owned peat-fired power plants in the Irish Midlands within a 12-month period, and the phase-out of peat-harvesting. A 10-year transition to closure was originally planned. Key concerns were: protection of employment in the region, and that measures adopted by government would have local buy-in and engagement. The commissioner was tasked with consulting with local communities, local government, employers, trade unions, state agencies, Bord na Móna and the ESB.

The commissioner's interim report was published in April 2020 with 25 recommendations for where promised funding should be allocated. The commissioner's office was situated within Offaly County Council, with staff seconded through from the Department of Climate Action. Government had adopted the report and committed to an implementation plan through the Department. Full implementation was planned between 2021 and 2023.

#### Funding included:

- ESB contribution and ring-fenced carbon tax: €11m for local projects. As of December 2020, the fund has increased to €27.8m.
- €20m retrofitting project.
- €5m peatland rehabilitation, from EU. As of December 2020, an extra €108m has been committed.
- A portion of the €17.5bn EU Just Transition Fund under the Just Transition Mechanism which is yet to be allocated. To access this funding, a territorial just transition plan was being developed by the Midlands Regional Transition Team.

#### Key recommendations:

- Inclusion of East Galway, North Tipperary and Roscommon.
- Reconstitution of the Midlands Regional Transition Team.
- Whole-of-Midlands approach, building on community resilience and enterprise, supported by government. Focus needs to remain regional and targeted.
- Enormous interest in JTF, with 100 projects. Those not successful must be engaged with and further funding made available.
- A Climate Change Centre of Excellence in the Midlands to make the region a hub of activity around renewables and low-carbon jobs. Recommends not demolishing existing infrastructure such as the Lough Ree power stations, but redeploying them for research and experimentation, due to the large interest in green enterprise in the region.
- Creation of an environment in the Midlands where people can socialise, work and live in their own region with good, sustainable long-term jobs and regional resilience.

There were many positives to draw on in Ireland for a just transition, not least the innovative and resilient response to the pandemic, as Kieran Mulvey emphasised. Offaly Local Development Company (Offaly LDC), Dr Sinéad O' Flanagan, Seamus Boland and Kieran Mulvey all noted how committed, dynamic and interested people in the Midlands were to harnessing opportunities in the transition. Regional strengths mentioned by the speakers included local knowledge and expertise, proud history and heritage, strong local government, enterprise and community development bodies, greenways, walkways, natural habitats, peatlands, forestry, canals, waterways and the Shannon river intersecting the region. Due to the phase-out of peat harvesting, communities in the Midlands were looking anew at wetlands and bogs as assets, not 'wastelands' as they were commonly understood.

*With the Quality of Life, Place and Experience* project, Offaly LDC were reframing the bogs as a positive resource and 'unencumbered landscape of beauty' that communities can develop, rather than as a 'black hole', as Brendan O'Loughlin stated. Seamus Boland noted that there had already been a painful transition for rural communities due to the 2011 ban on turf-cutting, brought in under the European Habitats Directive. Hard work was done by Irish Rural Link to explain the need to move away from turf-cutting and develop new, positive visions of what the peatlands can offer communities. Cultivating and rehabilitating wetland and peatlands could bring greenhouse-gas emissions out of the atmosphere and into the soil, while also boosting biodiversity. This positive framing underpinned the bottom-up Community Wetlands Forum, which brought together 21 members and sites where local communities are seeking to protect and realise the potential of their local bogland sites. Examples were given of the Abbeyleix Bog Walk, Clara Bog and LIFE Projects. There was potential for local people to secure good careers in this area, as international studies and internships are already underway in a number of sites. Such co-benefits in a transition were also noted by Rudiger Ahrend.

However, speakers noted that overly stringent restrictions and lack of support were confining the ability of Midlands communities to give effect to new, entrepreneurial ideas. The just transition required the development of 'a new rulebook' in Europe and Ireland, the commissioner said, that could help, not hinder a region when it was seeking to transition. The Covid-19 pandemic and climate change had dramatically upended a lot of the old economic metrics and traditional restrictions on support mechanisms such as state aid. For Kieran Mulvey, 'Just transition in its broadest sense should be facilitated not restrained by outdated rules that applied

to another economic era that was only 12 months ago'. Restraints on the work and dynamism of communities were also raised by Seamus Boland in relation to the lack of support for communities seeking to develop alternative jobs and community benefit in peatland rehabilitation, such as in Clara Bog. A number of recommendations from the OECD's Rudiger Ahrend could assist in developing this 'new rulebook' response, such as developing broader economic strategies that integrate local work into a national 'structural reorientation' response. This local/national learning was also echoed by Róisín Lennon (Offaly LDC).

For a just transition approach, 'meaningful engagement and ownership for communities' must be created, said Brendan O'Loughlin, a point echoed by all speakers. Social cohesion, networking structures, dialogue, partnership, and a sense of trust set the playing field for such engagement, and funding must be provided to support what the community proposed after this process. The following means of ensuring community ownership over a transition were highlighted: meaningful dialogue and multi-layered governance, engagement from local, regional and national agencies, bringing in community leaders, facilitating the 'clustering' of support networks, funding support, upskilling and retraining in areas such as community work, peat rehabilitation, enterprise and biodiversity. A positive and locally popular example of bottom-up participatory process in a just transition was the *Quality of Life, Place and Experience* project being run by Offaly LDC, funded by the Government's Just Transition Fund.

A key issue raised was the need for funding with specific regional supports and measures. Conclusions from the session were that funding must:

- be targeted at affected regions (East Offaly was the worst affected);
- be dedicated (not simply a renaming of existing funding);
- be long-term and multi-annual;
- be easy to access for different actors (accompanied by training for community groups in how to access funds, for example);
- support skills and potential in the region;
- create a comprehensive package that offers jobs to those that have upskilled and re-trained; and
- be free from unnecessary constraints that hinder the entrepreneurialism and dynamism of communities.

**Group 2:****State-citizen Interplay for Achieving a Just Transition: Lessons from the Netherlands****Lead Council:**

**Dr Luc Boot**, Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli)

**General aim of the session:**

*The Netherlands was striving to achieve a just transition towards a sustainable society. What role did citizens and citizen initiatives play in achieving this objective and how did this affect the interplay between government, social partners (employers/employees), civil society organisations and individuals/groups of citizens? What lessons could be learnt from the Dutch experience? The session aimed to discuss: balancing individual interests with collective solutions; dealing with different value orientations in society; leadership vs autonomy and the role of deliberative democracy; confronting scientific knowledge with emotions and practical experience; prejudice and polarisation as obstacles for sustainability.*

**Chair:**

**Dr Luc Boot**, Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Rli)

**Key contributors:**

**Annemieke Nijhof**, on behalf of Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure;  
**Ayolt de Groot/Menno Ottens**, Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy;  
**Professor Tamara Metze**, Wageningen University and Research;  
**Evan van Genuchten**, Youth Climate Movement.

It was roundly agreed in this session that the low-carbon transition must be just, and this soon turned to discussions—as Professor Tamara Metze (Wageningen University and Research) outlined—of what constitutes ‘just’, justice for whom, and justice according to whom. Concepts of ‘justice’ and ‘fairness’ were discussed as being quite new to climate policy frameworks. The lack of a justice framing and institutional structures to air concerns could lead to heated and emotional debates. According to Annemieke Nijhof (Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure), climate action was so focused on environmental science, engineering and physics that:

*...we tend to move away from emotion, which is considered secondary to these more cerebral pursuits. However, emotion is energy and [climate policymakers] have to build a bridge and overcome our discomfort with emotion. If you find out why someone is angry you will uncover a whole host of rich issues that we can move forward from. It is a rich source of change. Without it we can't make choices that will benefit the world.*

When conflicts arose in climate policy and energy production, those disrupting climate action were largely considered an ‘annoyance’, according to Professor Tamara Metze, rather than legitimate stakeholders raising legitimate concerns. In the Netherlands, renewable energy had been met with opposition from local rural groups. By interviewing and listening to these groups, Professor Metze’s research had found that rural opposition to renewables was due to local people feeling they were not being effectively involved in the process of deliberating policy choices of why renewables are being placed primarily in rural areas; they were kept out on the edges of policy and didn’t really ‘have a voice’. This lack of public participation was leading to rural areas enduring disproportionate suffering such as ‘loss of scenery, environmental values, even air pollution’, to service the energy needs of cities and reaching its targets. Rather than ‘annoyances’, these energy conflicts, Professor Metze argued, were really about preventable injustices that had not yet found space to be expressed in current frames of climate policy and debate, as justice issues were ‘not an overt topic on the agenda’ in the Netherlands. The ‘difficulties for regions were widely understood, but people did not think about those in terms of justice or injustice’.

**BOX 7:****Tips for Meaningful Youth Participation:**  
Presentation by Evan van Genuchten, Youth Climate Movement

Involve young people in high-level organisations in an early, regular and meaningful manner, and make provision for the fact that young people do not have the same resources.

Give young people the tools to participate effectively, such as through financial resources, time, knowledge and networks.

Make use of the very organised youth networks but understand that these will be organised in ways that are different from those of older people.

Be truly interested in, and support, what young people want to spend their time and resources on. Asking for input from young people does not mean you can decide on their agenda.

Value young people and their strength to create original ideas, but this does not mean using young people as a ‘hip and happening’ photo op for campaign purposes.

A first step to creating meaningful opportunities is to start the participation process early on, and not the week before a big event, for example.

Be clear about why you want to involve young people, and the appropriate age and interest group.

As Evan van Genuchten (Youth Climate Movement) said, participation was important for all groups and it was ‘not that difficult to just start talking with people’. The need to listen, and develop the capacity and make the time to incorporate viewpoints and concerns that did not fit the status quo was seen as a primary requirement raised by all speakers, as expressed by Annemieke Nijhof: ‘Be aware that if you fail to take that time, you will lose the people and, in the end, the political legitimacy for sustainability’. There was a general acceptance that the transition to a low-carbon economy must be fair, Professor Metze said, but not general agreement or discussion on what constitutes fair or ‘fairness according to whom?’. There was a need to develop procedures that give voice and practical effect to public conceptions of distributional, procedural and recognition justice.

As highlighted in the Q&A, a justice framework could assist in legitimising concerns and give space to questions of power, democracy in society and inclusion that fundamentally shaped effective climate action and a just transition. The (environmental) cost-benefit analyses generally used by researchers were not enough. Failing to take the time to incorporate and value concerns could also lead to climate policies that have unintended unjust consequences. For example, Professor Metze stated that the vulnerabilities of citizens from lower socio-economic backgrounds were not acknowledged in decision-making or campaigns on energy policy, and there were no procedures for their meaningful participation. As they could not co-design the definition of ‘energy justice’, energy policy was leading to distributional and procedural injustices such as these groups being unable to ‘financially participate in energy co-operatives/own solar’ and ‘they suffer most from raising energy prices’. These power dynamics must be examined, the need to listen must be practised, and the urge to stigmatise those who disagree must be avoided by all those involved, environmental advocates included. As Annemieke Nijhof said:

*How often, as rational professionals, do we not automatically believe that people are unwilling to adopt sustainable habits? How often do we find ourselves trying to convince people that we are right? Do we take residents’ emotions seriously enough? ‘Let me ask again’ is a much better approach than ‘let me explain again’. What are residents thinking, picturing and feeling when discussing a wind farm, for example? Asking them allows you to drill down to the underlying values and concerns, and that’s where you can engage.*

## BOX 8:

### What Constitutes Meaningful Public Participation in Rural-Urban Energy Disputes? Lessons from the Netherlands:

Presentation by Tamara Metze, Wageningen University

More inclusive and transparent formal decision-making. This means more information for town council members, and a role for them in agenda-setting as representatives of citizens.

Improve regional planning and cultivate more 'win-win' discussions between cities and town where questions of equality can come to the fore.

A clearer definition of the rights of citizens in participatory processes. Advice, co-creation or simply a financial benefit? Provision of resources to enable citizen participation, particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Make visible (perceived) energy (in)justices through maps that connect data on already 'burdened' areas or groups in society.

Deliberative polling and face-to-face dialogues to uncover and understand what people experience as unjust or unfair, and what they consider fair and just.

Facilitate local and regional initiatives that deepen trust, commitment and shared understanding.

Often intergenerational justice was raised as a need to take faster climate action, yet what that justice might mean was not as widely discussed. For Evan van Genuchten (Youth Climate Movement), part of a just transition approach was taking into consideration how current policies affect future generations. For example, the current post-Covid-19 economic recovery plan was borrowing money that future generations would have to pay for. There was a duty to ensure that investments contribute to long-term goals such as climate action, as opposed to short-term goals. For Annemieke Nijhof, young people's participation in decision-making forums symbolised hope, ambition and time. By virtue of being so future-orientated, as Evan van Genuchten stated, 'decisions made today will impact on our tomorrow'. Young people could have a 'boundary-breaking' long-term perspective. Thirty years to a 2050 net zero economy was half a lifetime, but it was also when younger people might just be entering their prime.

### Group 3:

#### Finance for a Just Transition

##### Lead Council:

**Dr Nathalie Boucquey**, Federal Council for Sustainable Development of Belgium (FRDO-CFDD) and **Hannah Janetschek**, German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE).

##### General aim of the session:

*To assure that no-one was left behind in the green transition, the Just Transition Mechanism of the EU Green Deal would provide financial support to help workers and regions most affected by the transition. The development of the 'do no significant harm' principle (DNSH) in the EU Sustainable Finance Strategy was of major importance for just transition as well. Under this principle, for example, 'green' financing was reserved to enterprises that comply with social safeguards. Just transition should reflect a balance of the environmental and social dimensions of sustainable development. This was a controversial issue. Imbalance risks were identified in the use of the Just Transition Fund and of the EU Taxonomy for green financial products. This session considered those risks and discussed how policymakers could address them. In particular, the session was focused on two instruments to implement the DNSH principle: a possible social taxonomy<sup>3</sup>, and due diligence to protect the environment and to safeguard social rights.*

##### Chair:

**Dr Nathalie Boucquey**, Federal Council for Sustainable Development of Belgium (FRDO-CFDD)

**Dr Hannah Janetschek**, German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE)

##### Key contributors:

**Rebekka Popp**, E3G (Berlin)

**Prof. Robert McCorquodale**, University of Nottingham;

**Myriam Vander Stichele**, Senior Researcher at the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporation, SOMO

In Session D.3: Finance for a Just Transition, the power of law and human rights to provide sound frameworks and parameters for justice, as well as tracking accountability, was highlighted. It was recommended that governments and actors foreground inclusivity and the meaningful participation of those worst affected, as well as the principles outlined in signed agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, the Silesia Declaration and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Placing such work on a statutory footing was also recommended.

Finance could be a significant lever in harnessing private and public investment for the low-carbon transition. However, currently, financial decision-making was based solely on financial concerns. Yet investment decisions could have major social, physical, environmental and even spiritual costs. Professor Robert McCorquodale (University of Nottingham) gave the example of the recent destruction of sacred Indigenous Australian sites in Juukan Gorge in Western Australia. These sites, estimated to be 46,000 years old, were demolished by the mining company Rio Tinto to make way for an iron ore mine worth \$135m. The fact that this land was considered priceless does not appear anywhere in the financial records of the company. The interest of the Indigenous Australian peoples was simply not rated. Professor McCorquodale proposed that requiring mandatory corporate environmental and human rights due diligence would at least have forced the company in this instance to think of the wider impacts of their investments. Due diligence would turn such costs into a business risk (such as a reputational risk) even if it was not financial.

<sup>3</sup>Under the EU Taxonomy Regulation, the EU Taxonomy is a classification tool aimed at investors, companies and financial institutions to define the environmental performance of economic activities across a wide range of industries, and sets requirements that corporate activities must meet to be considered sustainable.

## BOX 9:

### Just Transition in the European Union: Presentation by Rebekkah Popp (E3G)

The aims of the Just Transition Fund were to support regions worst affected by the phase-out of high-carbon activity such as coal and steel production. It would provide targeted support of €150bn in the next seven years to affected regions, primarily in support of reskilling and the creation of new jobs.

The fund was outlined as being part of the European Green Deal, the new growth strategy of the European Commission, which set out a wider agenda that integrates social and environmental justice in future EU investment. The fund was a key piece in climate negotiations as it was introduced as an attempt to convince more reluctant countries to commit to an EU-wide target of climate neutrality by 2050 and a 2030 target of a 60 per cent cut in emissions by 2030. Poland, Germany and Romania are to receive the largest amounts so far.

#### The Fund was guided by three pillars:

- Just Transition Fund: direct grants.
- InvestEU Scheme: aims to leverage private investment.
- EIB public-sector loan facility: aims to mobilise public investment.

It was not clear yet how the Next Generation EU Recovery Plan and the Recovery and Resilience Facilities would be aligned with regional territorial just transition plans.

#### Positives

- Providing transition support beyond the coal sector to industrial regions (such as the steel industry in Taranto, southwest Italy).
- Clear exclusion criteria against coal and nuclear, though loophole remains for gas.
- Member states would have to develop regional 'territorial just transition plans' to access funding that outline worker and social support, diversification, land restoration, etc. This was initiating debates and planning processes that were previously lacking, and set up clear process that stakeholders (civil society, local authorities, etc) can engage with.

#### Negatives

- Funding not tied to conditions that commit countries to a low-carbon transition, such as full coal phase-out or achievement of 2030 targets. It was not incentivising climate action. It was proposed that 50 per cent goes towards achieving climate neutrality by 2050, but this would affect Poland only.
- Risk that money would be invested in natural gas, driven by European Parliament support for these investments.
- There was no guaranteed access for local authorities to the fund, or for participation in its development. However, the Just Transition Fund was regulated by the same rules as the EU Cohesion Fund, which enshrines **the partnership principle**. Germany and Poland had delegated strongly to regional government.

All estimates for climate policy showed that public-sector sources of funding would not be adequate for the challenge of meeting the Paris Agreement targets, according to Dr Nathalie Boucquey (Federal Council for Sustainable Development of Belgium (FRDO-CFDD)). Therefore, since 2018, the EU had been promoting private-sector investment in sustainable development, bringing into force the framework Taxonomy Regulation in July 2020. Under the European Green Deal, the European Commission had also proposed further new financial instruments to achieve the aims of the Communication. However, strong legal definitions were required to ensure that this investment did not contribute to 'greenwashing'<sup>4</sup>, or indeed 'redwashing'<sup>5</sup>. Academics and experts have been working on developing taxonomies that can ensure financial investments are environmentally, socially and human rights-compliant. Dr Nathalie Boucquey and Dr Hannah Janetschek (German Council for Sustainable Development (RNE)) had been collaborating on this topic for a number of years. Under the current Taxonomy Regulation, in order to be considered a 'green' investment, a financial product must contribute to at least one of six categories, including climate-change mitigation and the protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems. There were a number of current loopholes in the legislation that left it in danger of encouraging 'greenwashing', for example; definitions for each category were still undergoing an unclear and non-transparent process. The taxonomy also outlined what was a good investment, but not what was a bad one. Myriam Vander Stichele (SOMO) called for a 'brown taxonomy' that listed what type of investments contribute to climate change and environmental degradation.

A major insight from the session was that often there was a misalignment between social and green objectives in finance. Myriam Vander Stichele noted the need to develop integrated green and social 'do no significant harm' objectives to guide institutional and private investment to ensure it was consistent with the objectives of the European Green Deal, and not made at the expense of social and workers' rights. The EU had not developed a social taxonomy alongside the green taxonomy, and it had not required that green investments avoid undermining social rights. To avoid unintended consequences, Myriam Vander Stichele stated that definitions of investment activity should be underpinned by strong foundational documentation such as OECD guidelines on business, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the ILO Labour Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At the least, a delegated act was required to work out the principles that underpin minimum safeguards.

The importance of strong criteria in defining what constitutes a 'just transition' approach to financial investment was reiterated by Professor McCorquodale. Human-rights based regulations, definitions, processes and safeguards in financial-sector investment were crucial to securing trust, interest and rewards for good institutional behaviour. According to the report, **Study on due diligence requirements through the supply chain**, conducted by Professor McCorquodale and colleagues for the European Commission in January 2020, these indicators were being called for by businesses, as they wanted a 'level playing field'. In a survey of 631 respondents, 80 per cent of companies stated that they wanted legal certainty on human rights and environmental due-diligence obligation as it would enhance competition and regulation, and would ensure that leaders in this were 'not disadvantaged by those using child labour' or other cheaper short-cuts.

<sup>4</sup> Greenwashing is the process of conveying a false impression or providing misleading information about how a company's products are more environmentally sound. Greenwashing is considered an unsubstantiated claim to deceive consumers into believing that a company's products are environmentally friendly.

<sup>5</sup> Redwashing is the practice of a company presenting itself as progressive and concerned about social equality and justice, in order to use this perception for public relations or economic gain.

Strong criteria throughout funding processes were also crucial to ensuring that government-mobilised financial supports boosted social rights and climate neutrality. For example, there was great potential to use the grants and public and private finance levers under the Just Transition Mechanism 'to deliver a method programme for a socially just transition', according to Rebekkah Popp. However, these supports were not conditional on the achievement of climate targets and there was a risk that the funding would go towards supporting 'status quo' projects such as **natural gas**, rather than providing a 'brown to green' transition<sup>6</sup>. For this reason, Rebekkah Popp questioned 'whether the Just Transition Fund could support the just transition to climate neutrality or whether it might only cement the status quo and even hinder a just transition?' There were still opportunities to shape investments, however, as the Just Transition Fund had not yet been adopted<sup>7</sup>. For those calling for greater commitment to just transition and climate justice principles, key spaces of influence included the territorial just transition plans of member states which will shape the funding priorities at local level. There were also EU discussions on the design of the fund taking place between the European Council, Commission and Parliament. This was an opportunity to shape climate conditionality to ensure that investments in fossil gas, for example, were excluded.

A number of positive developments were underway on financing a just transition, and previously socially and environmentally negative priorities were being reorientated. For example, the European Green Deal explicitly connected social and environmental goals. There was a possibility that the new commissioner will add social taxonomy to the Regulation. The new European Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability and Capital Markets, Mairéad McGuinness, has expressed support for this.

The Just Transition Fund had been agreed, and would be directing €17.5bn of direct EU support to those EU regions worst affected by the phase-out of coal and peat. To access this funding, worst-affected member states were required to submit territorial just transition plans outlining where and how support will be delivered. In terms of private and public finance on a wider level, the EU High Level Group on Sustainable Finance had prepared a First Action Plan on Sustainable Finance with the European Commission, which advises on a taxonomy to promote social rights and environmental protections in EU investments. Finally, there was the possibility of a mandatory due-diligence framework being developed at UN level to guide financial investment.

<sup>6</sup> This is when high carbon jobs are replaced by jobs in the low-carbon economy.

<sup>7</sup> As of December 11 2020, a provisional agreement on the Just Transition Fund has been reached with EU member states.

## Day 3 – Thursday, 29 October 2020

### Artistic Interlude: 'Tended' by Laura Woulfe

Winner of the 2020 Irish Writers' Centre Writing for a Change Flash Fiction Competition (Under 30s English Language Session). Organised in partnership with the National Botanic Gardens and Channel Magazine.



### 'Tended' by Laura Woulfe

Like you, as I grew I began to notice something strange about the world around me. A strangeness that showed itself as grumbling threats to the order of things. Like growing up and getting a place of your own, of being able to get a steady job. Things everyone was supposed to be able to do. I know you felt these threats too. I know some of you can't even get enough nutrients from the soil because someone else took more than their fair share. I feel you.

I sometimes wonder why people keep saying that things are changing. These changes started long before I took my first breath. Things have already changed. To me there are two worlds, one imaginary and one real. One that I thought existed, one that maybe used to exist but doesn't anymore, and this world that I'm actually in but is in danger of giving up. I get it, Sometimes I feel like giving up too.

In this new strange world, we're expected to last longer. I know you feel the pressure to bloom earlier because it's warmer, and you're expected to hang on to your leaves longer because it's warmer. It sometimes feels like it's hotting up for me too; expected to do it all, have a great job and a family. Keep going, longer and longer, until I'm 66 because I can't afford a pension, there's pressure on me too.

It feels like we still have to prove ourselves sometimes, you and me. To give this society, this city, this world everything just to feel worthy of it, even though it's crumbling, even though it's not giving us what we need in return. You do so much already just by being, you clean the air we breathe but that's not enough. We want to eat you, chop you up and turn you into something more useful. To take the pretty ones inside to look nice. To cut you down and burn you because you're taking up too much space. Maybe you could tell me if your roots have eyes, how many human heads you can see down there, buried in the sand.

## Session E: Participatory Processes for a Fair & Inclusive Transition

### What role for Commissions, Councils & Social Dialogue?

#### Live input from Councils and multi-stakeholder bodies:

**Peter Schmidt**, President, EESC-SDO;  
**Arnau Queralt-Bassa**, Chairman, EEAC Network;  
**Luke Murphy**, Head of the Environmental Justice Commission, IPPR;  
**Elif Gündüzyeli**, Senior Coal Policy Coordinator, CAN Europe

The key takeaway from the session was the need to co-design the transition, as Arnau Queralt-Bassa (Chairman, EEAC Network) said: 'We must ensure that we are talking with people, not above or about them'. As not everyone would benefit from the low-carbon transition, we needed to ensure that those affected by this vision of a low-carbon future are truly heard. Co-design was important not only for reasons of avoiding delay or blocking by the public, according to Luke Murphy (IPPR), but because it would lead to a faster, more holistic, better-designed transition. Greater social involvement and dialogue was 'not a barrier but a pre-requisite' to a faster transition and to avoid greater injustices.

Definitions of 'just' and 'transition' also required bottom-up local engagement, noted Elif Gündüzyeli (CAN Europe), as this could help define who the affected communities are. Three groups were affected in a just transition: those affected by rapid decarbonisation; those whose livelihoods are affected by climate change (such as beekeepers), and communities affected by high-carbon industrial activities and past injustices such as the loss of lands and homes due to open-cast mining.

## BOX 10:

### Four Learnings from the UK Citizen's Assembly on Climate Change: Presentation by Luke Murphy, IPPR

- Importance of developing a positive vision with stakeholders to move away from the status quo.
- Must be meaningful co-development and co-design of vision and strategy with the local communities, local government and workers affected.
- Substantial funding was required, but funding without co-design and engagement was not a sufficient condition for a just transition.
- Institutions to bring together stakeholders to deliver a government priority are important. Examples include Scotland's Just Transition Commission and Germany's Coal-Exit Commission.

These institutions must be inclusive, and incorporate all partners, including historically marginalised communities. They also must be meaningful, and there must be an avenue for recommendations to lead to change. Deliberation for deliberation's sake can lead to apathy.

Throughout the session, it became clear that civil society played a key role in bringing together communities and developing means to help them discuss and voice their anxieties about the transition. Examples included the citizen juries on climate change being run by the IPPR's UK Environmental Justice Commission, the worker-led movement *Iron and Earth* which facilitates just transition dialogue around the Canadian tar sands, and eNGOs monitoring EU-funded biomass projects in Slovakia. These 'just transition' discussions were leading to allies in local communities and trade unions at international, national and local level. The German Coal-Exit Commission to phase out lignite was given by Luke Murphy as a positive example of a just transition dialogue process. The Commission dialogue process was now being repeated in the Czech Republic and Poland, and CAN Europe recognised the importance of national and locally based social campaigners.

The EEAC was discussed as having an important role in joint dialogue and ensuring it was inclusive, particularly of young people. Arnau Queralt-Bassa noted that the very function of Sustainable Development Councils was to build common solutions to complex, long-term issues from the ground up, providing advice and a political sounding board for governments and parliaments. Peter Schmidt (president, EESC-SDO) also drew attention to the role of the Multi Stakeholder Platform that involved civil society and led to the European Green Deal, and the European Economic Stakeholder Platform which involved a range of local and national stakeholders in the circular economy to educate the Commission and politicians.

Much of the progress so far in decarbonising economies, particularly in the UK, had been achieved through the power system. Luke Murphy pointed out that this has been done 'in the background', but a much more difficult transition lay ahead that would 'affect every part of our lives'. For Peter Schmidt, there was a need to move away from a neoliberal economy to a 'wellbeing economy' that made the European Green Deal a 'green and social' deal, giving hope that there 'was the possibility of alternatives' as opposed to the view that current frameworks were 'set in stone'.

**Artistic Interlude:**

'Caoineadh na Fáinleoige' le Tegan Forde  
'The Swallow's Lament' by Tegan Forde

Winner of the 2020 Irish Writers' Centre Writing for a Change Flash Fiction Competition (Under 30s Irish Language Session). Organised in partnership with the National Botanic Gardens and Channel Magazine.

**'Caoineadh na Fáinleoige' Le Tegan Forde**

Leathnaím mo sciatháin ag breacadh an lae, mo ghuth beoga ag canadh geantraí mo chroí éadrom. Is barróg teochroíoch é chéad dealramh na gréine, ag adhnann mo chlúmh ildáthach go lasánta. Lonraím go misniúil in aghaidh mo nead lom, ar nós bogha báistí ag péinteáil an spéir liath ina dhiadh an stoirm.

Tá chéadchhosulachtaí an fhómhair faoi lán seoil thart timpeall orm. "Go n-éirí do bhóthar leat", a ghiógaim don duilleog bhuí atá ag fiodrinne síos agus síos os mo chomhair amach, réidh chun suan an gheimhridh a fáiltiú faoi dheireadh. Fágaim slán sollúnta le mo sheanchara, an dair neartmhar sin a thug foscadh dom ó ndiardain gach stoirm a rug orainn I mbliana. Chrochaim mo seolta agus buailim an bhóthar ar m'aistear ó dheas.

Tá an dúiche ag nochtadh os comhair mo shúil. Tá sí loiscthe le gaoith agus le grian: mo ghairdín pharthais bocht. Buaileann an boladh dóite mé go tréan agus líonann mo shúile le deora. Tagaim chun talún le croí brúite. Feicim mo chairde go léir, mo chairde álainn, gleoite, scaptha timpeall an nua-ifreann seo, gan buaileadh ar bith ina sciatháin spadánta. Tá an flóra dóite spallta leis an tart. Tá brón orm, a cabhlacha bochta, níl rud ar bith agam daoibh ach na deora atá á síleadh le mo ghrua. Is suarach an eirigéis iad ach geallaim go mbeannfaidh siad bhur súile traochta le codladh sámh, síor. Slán a chairde, go bhfeicfidh mé arís sibh, I néal na spéire sa todhcaí.

Fágaim m'aithbhaile léirscriosta lán le bhrón áibhéalta. Choimeadann an dóchas mé san aer: An dóchas go bhfuil an dair neartmhar ag fanacht orm in Eirinn. Eitlím ar dólámh, gan eatramh ar bith ón bpian. Mothaím an ceo ar mo dhroim; Tá mé beagnach ann. Déanaim socthumadh trí na scamail reatha ar thóir mo nead sábháilte. Ach níl sí ann...Nó an dair. Tá innealraí móra millteannacha ag gabháil timpeall in ár áit. Géilleann mo sciatháin lag. Titim síos agus síos. Tá an solas ag éalú uaim, 's tá sé ag éirí dorcha anois. Cloisim bíogail breá mo chairde ag canadh dom. Feicfidh mé sibh go luath. Dúnaim mo shúile agus cuireann an seoithín seó suaimhneach mé ar bhóthar m'aistear deireannach, thuas go haoibhneas na bhflaitheas.

"Suaimhneas síoraí dá anaim" a deir na ndaoine sin a mharaigh mé, an fháinleog dheireanach a chanfadh port na maidine go bog binn ag fáinne geal an lae.

**'The Swallow's Lament' by Tegan Forde**

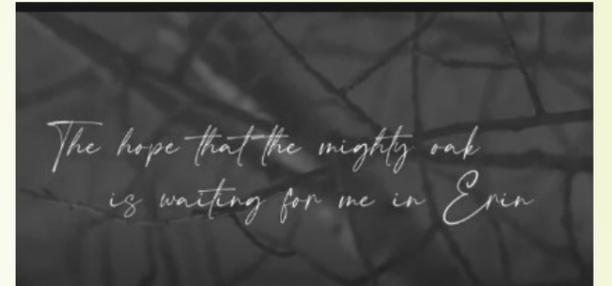
I spread my wings at the break of day, my lively voice singing the song of my light heart. The first gleams of sunlight are a warm-hearted embrace; they set my iridescent feathers alight so brightly. I boldly shine against my bare nest, like a rainbow painting the grey sky after the storm.

The first touches of autumn are in full play around me. "Fare thee well," I chirp to the yellow leaf that pirouettes downwards and downwards before me, ready to greet the winter slumber at last. I bid a solemn farewell to my old friend, that mighty oak that sheltered me from the eye of every storm that grasped us this year. I set sail and hit the road for my journey south.

The landscape unfolds before me. It is scorched by the wind and sun: my poor earthly paradise. The smell of burning strikes me and fills my eyes with tears. I drop to the earth with an aching heart. I see my friends, my lovely, sweet friends, scattered around this hell without a flutter in their lifeless wings. The blackened flora is parched with the thirst. I am awfully sorry, you poor creatures, I have nothing to give but the tears that I shed. They are a poor gift but I promise they will bless your tired eyes with eternal sleep. Farewell friends, until we meet again in the gentle clouds above.

I flee my desolate home full of painful grief. Hope keeps me in the sky: the hope that the mighty oak is waiting for me in Erin. I fly, never resting, never taking respite from the pain. I feel the mist on my back; I am almost there. I dive through the misty cloud looking for my safe old nest, but she is not there, nor the oak. Great big machines are milling around in our place. My weak wings give way at the sight. Downwards and downwards I fall. The light is leaving me now, and it is getting so very dark. I hear the wonderful chirps of my friends sing to me. I will see you all so soon. I close my eyes and the peaceful lullaby guides me on my final journey to the blissful skies above.

"May she rest in peace," say those who killed me, the last swallow who would sing a morning song so softly and sweetly at the dawning of the day.



'Caoineadh na Fáinleoige' le Tegan Forde

## Session F: What Next for Just Transition Mission, Process & Practice in the context of Covid-19?

### Introduction:

Dr Larry O'Connell, NESC

Address by the President of Ireland,  
Mr Michael D. Higgins



The President's speech included high praise for NESC's recent report and foundation for the 28th EEAC Annual Conference: *Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland* (March 2020). The President praised the valuable analysis of the efficient development of the economy alongside a commitment to achieve equality and social justice, the commitment to enormous, dedicated research from multiple sources, and the reinvigoration of support for public investment. The President described NESC's report as equivalent in significance to the seminal Whitaker Report, which set out influential guiding principles and an agenda for Ireland's transformative First Programme for Economic Expansion 1958 to 1963—a programme that lifted much of Ireland out of poverty into economic development.

*The third section of the NESC report draws on international case studies, setting out potential exemplars of the 'just transition' policy approach. It would be a tragedy, I repeat, if the pressure of contemporary events resulted in this valuable contribution being overlooked, as the challenges identified by the report will endure beyond the current crisis. The Council has identified recommendations which will help Ireland address these, while also embracing the significant opportunities that will arise. Studying transition, in the particular manner that the Council has done, is thus relevant to the crisis, its aftermath and our recovery.*

The President noted how important it was to have such a conference, a meeting of European minds and a clear framing for the EU and Ireland as we emerged from the pandemic:

*It is difficult to overstate the importance of this conference, given that it is taking place as we continue to deal with a pandemic that is having such devastating personal, social and economic consequences.*

*Your conference represents the taking of a unique opportunity to engage, in terms of adequacy and courage, with the theory, empirical research, policy and practice relating to one of the most critical challenges in contemporary public policy: how are we to ensure, within principles of inclusivity, that we move towards a net-zero economy and society across Europe, towards such a transformation as will result in regenerated soils, protected biodiversity and oceans, and a thriving circular economy—adjustments, all of which are so urgently necessary if we are to avoid ecological catastrophe.*

*... After the narrowly national reactions in too many instances to the onslaught of Covid-19, it is important now to shape a European-wide identity cognisant of the interwoven tapestry of global connection on which our societies and economies depend, and through which our choices affect lives outside Europe.*

While calling for a wider use of just transition principles in all economic and social transitions, the President also drew attention to the roots of the concept in the trade union movement response to previous unjust transitions:

*'Just transition' addresses this concern [of previous unjust transitions] by promoting sustainable actions to help workers in a transition, by ensuring workers' voices are part and parcel of any conversion. Uniting the great and urgent projects of social and climate justice by means of a just transition necessitates, for example, that we comply with demands for fairness for coalminers and peat-extraction workers in coal- and peat-dependent, underdeveloped regions who lack employment opportunities beyond coal and peat; fairness for farmers who will be required to change practices for the protection of climate and natural systems; fairness for workers in emerging economies who demand their share of the so-called 'industrialisation dividend'; fairness for those having to abandon their homes as sea levels rise and threaten coastal regions and islands as a consequence of climate change; fairness for those populations impacted by air pollution and broader environmental impacts of fossil-fuel use. The challenge is to produce policy measures which enable workers and sectors to be the arrow of change rather than the battered target of random initiatives.*

### Panel discussion:

Dr Patrick Bresnihan, Maynooth University;  
Alice Charles, World Economic Forum;  
Prof. Raphael J Heffron, University of Dundee;  
Dr Edouard Morena, University of London;  
Sandrine Dixson-Declève, The Club of Rome

In this session, there was a collective sense, expressed in part by Sandrine Dixson-Declève (The Club of Rome), that a transformational moment had arrived due to a convergence of tipping points: Covid-19, inequality, climate and biodiversity—with the first caused by the last two. For Sandrine Dixson-Declève, the moment had to be taken to shift the system and design a journey to a 'wellbeing economy' that not only provided a just transition for people and an equitable pattern in the distribution of wealth, but an economy and society within planetary boundaries.

Likewise, just transition was discussed by all speakers in this session as being a broad concept that could guide the transition to a more equal, environmentally sound economy and society. For example, Professor Raphael Heffron (University of Dundee) depicted the key principles 'at the heart of a just transition', such as distributional, procedural and cosmopolitan justice, as a framework to guide the transition to a low-carbon economy. The need to expand and adopt a more holistic approach to just transition that applied concepts of climate and labour justice across economy, society and global supply chains, was also noted by Dr Edouard Morena (University of London). Dr Morena also welcomed the focus of President Higgins's speech on the history and origins of the just transition concept as it showed how it was a concept built from the grassroots up, rooted in the response of the trade union movement and frontline communities in the 1980s and 1990s to the closure of polluting industries due to globalisation, and environmental regulations. Their aim was to build a bridge between environmentalism, occupational health and safety and labour rights. For these reasons, 'just transition' was unique among most other concepts circulating in green discourse, such as green growth and sustainable development.

All speakers noted how the pandemic has exposed deep veins of sectoral and planetary interconnectedness, and severe structural inequalities, and yet has opened up the opportunity for a fundamental shift in how we order our economies, societies and cities. For Dr Patrick Bresnihan (Maynooth University), the pandemic had brought to the surface how the burden of transitions was 'not random, or even reasonable, but aligned with long-standing structural inequalities'. Dr Morena described the Covid-19 pandemic as leading to 'an acceleration of history' that both highlighted and continued to exacerbate pre-existing inequalities that would also influence the impact of climate change. These pre-existing inequalities included systemic racism, the centrality—and yet low-paid nature—of care work, income and spatial inequality and a growing distrust between people and elites. Alice Charles (World Economic Forum) also noted the inequalities being exposed in the accessibility of virtual and mental health services. In Melbourne, Australia, to take one example, there had been a 59 per cent increase in violence against women since the start of the pandemic.

The question of how to get to the 'just' economy and society was raised as a key point in the session. The European Green Deal, which mentioned doughnut economics and seeks to address inequality, was illustrated by Sandrine Dixson-Declève as the opportunity through which Europe could reorder 'human development beyond a just transition to securing the wellbeing of people and planet'. Dr Patrick Bresnihan raised the importance of bottom-up, popular politics to counter the recent turns to 'nasty right-wing politics', which signalled that the public would no longer quietly accept the inequalities created by previous transitions. He also raised the importance of interventions to deliver long-term investment; and the need for consideration in respect of those suffering from inequality. For Professor Raphael Heffron, the transition required bold action, both bottom-up and top-down, and particularly in finance. At EU level, this would mean derisking investments and redirecting subsidies into targeted supports for companies and sectors across society that could ensure a low-carbon economy. Globally, it meant increasing low-carbon technology transfer between developed and developing nations, as required by the UNFCCC.

The importance of infrastructure in the just transition was also highlighted. For Alice Charles and Sandrine Dixson-Declève, cities were shifting fast to sustainable mobility and more public space. The positives and negatives of the pandemic could be seen in terms of more liveable cities; potentially more social and affordable housing due to a reduction in office blocks, and an increase in bike lanes and pedestrianisation, but negatively, a reduction in public transit.

In his closing speech, NESC Director Dr Larry O'Connell highlighted the focus on both top-down thinking and vision and the need to find ways to engage people and stakeholders in the process of advancing the transition. He noted that Councils within the EEAC network occupied an important position. They could, and this conference had helped to do so, connect top-down and bottom-up efforts. Doing so would help ensure that across Europe that the transition to low carbon could become a reality and that, in line with principles of a just transition, this would occur without leaving people behind.

In his closing speech, EEAC Network Chairman Arnau Queralt-Bassa described the speech of President Higgins as a 'really inspiring contribution'. The conference provided an excellent forum for sharing perspectives and experiences, with a valuable, honest exchange of lessons learnt, not only from successes but also from hurdles and challenges. He said the conference would also stay with him due to the use of music and poetry.

His key takeaway messages were that managing impacts was an incredibly important but complex task; the importance of social dialogue as a foundational element of a just transition; and finally, reaffirming the words of his colleague Annemieke Nijhof (Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure) (see Session 2), he said that 'emotion is something that comes with and belongs to just transition... we should not shy away from emotions in our search for a just transition'.

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