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► The role of tripartite social dialogue in facilitating a just transition: Experiences from selected countries

Author / Oscar Molina Romo





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Abstract

This Working Paper analyses the role of tripartite social dialogue in supporting green workplaces and, more generally, promoting just transitions at enterprise level. The Working Paper explores the different mechanisms whereby social dialogue has contributed to governing, promoting and implementing policies and initiatives to achieve the above goals, with a particular focus on the role of National Social Dialogue Institutions (NSDIs). In doing so, the Working Paper also discusses the main challenges facing social partners regarding their involvement in these policies and processes, including the opportunities or obstacles created by the institutional framework, the type of technical capacities required and the articulation between different levels of social dialogue. Lastly, the Working Paper provides some policy pointers to enhance the role of social dialogue as a tool to sustain just transitions and extend green workplaces.

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▶ Introduction

Over the last two decades, policy agendas at national and transnational level have seen an increase in issues related to the just transition. We understand the just transition as a systemic, multidimensional and multiactor approach, whose goal is to maximize the benefits of decarbonization, progress towards environmental sustainability and minimize the potential negative impacts on economic activity, workers, communities and territories (Spain, Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge 2020). As pointed out by Galgóczi (2018, 2),

Just transitions need to be an integral part of the sustainable development policy framework. From a functional point of view, just transition has two main dimensions: in terms of “outcomes” (the new employment and social landscape in a decarbonized economy) and of “process” (how we get there). The “outcome” should be decent work for all in an inclusive society with the eradication of poverty. The “process”, how we get there, should be based on a managed transition with meaningful social dialogue at all levels to make sure that burden sharing is just and nobody is left behind.

The inclusion of just transition in policy agendas can help drive urgent transformations required to mitigate climate change and environmental degradation, whilst ensuring this doesn't have a negative impact on the economy and, most importantly, without leaving anyone behind. Accordingly, it is important to adopt a multi-dimensional approach capable of linking the environmental, economic and social dimensions through innovative solutions and initiatives. Thinking, designing and implementing these policy initiatives requires a common effort from many actors and sectors of the economy, in order to devise transversal and coherent actions in the context of stable and participatory forms of governance.

In this context, there is a call for a central role to be played by social dialogue, understood as “all types of negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between and among representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic or social policy” (ILO, 2013, 39). The key role of social dialogue in managing and delivering just transitions towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies was already highlighted in the *Guidelines for a Just Transition* (ILO 2015). Just transition requires political steering, actors and policies to make it happen and ensure it is inclusive and job rich. Social dialogue is a priority instrument to deliver these policies and should be one of the pillars for good management of transitions towards environmentally and socially sustainable economies and societies.

This Working Paper analyses the role of tripartite social dialogue in supporting green workplaces and, more generally, promoting just transitions at enterprise level. More specifically, the Working Paper explores the different mechanisms whereby social dialogue has contributed to governing, promoting and implementing policies and initiatives to achieve the above goals, with a particular focus on the role of National Social Dialogue Institutions (NSDIs). In doing so, the Working Paper also discusses the main challenges facing social dialogue and social partners regarding their involvement in these policies and processes, including the opportunities or obstacles created by the institutional framework, the type of technical capacities required and the articulation between different levels and instances of social dialogue. Lastly, the Working Paper provides some policy pointers to enhance the role of social dialogue as a tool to promote green workplaces.

This Paper is structured in three sections. The first section provides an overview of the main dimensions of just transition and the role that social dialogue can play in designing and implementing them. The second section contains the analyses of policy initiatives from selected countries in relation to the green transition, paying particular attention to the role of tripartite institutions in promoting and implementing these initiatives, and its role in greening workplaces. Section three discusses the benefits and challenges of social dialogue and social dialogue institutions in promoting a just transition and green workplaces.

The case studies included in this Working Paper have been selected according to three criteria: geographical diversity, existence of an (active) national social dialogue institution, and evidence of recent legal or

regulatory activity in the field of just transition and green economy. Using these criteria, the countries selected are the following:

Africa	America	Asia	Europe	Oceania
Guinea South Africa Senegal Morocco	Argentina Canada Chile Colombia Mexico	Indonesia Kyrgyzstan South Korea Thailand	Ireland Netherlands Slovenia Spain	Australia New Zealand

The methodology used in the study consisted of desk analysis of secondary sources, including reports by national or regional institutions and international organizations, press releases, newspapers and academic works.

▶ 1 Promoting green workplaces within just transitions: types of policy initiatives and dimensions

Under the umbrella of just transition - an approach that seeks to ensure workers, businesses and communities are both protected and benefit from the profound and rapid changes to come in the transition to a new greener economy - there are many different types of policies and actions. The concept of a “just transition” encompasses a political imperative, a policy goal and a set of practices meant to minimize the harmful impacts of industrial and economic transitions on workers, communities and society at large (Krawchenko and Gordon 2021). Practices and initiatives within the umbrella of just transitions can either be “jobs-focused”, “environment-focused” or “society focused”. Job-focused initiatives concentrate on the impact that just transitions have on workers, including working conditions and levels of employment. Under this approach, the focus is placed on preserving jobs and guaranteeing their quality. Environment-focused initiatives instead look primarily at the role the transition has in promoting a more sustainable natural environment. Lastly, society-focused interpretations adopt a more encompassing approach and focus on the impact on communities, workers and society at large (Krawchenko and Gordon 2021).

The approach in this Working Paper looks at jobs-focused and society-focused initiatives and policies in the light of social dialogue processes. Society-focused initiatives often provide the framework for the development of local and company-level approaches. These include green transition plans enacted by governments setting general goals and policy orientations for lower level instances and actors to set out concrete actions, including the promotion of green jobs and green workplaces at local or company level.

Green jobs first refer to decent jobs that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment, be they in traditional sectors, such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors, such as renewable energy and energy efficiency (ILO 2016). The characteristics of these jobs include reduced consumption of energy and raw materials, and the capacity to limit climate change, reduce waste and pollution, thereby protecting and restoring ecosystems, and helping actors and companies to adapt to climate change. Green jobs also refer to those jobs replacing “brown” jobs in carbon intense sectors and activities. Green jobs constitute positions in agriculture, manufacturing, construction, installation and maintenance, as well as scientific, technical, administrative, and service-related activities that contribute substantially to preserving or restoring environmental quality. Specifically, but not exclusively, this includes jobs that also help to protect and restore ecosystems and biodiversity; reduce energy, materials, and water consumption through high-efficiency and avoidance strategies; de-carbonize the economy; and minimize or altogether generation of all forms of waste and pollution. Green jobs also need to be decent jobs with adequate wages, safe working conditions, and worker rights, including the right to organize in trade unions (UNEP/ILO/IOE/ITUC 2008).

A green workplace can be defined as one that is environmentally sensitive, resource efficient and socially responsible (SHRM 2008 and Zu 2013). The concept of green workplaces overlaps significantly with that of green jobs but since it is focused on the workplace, there is a stronger emphasis on the processes (for example, reducing waste, limiting use of energy, investing in greener energy sources) than on job characteristics. A large body of works has explored the role of individuals' voluntary behaviour to help companies to reach environmental goals, or organizational citizenship behaviours for the environment, and the role of behaviours linked to job tasks at the workplace level, highlighting the diversity of such behaviours (Francoeur et al. 2021).

In line with the above interpretations, the transition to a more inclusive, green economy offers an opportunity not only to reverse negative environmental trends; it can also be used to generate new employment

opportunities, and reduce household and corporate costs, while driving new forms of investments and environmentally sustainable forms of growth. Inclusive green economy approaches are designed to shift policies and incentives in ways that redirect public and private financing towards economic activities that reduce environmental degradation, help to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and ensure a just transition for workers and businesses engaged in “brown” economic activities.

How can NSDIs contribute to a just transition? Mechanisms to promote and influence initiatives for greening workplaces

The role of social dialogue in promoting just transitions and green workplaces is particularly important for two main reasons. First, because the green transition expands the traditional areas of negotiation among social partners. This requires social partners to build new expertise and technical capacities to include the green agenda in their activities and negotiation agenda. This helps to revitalize social dialogue and also to achieve innovative win-win solutions and policies among social partners. Second, since the just transition and the promotion of green workplaces might have in some sectors a negative impact on total employment, job quality or workers, especially in those cases where brown, highly contaminating activities are closed down (Markandya et al. 2016), social dialogue constitutes a key governance tool to find solutions and share the burden and benefits of the environmental transition between workers and employers, with the support of governments.

One of the key issues related to social dialogue as a mechanism to govern just transitions is its capacity to have a meaningful impact on greening policies and practices at company level. That is to say the capacity to be effective in shaping policies and reaching goals. In a recent study, Guardiancich and Molina (2021) explored the conditions for social dialogue effectiveness, with a particular focus on the role of institutionalized mechanisms, such as NSDIs. Effectiveness, understood as goal attainment, consists of several dimensions, including instrumental or policy effectiveness, which is the capacity to translate social dialogue outcomes into practices and policies; agenda effectiveness, which refers to the impact that social dialogue may have on setting the political and public policy agenda; and analytical effectiveness, which is the capacity to analyse a policy problem and make recommendations to reach specific policy goals by providing stakeholders with the necessary knowledge to tackle a certain socioeconomic issue (SER, 2018).

Relying on this approach, two elements may stand out as key in shaping the impact and role of social dialogue in promoting and assisting in the development of green workplaces and policies. First, the capacity of social dialogue and tripartite institutions to participate in just transition policy debates, initiatives and policies, by setting the agenda or providing analysis. As the ILO-AICESIS survey of NSDIs showed, most NSDIs are still only weakly involved in designing policies around the Sustainable Development Goals, including climate change (Guardiancich and Molina 2021). One of the important elements to strengthen the role of NSDIs is the development of social partners’ technical capacities. These are key for well-functioning and effective social dialogue and NSDIs. Since the just transition and greening workplaces requires the engagement of social partners with new topics, and agreement on aspects beyond the traditional scope of company agreements, the role of the social partners will very much depend on their ability to build these capacities and assist lower levels (Caspar, Rieff and Roelen 2019). Moreover, as pointed out by Galgóczi (2020, 373), the type of dynamics between labour and capital that have arisen from climate change and the ecological transition are different from the traditional capital or labour conflicts. In the case of climate change, common objectives are easily shared among workers and companies. However, since the policies to achieve this goal are contested, social dialogue should contribute to finding balanced and just policies to this end.

Second, the capacity of social dialogue institutions and social partners to bridge the gap between the national level, where general policy orientations are provided (just transition or green economy plans) and the local or company level, where green workplace and just transition policies are implemented at enterprise level, is pivotal. One of the recurring aspects in the debate on the importance of social dialogue in the just transition is the need to ensure coordination among the different levels: national, sectoral, regional, local or

enterprise. The role of social dialogue and the social partners in just transition depends on its scale and level where it takes place. While at national level, social partners' main role is to participate in the formulation and implementation of strong climate and just transition policies, at enterprise level social partners oversee the implementation of specific plans to reduce emissions, reskill workers and ensure decent jobs (Smith 2017).

Company-level trade union representation structures provide a privileged channel to develop green policies and plans. In those cases where social partners are organizationally weak or lack adequate technical capacities, or where there are no widespread worker representation structures at enterprise level, the existence of local (or regional) level structures of social dialogue with the support of social partners becomes a key resource to assist companies and workers. These local (or regional) structures or bodies can provide technical assistance to companies to implement green transition plans. But for such lower level social dialogue instances to deliver adequate responses, the support and guidance of higher-level institutions is crucial.

▶ 2 Comparative analysis of experiences in selected cases

This section analyses experiences of social dialogue on just transition in selected countries. The aim of this section is to show the variety of cross-country practices whereby social dialogue contributes to the promotion of green workplaces. Best practices are also highlighted and lessons drawn from those are discussed. The analysis of these experiences is structured around three dimensions. First, the type of governance regime, where social dialogue approaches are confronted with multi-stakeholder approaches and more government-driven or technocratic approaches. Second, the characteristics of social dialogue processes, including the degree of institutionalization or the role of NSDIs, the different levels of social dialogue involved in just transitions and green workplaces, and their articulation. Third, the topics dealt with in social dialogue processes around green workplaces and just transitions.

General characteristics of social dialogue processes and NSDIs, and their role in governing just transitions

The first step in this comparative analysis consists in determining the role of social dialogue within the governance regime for just transitions in the countries analysed. Particular attention is paid to the role of NSDIs or institutionalized forms of social dialogue. A governance system is composed of interactions between the formal (government) institutions and those in civil society. Governance refers to a process whereby elements in society wield power, authority and influence, and enact policies (Weiss 2000, 797). Three ideal types of governance systems, depending on the type of actors involved in designing and implementing just transitions, are considered.

- a) **Multi-stakeholder approach.** Under this governance regime, just transitions involve a wide variety of actors, including businesses, local communities, consumers, workers and trade unions. Their role in drafting and implementing just transition plans can vary from participation via online platforms to a more institutionalized involvement through the creation of ad hoc bodies at national, regional or local level.
- b) **Social dialogue approach.** This type of governance of just transitions consists in the involvement of social partners vis-à-vis governments at different stages of plans. This involvement may vary in the form (formalized channels, including NSDIs or more informally, through ad hoc meetings and committees) and intensity (from information to consultation or negotiation).
- c) **Government-led / technocratic approach.** Under this governance mode, just transitions plans respond to government initiatives, very often with the support of groups of experts, but with limited or no involvement of other civil society actors.

The first two models are participatory, though with a different constellation of actors in each. In the case of multi-stakeholder approaches, trade unions and employers become one inter pares, while in the case of social dialogue approaches, they are key actors within the process. Even though many cases show a combination of different governance regimes, even across different levels of government, the typology can be used to provide an overview of the differences observed across countries. Table 1 sets out an overview of differences across the countries surveyed in relation to the type of governance accompanying just transitions.

► **Table 1: Governance model of just transitions and role of NSDIs**

		Governance of just transition		
		Government-led	Multi-stakeholder	Multi-stakeholder with social dialogue
Role of NSDIs	Non-existent	Australia (national), Chile	Australia (local)	Canada, New Zealand
	Limited	Colombia, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Republic of Korea	Argentina, Slovenia	Republic of Guinea, Senegal
	Strong			Ireland, Netherlands, South Africa, Spain

Source: Own elaboration

First, it is important to note the key role of governments (both at national and regional / local level), especially in countries where there is limited institutionalization of social dialogue in steering just transition plans and, in some cases, facilitating the involvement of social partners or other actors in the design and implementation of just transitions. Together with governments, international organizations have also played a relevant role in promoting social dialogue processes around green transitions in countries such as Argentina, Colombia, Indonesia and Mexico. The most important initiative in this regard was the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE). PAGE brings together five UN agencies – UNEP, ILO, UNDP, UNIDO and UNITAR. PAGE has supported the organization of high-level conferences in countries adhering to this initiative, in order to promote the incorporation of a green agenda and help to initiate social dialogue around just transitions.

Table 1 shows a wide variety of mechanisms for social dialogue around just transitions, with a different role for social dialogue, NSDIs, the form of involvement of social partners and their role in the design and implementation of just transition plans. Countries are grouped in three categories, taking into account the role of NSDIs.

Countries with no NSDIs

Within the sample of countries surveyed, there are some where there are no NSDIs. In these countries, social dialogue takes place outside institutionalized channels. However, in some cases, such as Canada and New Zealand, new forms of institutionalization can be observed.

The weakness of social dialogue in Chile explains the predominant role of the government in relation to the design and implementation of just transition initiatives. The Chilean Government included the just transition into their Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris Agreement 2020.¹ The Government is currently elaborating the Strategy for a Green Transition. In this process, a series of workshops have been organized to present plans and consult the different actors involved, including social partners. For instance, the Agreement for the withdrawal or closure of coal-fired power plants, of voluntary origin and binding commitment, has resulted from coordinated work between the Government through the Ministry of Energy and companies that own coal-fired generating units in the electrical system, with the involvement of trade unions.² The Agreement analyses the effects and impacts that the removal of coal from the electrical matrix has on the safety and economic efficiency of the National Electric System. As part of the process of closures, some regions where carbon plants were located have developed different initiatives to relocate redundant workers and reduce the social and economic impact of these closures. These include the Biobío and Antofagasta regions.³

¹ See <https://cambioclimatico.mma.gob.cl/contribucion-determinada-ndc/>

² See <https://energia.gob.cl/mini-sitio/estrategia-de-transicion-justa-en-energia>

³ See <https://www.revistaei.cl/2020/12/23/cierre-de-centrales-a-carbon-valparaiso-biobio-y-antofagasta-alistan-transicion-justa/#>

Another case of the limited role of social dialogue in a country with no NSDI is Australia, where Markey et al. (2014, 47) pointed to a lack of social dialogue and predominantly multi-stakeholder initiatives to promote dialogue and identify sustainable work and business practices. This was also the case of the 2009 Green Skills Agreement in Australia between the Federal Government and state and regional governments, where social partners were involved but to a limited extent.⁴ More recently, the participation of social partners in the National Framework for Adaptation and Mitigation Bill, 2020, was also limited with regard to the submission of their views on the Government's proposal.

Despite the absence of a NSDI, Canada is one case where the multi-stakeholder approach, which includes social partners, has experienced some institutionalization (See Box 1). In 2018, the Canadian Government promoted the creation of the Task Force on just transition for Canadian coal power workers and communities. The platform brought together a broad range of stakeholders, including coal workers and community members, to identify what would be needed to ensure the transition was just.⁵

► **Box 1. The Task Force on just transition for Canadian coal power workers and communities as a form of institutionalizing social dialogue**

Social partners in Canada have been involved in a series of initiatives, together with other civil society actors both at national and local level. Their involvement has gone beyond a mere advisory role. For instance, their role in the Task Force on just transition for Canadian coal power workers and communities has served to inform the Government's specific just transition initiatives. Moreover, at the local level, several initiatives have been put in place. In 2018, Vancouver established a just transition roundtable with the British Columbia Federation of Labour, and the ITUC.⁶ This roundtable has allowed for the involvement of social partners and other civil society organizations in greening local economy policies and initiatives. While there has been no explicit focus on promoting green workplaces and jobs, these national and local initiatives provide an interesting example of articulation in social dialogue where local-level structures provided support to companies to implement green job policies.

Another interesting case of institutionalization of social dialogue in the field of just transition is that of New Zealand. Tripartite social dialogue in relation to the just transition in New Zealand is taking place through the Future of Work Tripartite Forum, chaired by the Minister of Finance, the Council of Trade Unions and Business New Zealand.⁷ The Future of Work tripartite forum has an important role to play in ensuring social partners are engaged at a strategic and systems level in coordinating a just transition approach to the employment implications of a transition to a low-emissions economy. In the memo issued by trade unions and employer organizations, several agreements and recommendations for future plans and policies were made, including to establish a tripartite (plus) just transition governance group, with appropriate secretariat support, for the transition to a low-emissions economy. Moreover, social partners agreed to promote regular engagement of social partners and tripartite (plus) cooperation on research and intelligence to inform a just transition.

An additional and complementary element of the governance of just transitions in New Zealand is the just transition unit that works across government, portfolio and agency boundaries to support regions in planning effectively in response to major economic shocks. The unit also supports regions in aligning the interests of communities, regions, sectors and communities, and establishing partnerships with a common vision. It supports pathways to ensure successful actions alongside other government agencies that are active in a region, to ensure planning and implementation of just transition initiatives are aligned with central government objectives and funding streams.

⁴ See <https://www.greenskills.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/greenskillsagreement.pdf>

⁵ See <https://www.wri.org/just-transitions/canada-national-task-force>

⁶ See <https://www.industrialunion.org/just-transition-an-idea-whose-time-has-come>

⁷ See <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/16835-joint-social-partner-memo-on-partnership-for-a-just-transition-28-june-2021-forum> and https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/191014_-_ppl_power_for_our_planet_-_next_steps_on_just_transition-oct-2019.pdf

Countries with functioning NSDIs but with a limited involvement in green transition and green workplace initiatives

There is a group of countries with NSDIs that have so far shown limited involvement in designing just transition plans and implementing green jobs or workplace strategies. The reasons for the limited involvement are diverse, including the lack of mandate on issues related to climate change and the green transition, to an overall limited role in the policy process, or a short history (Guardiancich and Molina 2021).

In the case of Argentina, the recent creation of the Social and Economic Council has prevented this institution from playing a more important role in the design or implementation of just transition and green jobs initiatives. Those initiatives involving social partners have developed outside formal channels and have, to a large degree, consisted of meetings to present results and share findings in relation to just transition. Moreover, this case also shows the important role of international organizations and actors in promoting actions and involving social partners in some of these initiatives,⁸ though a multi-stakeholder approach seems to prevail.

The Mexico City Social, Economic and Environmental Council is a similar case. Institutionalized social dialogue in Mexico takes place mostly through regional economic and social councils, with the aforementioned as the most important. In 2019 the Council incorporated the “environmental” dimension into its name, thereby expanding its mandate to such issues. However, the role of the Council in relation to environmental initiatives have been rather limited so far. Several initiatives have incorporated elements related to the green and just transition policy agenda. These include the National Development Plan (2019-24) or the National Strategy for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In none of these programmes has social dialogue played a prominent role, either in its design or implementation.⁹ There is accordingly a need to increase the involvement of social partners in just transition policies and agendas.

The forum for institutionalized involvement of trade unions and employers in Colombia is the Tripartite Permanent Commission for Concertation on Salary and Labour Policies (Comisión Permanente de Concertación de Políticas Salariales y Laborales). It is the main institution for the promotion of social dialogue on labour issues in Colombia. However, contrary to other national social dialogue institutions from countries included in this study, this institution has a narrow mandate on labour issues and no involvement in aspects related to the just transition.

Social partners have accordingly been involved in social dialogue on just transition issues outside institutionalized channels. The Colombian Government has prepared several policy initiatives to guide a sustainable economic development for the country. These include the National Development Plan (2018-2022), the 2018 Policy for Green Growth (2018), the 2016 National Plan For Green Businesses (2016) or the 2016 National Plan for Climate Change (2016). In a document prepared in 2019 on the potential to create green jobs in the framework of the just transition in Colombia, it was clear that social dialogue had a limited role in designing and implementing these initiatives so far.¹⁰ Only in the case of the National Development Plan 2018-2022 was some form of social dialogue reported.

An interesting experience took place in November 2019, when the Colombian Government through its Ministry of Employment and the ILO signed a tripartite pact for green jobs and just transition in Colombia.

¹¹ The forum on green jobs and just transition in Colombia, made it possible to place on the public agenda

⁸ With the support of UN PAGE, representatives of the Government, trade unions and business organizations of Argentina, organized in a high-level political meeting, “National Dialogue on just transition towards integral and sustainable development”. See https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---ilo-buenos_aires/documents/publication/wcms_789251.pdf for an executive summary of the main contributions in this meeting.

⁹ See https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms_750514.pdf

¹⁰ See https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-lima/documents/publication/wcms_759029.pdf

¹¹ See https://www.ilo.org/lima/sala-de-prensa/WCMS_732750/lang--es/index.htm

the urgency of developing actions addressing climate change from an inter-institutional perspective and, in this way, connect the advances in environmental policies with the labour market and the economy. All the actors involved in this forum pledged to support the promotion of green jobs and the just transition towards a green economy, and to contribute to the fulfilment of international and national commitments on climate change, the green growth policy and the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, the agreement also contemplates strengthening the instances of tripartite social dialogue and the articulation with key actors to define public policy guidelines identifying specific actions for the transition to a green economy.

Social dialogue in Indonesia was institutionalized in 1983 with the establishment of the National Tripartite Council (LKS), as well as some councils at regional and local level. This Council meets periodically to discuss issues related to the labour market and its regulation, the discussion of minimum wages being the most important issue discussed. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the LKS was active in negotiating the responses to the crisis.¹² Even though issues related to the impact of climate change have gained importance on the political agenda, so far social dialogue has had a limited role in outlining a just transition strategy. Similarly, there is no evidence of involvement of the LKS into the green/just transition agendas. In 2018, one of the largest trade unions, the Confederation of Indonesian Prosperity Labour Union together with the ILO Jakarta office, organized a conference on just transition. As a result of this conference, a steering committee recognized by the Government and including trade unions and other civil society organizations was set up. However, employers were not involved and the impact on policy has so far been limited.

Social dialogue in the Kyrgyz Republic takes place at various levels. On 27 December 1999, the Government adopted Regulation 718, on the republican tripartite commission for regulation of economic, social and labour relations. The Law on social partnership in the domain of labour relations in the Kyrgyz Republic was issued in 2003 (Musabaeva and Verhulp 2009, 15). As a result, the Republican Tripartite Commission, was established. However, this body has had a rather limited role in relation to the development of just transition plans to date. Until recently, there were no just transition plans either at national, sectoral or regional level. However, in 2019 the Programme for the Development of Green Economy in the Kyrgyz Republic was enacted, setting out a strategy and plan to create the basis for the introduction of green economy approaches to the development of the national economy by 2023. The comprehensive and detailed programme covers areas such as climate change needs, commitments and actions on green agriculture, transport, energy, education, green industry, tourism, waste management sustainable procurement, finance and fiscal policy. The matrix of outcome targets, enacted along with the programme, will facilitate effective and timely monitoring of the implementation of the programme.

Social dialogue in the Republic of Korea is institutionalized through the Economic, Social and Labour Council. This tripartite institution has promoted several tripartite processes and agreements on different policy areas, including labour market reforms, collective bargaining and industrial relations, the impact of technologies on the labour market, and more recently, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, when it comes to the green transition, there is no evidence of its involvement in any policy initiative.

The limited role of social dialogue through the Economic, Social and Labour Council is congruent with an assessment of the “green growth long-term” policies implemented so far by the Republic of Korea. This assessment showed problems linked to its top-down approach, which hindered effective involvement of civil society groups and lacked a multi-stakeholder approach.¹³ The most important body in devising the green growth long-term policies (the Green Growth Committee) includes among its members businesspeople, civil servants and representatives of government-funded think-tanks, but does not involve civil society actors. The consultative groups assisting the Green Growth Committee facilitate some involvement of civil society groups but always limited to a consultative role. In line with this view, Lee and Woo (2020) also stress the limited involvement of stakeholders in the elaboration of the New Green Deal.

¹² See https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-jakarta/documents/publication/wcms_741507.pdf

¹³ See https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/sites/default/files/downloads/resource/Koreas-Green-Growth-Experience_GGGI.pdf

Slovenia presents an interesting case, since the Social and Economic Council has traditionally been presented as best practice when it comes institutionalized social dialogue in the context of Eastern Europe. Social dialogue in Slovenia is formalized through the Social and Economic Council, created in 1994. It is a tripartite body, that cooperates in the drafting of legislation and provides recommendations. Even though it has had an important role in the policymaking system, it has recently faced some challenges. More specifically, trade unions left the Social and Economic Council in 2021 as they considered that the Government had not respected its role. The role of social dialogue in the green transition has so far been limited, not playing a relevant role in the planning or design of national plans. Social partners were not engaged in social dialogue during the development of the laws and policy initiatives related to just transition plans. Moreover, in the initiatives approved so far, explicit and dedicated social dialogue with unions and workers is not clearly indicated.

Countries with NSDIs that have been involved in just transition

Some of the NSDIs analysed in this section already include actors representing environmental interests with a mandate on these topics. As explained below, this is the case of the Guinea Economic, Social, Environmental and Cultural Council (CESEC) and the Irish National Economic and Social Council (NESC).

In the case of the Republic of Guinea, CESEC has been involved in several initiatives in relation to the just transition. In April 2021, it launched a capacity-building programme on the issue of climate change, with the support of the Agence Française de Développement. The programme concerns mainly advisers from CESEC Guinea, deputies of the National Assembly and their parliamentary assistants and the executives of the Prime Minister. The objective of this initiative is to assist the advisers in developing skills to address climate change and participating in social dialogue initiatives in relation to the just transition and green workplaces. Thus, one of the strategic aspects highlighted in the 2019 National Strategy for Sustainable Development was the need to reinforce the involvement of social partners and participatory governance in order to implement effective policies for sustainable development. Weak and insufficient social dialogue constitutes another element hindering the development of broad and shared action plans for a green economy.

One of the most interesting cases for the involvement of NSDIs in just transition and green workplaces plans is Ireland. The NESC has been very active in carrying out research and helping to develop just transition projects and initiatives. In the multiannual work programme carried out by NESC, two of these initiatives and projects are particularly relevant.

First, the importance is highlighted in their statement of grounding the recovery in sustainable development.¹⁴ Thus, the statement sets out the contribution that NESC can make to help the Irish policy system to achieve these goals. Among other activities, the council has developed some work on climate policy and just transition. Moreover, it is also supporting and assisting projects focused on strengthening sustainability and resilience in cities and communities. For the Shared Ireland programme of research, the NESC has also produced a report examining the particular challenges and opportunities of climate change and biodiversity loss across the island. The report not only identifies the main challenges and opportunities of these processes for Ireland but, most importantly, it also shows the need to accept that strengthening co-operation takes time and requires public engagement and participation.¹⁵

► **Box 2. The just transition review group in Ireland**

The report [Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland](#) is a key contribution from NESC, analysing the impact on employment of the technological and ecological transitions. The report identifies three key areas requiring a more proactive capacity to govern the impact of the transition:

¹⁴ See <https://www.nesc.ie/work-programme/sustainable-development-and-climate-action/>

¹⁵ See <https://www.nesc.ie/work-programme/shared-island/>

lifelong learning, training and education; effective support for viable but vulnerable companies; and ensuring that funding has the greatest possible local impact must be the priorities. The report also highlights the importance of social dialogue as an effective mechanism for fostering trust and adopting a problem-solving approach to transition. To achieve this goal, one of the recommendations made in the report is to “establish a social dialogue and deliberative process, called the Just Transition Review Group, to develop a shared vision and associated mission-oriented actions for an Irish just transition”.¹⁶ More specifically, the report argues that new institutional structures for social dialogue established by the Government are necessary. These institutions should have overarching targets and goals and could therefore create momentum and maintain discipline of governments to address and provide policies to address the green transition.

Another case of strongly institutionalized social dialogue in relation to the just transition is the Netherlands. The Social Economic Council of the Netherlands is probably one of the most active in the world and carries out an important advisory role to the Dutch Government on many issues. In the field of the ecological and energy transition, it has produced several reports, including some on the sustainability of supply chains,¹⁷ the circular economy¹⁸ and biomass.¹⁹ Regarding the role of social partners, the Climate Agreement²⁰ provides for the creation of a cross-sector task force, composed of employers, employees, educational institutions and the Government. The objective of this task force is to help to reach agreements on the labour market and training, with broad social support.

Social dialogue in South Africa is institutionalized through the National Economic Development and Labour Council. South Africa is one country where the policy debate around the green transition and its social and economic implications has been more intense and started earlier. The reason for this is the country's strong reliance on coal, not only in terms of electricity generation, but also as an important source of export revenue and employment. This has had a significant environmental impact while placing the country in a vulnerable position on the road towards a low carbon economy. This is probably one of the reasons why social dialogue has played a key role.

The role of social dialogue in promoting just transition and green workplaces in South Africa has been important since the 2011 Green Accord, signed by the Government with the backing of employers, three labour federations (the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the Federation of Unions of South Africa (FEDUSA) and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), and other civil society organizations. Social partners participated in discussions as the Government tabled the National Climate Change Response Green paper at the National Economic Development and Labour Council, where a joint task team was set up, comprising representatives from business, community, labour and Government from the Trade and Industry Chamber and Development Chamber.

South African trade unions have been actively involved in other initiatives to promote social dialogue and green jobs. In 2013 they participated in a capacity-building initiative, “Social Dialogue for Green and Decent Jobs: South Africa-European Dialogue on just transition”, promoted and funded by the European Union. This initiative was aimed at learning from experiences in different regions while promoting informed dialogue on decent jobs creation and just transition towards a green economy in South Africa.

¹⁶ See http://files.nesc.ie/nesc_secretariat_papers/No_20_Approaches_to_Transition.pdf

¹⁷ See <https://www.ser.nl/en/Publications/sustainable-supply-chains>

¹⁸ See <https://www.ser.nl/en/Publications/financial-instruments-circular-economy>

¹⁹ See <https://www.ser.nl/en/Publications/biomass-in-the-balance>

²⁰ The Climate Agreement is part of the Dutch climate policy. It is an agreement between many organisations and companies in the Netherlands to combat climate change. The government's central goal with the National Climate Agreement is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Netherlands by 49 per cent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. See also <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2019/06/28/climate-agreement>

Institutionalized social dialogue, through the Social, Economic and Environmental Council of Senegal, has played an important role in integrating the green agenda into national policies. With the support of the UN Partnership for Action in the Green Economy (UN PAGE), it has developed several initiatives with the involvement of social partners and other civil society actors, including the second phase of the Plan Senegal Emergent. Social partners were already involved in the design of the national action plans for economic and social recovery (such as the Plan Senegal Emergent). This involvement has gained momentum in the most recent initiatives, including the second phase of the Plan Senegal Emergent that included more specific references to the green economy. The creation of the National Platform on the Green Economy constitutes another important stage in the development of a green policies and agendas. This platform aims to stimulate green growth and development through a multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue, information sharing and coordinating action on issues such as green financing, climate change, green jobs and the sustainable exploitation of the country's oil and gas resources.²¹

One of the countries where the benefits of coordinated social dialogue to bring about a just transition are evident is Spain. Tripartite social dialogue in Spain is characterized by institutionalization at national level through the Social and Economic Council, but also at regional level through regional social dialogue institutions. Although social dialogue on the just transition has mostly developed through ad hoc processes between the Government and social partners, the Social and Economic Council has played an important role in providing research inputs for the debate, including the report on the electrical sector in Spain,²² that allowed social partners to exchange opinions around topics related to the just transition.

Articulation between national and local/company level experiences

The aim of this section is to explore those facilitating conditions in social dialogue processes that contribute to promoting the development of green workplaces, that is to say, to closing the gap between the national-level just transition initiatives and their implementation at local and company level to promote green jobs. This section is structured around the discussion of the articulation between the national and local levels. For social dialogue to promote green workplaces, it is not only important that it is institutionalized, but also that it reach local and company levels. Bridging the gap between the national green or just transition plans, and companies or local communities is key to the effectiveness of social dialogue. The degree of articulation of social dialogue in just transition processes thus plays a key role. Articulation refers to the coordination among different levels and, more specifically, the rules linking these levels. These rules may establish a certain division of responsibilities among levels, or specify under which conditions certain topics can be regulated by lower levels. This articulation may accordingly take different forms depending on the country, but it is a key ingredient for the success of these policies. It is also important that social dialogue provides the instruments for actors at local and company levels to implement the policies. These instruments can go from precise indications on the topics to be included in green workplace strategies, to capacity-building initiatives for social partners or financial resources to promote, inter alia, reskilling and employment creation. Table 2 provides an overview of the main findings in the countries selected in relation to these dimensions.

²¹ See <https://www.un-page.org/senegals-new-national-platform-green-economy>

²² See <https://www.ces.es/documents/10180/4509980/Inf0417.pdf>

► **Table 2: Role of social partners in green transition and articulation among levels**

		Involvement of social partners		
		Information sharing	Consultation	Participation and negotiation
Articulation between the national level and local level initiatives, and predominant level	Absent	Kyrgyzstan	Mexico, Republic of Guinea	Ireland, Netherlands, South Africa
	Weak	Indonesia	Argentina, Australia, Chile, Colombia, Senegal, Slovenia	
	Strong		Republic of Korea	Canada, New Zealand, Spain

Source: Own elaboration

As difficult as it is to assess the type and degree of involvement of social partners, this table points to some general trends. First, the degree or intensity of participation of social partners in just transition plans remains limited. In most cases, there is only some consultation and/or information sharing on the part of government. Cases of fully-fledged participation, with social partners involved in drafting plans, are rather exceptional. Only in Ireland, the Netherlands, South Africa and Spain does the analysis point towards a stronger engagement in the elaboration of these plans. In the first three countries, having strong and well-functioning tripartite social dialogue institutions facilitates the involvement of social partners and the development of social dialogue processes on issues related to the green transition. Second, there is a weak articulation between social dialogue processes at national level and those at company or local level. In those countries where national plans have been elaborated with some involvement of social partners, there are limited references to their role in implementing policies at lower levels.

The absence of national-level social dialogue contrasts with some interesting local experiences in Australia, such as the one in Latrobe Valley. As pointed out in Snell (2018: 554), in the Latrobe Valley, strongly affected by the process of closure of coal generated energy, in 2007 the unions began to hold a series of climate change forums “that brought together national and state secretaries of the region’s major unions, environmental organizations, local community groups, and local and state government representatives to discuss the future of the region in a carbon-constrained environment and how best to manage a just transition for impacted workers”. This case shows the importance of local level actors to identify solutions to the just transition and the importance of cooperation among unions, governments and employers to implement them.

Trade unions have tried to make up for the lack of social dialogue at federal level by promoting, within the Australian Congress of Trade Unions, initiatives to ensure a coordinated response to climate change among its affiliates. Among other initiatives, they have promoted the involvement of members in workplace initiatives to reduce carbon emissions and launched the Union Climate Connectors campaign, in conjunction with the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Australian Council of Social Service, to involve union members in workplace and community initiatives, aimed at increasing awareness of sustainability issues. Moreover, Australian Congress of Trade Unions has also argued for a new statutory authority that would oversee the process of closure of coal fired power stations, whilst adopting an industry-wide multi-employer pooling and redeployment scheme for retrenched workers. In addition, this new body would also develop initiatives and adjustment packages supporting workers in seeking new jobs with job services, retraining, financial and personal support, and travel subsidies and relocation assistance.²³

The Programme for Green Jobs in Mexico City is a good example of the positive contribution of social dialogue to the development of initiatives for green jobs. The focus of these initiatives is on training, dialogue and promotion of new companies in water collection, energy improvement of buildings or urban biodiversity

²³ See <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/nov/08/australian-unions-call-for-just-transition-from-coal-generated-electricity>

protection. This initiative was promoted by the ILO, together with the Ministry of Labour and Employment Promotion and the Ministry of the Environment, which agreed to promote the creation of green jobs, that is, employment that reduces the environmental impact of the economy and society. The objective of this memorandum of understanding is to enable the development of the necessary actions for the creation of green jobs, and the transition to a sustainable and resilient economy.

The case of New Zealand is one of the most interesting when it comes to the articulation of just transition programmes. This articulation takes place through the just transition unit,²⁴ within the Ministry of Innovation, Business and Employment. The just transition unit helps to share and coordinate the work of transitioning New Zealand to a low-emissions economy. More specifically, a key focus of the unit is to ensure that regions are activated and supported to plan and manage the social, economic and environmental impacts of a transition. A successful transition is where regions can identify and subsequently act upon new opportunities and manage the impacts in a fair and just manner. Two regional plans are now within the support of the just transition unit: the Taranaki region and the Southland region. In these two cases, the just transition unit has promoted the involvement of social partners in the design and implementation of the plans (See Box 3).

► **Box 3. The experience of the Taranaki region in New Zealand**

New Zealand's just transition unit has pioneered a community consultation process in the Taranaki 2050 road map, which transitions that region's economy away from a reliance on new offshore oil and gas. New Zealand's just transition unit offers a centre of governmental expertise on how to manage just transitions and broker partnerships in affected regions (Krawchenko and Gordon 2021). The work of New Zealand's just transitions unit is notably proactive, seeking to identify regions that are (or will be) negatively impacted by ongoing efforts to decarbonize the economy and to co-develop new economic strategies.

At the regional level, the experience in the Taranaki region provides an interesting case for the role of social dialogue in green transitions.²⁵ Taranaki formulated an ambitious blueprint for a just transition, a joint project involving the Government, workers, employers, Māori communities, local communities, civil society and other stakeholders. The Taranaki 2050 process was a consultation exercise led by Venture Taranaki to co-design a road map and sectoral plans for transition. The Taranaki process has now evolved into a regional social partnership with the involvement of unions, employers, community, local government and central Government.²⁶

The Government-led top-down character of just transition initiatives in South Korea, contrasts with the local government bodies that have also established regional green growth plans and created regional green growth committees. These are in charge of enforcing green growth programmes and have a similar organizational structure to the presidential Green Growth Committee. The establishment of these local committees facilitates the review of green growth policies and plans at the local level, while providing a more favourable setting for the involvement of local actors. While facilitating a better fit between the characteristics of the region and the policies, these local green growth committees reproduce some of the problems already observed in the central Green Growth Committee, including the limited role of civil society groups that have a consultative role.

²⁴ See <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-development/just-transition/>

²⁵ See <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Inputs%20from%20International%20Trade%20Union%20Confederation%20%28ITUC%29.pdf>

²⁶ See <https://www.equaltimes.org/can-the-taranaki-2050-roadmap?lang=es#.YiecYHrMLcs>

In the case of Argentina, Ernst, Brizuela and Epifanio, (2019, 66) show how the local level has been more active than the national level in including aspects of the green economy or green employment in their agendas. These include the City of Buenos Aires and Santa Fe. In the case of Buenos Aires, the green economy is an active and specific area of work, and the local government recognizes and uses the concept of green employment formulated by the ILO. This has translated into a plan to formalize ragpickers or other measures aimed at efficient and sustainable waste management.

The topics and policies involved in social dialogue processes in relation to greening workplaces

The final step in the comparative analysis consists in understanding the topics dealt with in social dialogue processes concerning just transitions and green workplaces. Just transition plans typically focus on broader issues, including training and skills, development policies, investment in new activities, sectors and funding, taxation or social protection etc. In the case of green workplaces, we can expect a stronger focus on the production process and the reduction of emissions, but also on, inter alia, reskilling, functional mobility, and flexibility and organization of work. With respect to the topics discussed and the type of policies emerging in relation to the just transition and green workplaces, the landscape is even more diverse than in the other dimensions analysed, as can be observed in Table 3.

► **Table 3: Most relevant topics in relation to the Green Transition**

	Relevant Topics
Argentina	Employment impact
Australia	Reducing carbon footprint, restructuring
Canada	Reskilling, information on labour market developments
Chile	De-carbonization; employment impact of plant closures
Colombia	Labour market impact of green transition, rural development through greener activities
Indonesia	Impact of climate change
Ireland	Green jobs, green workplaces and processes,
Kyrgyzstan	Reduce economic and social impact of climate change
Mexico	Promote creation of green jobs, reduce the economic impact of climate change
Netherlands	Dependent on the regions' needs
New Zealand	Maintain employment levels
Republic of Guinea	Impact of climate change
Republic of Korea	Green transition of infrastructures, innovation in the green industry, green energy supply
South Africa	Investment, training and reskilling, promote green workplaces
Senegal	Employment creation, green jobs
Slovenia	De-carbonization; employment impact of plant closures
Spain	Employment creation, skills and training

Source: Own elaboration

Since this Working Paper analyses social dialogue processes and their role in promoting green workplaces, in most cases the topics and policies discussed constitute general orientations for actors at lower levels. Accordingly, there is limited evidence on specific mechanisms and initiatives developed at company level to achieve these goals. The discussion in this section should be read as the general policy framework to implement and develop these initiatives, rather than an analysis of them.

Based on the sample of countries selected for analysis, countries have been grouped into three categories. This grouping is based on the expectation that the type of policies and issues discussed in social dialogue processes varies according to the types of problems facing each country in relation to climate change and the green transition:

- There are, on the one hand, **high-risk climate countries where the policy debate so far has revolved around the policies required to tackle the impact of climate change** on the economy and society, with a limited role of initiatives aimed at promoting new greener activities or green workplaces.
- A second group consists of countries where the focus is placed on tackling the impact of **decarbonization and the need to develop new sectors and activities in regions** affected by the closure of coal-powered plants.
- A third group consists of cases where, in addition to policies aimed at tackling the impact of climate change and decarbonization, policies are being formulated aimed at helping businesses to change their **production processes in order to reduce emissions and promote green workplaces**.

High-risk climate countries where the policy debate so far has moved around the policies required to tackle the economic and social impact of climate change

A first group of countries consists of those at high risk because of the impact of climate change. Since the priority in these countries remains facing the consequences of climate change, issues related to social and labour market implications have had a more limited role in social dialogue processes.

In Indonesia, the issue of climate change has gained importance on the political agenda since the country is very vulnerable to climate change due to the large number of islands and the reliance of the country on primary activities (agriculture and fishery) and tourism. There have been some high-level discussions on just transition, but these haven't translated into concrete policies and programmes thus far. The focus of discussions has been on labour market management, job creation and skills, not always linked to strategies to transition to lower-carbon economies.

A similar case is Argentina, which is very dependent on the primary sector. The predominance of national level initiatives in this case explains the broad focus on issues related to the employment impact of the green transition. The umbrella of the just transition has also allowed for the integration, into the existing initiatives, of broader issues and problems linked to informality in the labour market, the future of the care system or skills. However, the impact on workplaces of these initiatives is unclear.

Over the last two decades, the Kyrgyz Republic has experienced an increase in air and water pollution, and therefore health risks due to resource extraction, population growth and increased consumption. Since the country is also vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather events due to its geographical position, climate change adaptation has been on the Government's agenda for some years. The orientation towards sustainable development has led to the adoption of the "Concept of Ecological Safety" and the "National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2013–2017". Despite these initiatives, this has so far not translated into the development of a just transition strategy. At the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow on 2 November 2021, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov made a statement about the transition to an emission-free economy and the impact of climate change on the people of the mountainous areas, thus moving beyond the economic impact of the green transition and introducing social considerations. However, little progress has been made in relation to specific policies or social dialogue processes.

Countries facing challenges derived from the decarbonization process

A second group consists of countries where the focus is placed on tackling the impact of decarbonization and the need to develop new sectors and activities in those regions affected by the closure of plants.

In the case of Australia, the debate has so far moved around the regional and local impact of coal plant closures. In these regions, policies have tried to support new activities and investments, whilst providing new skills to workers made redundant because of coal plant closures. Developments in the workplace have been shaped by Government initiatives, and more specifically Australia's climate change strategies,²⁷ with a strong focus on reducing the carbon footprint of companies' activities, but with limited appearance of other topics (Markey, McIvor and Wright 2014).

Social dialogue around just transitions in the case of Canada has concentrated on mitigating the impact of the transition in coal-dependent regions. One of the main strengths of the task force was the strong support from the federal Government, including the establishment and operation of locally driven transition centres in affected coal communities providing information to workers, including the creation of a detailed and publicly available inventory with labour market information pertaining to coal workers, such as skills profiles, demographics, locations and current and potential employers. Moreover, reskilling programmes were also put in place.

Due to the important role of the mining sector and its impact on the economy and environment, Chile is one of the countries where the impact of the green transition on jobs and the economy is potentially more significant. So far, green transition initiatives have mostly focused on the aspect of decarbonization and the closure of coal-fired plants. A commission for decarbonization has been set up, with representatives of companies, as well as other civil society actors, including trade unions.²⁸ The main policies discussed in this table are related to the impact of plant closures on employment and the economy.

The policy debate around the green transition in Colombia has been determined by the important role that coal exports play in the economy, accounting for approximately 14 per cent of total exports.²⁹ The strong role of coal exports explains the lack of a strategy to phase out coal mining and the focus on other aspects of the green transition, including rural development through greener activities. In 2021, Colombia enacted an energy transition law to promote investment in hydrogen, renewable energy and sustainable transport. In order to promote the use of these renewable energies, the new legislation also provides a legal framework for other energy sources such as geothermal plants, as well as storage, carbon capture and energy efficiency.³⁰

In the case of New Zealand, the tailored approach to just transitions, promoted and facilitated by the joint transition unit, allows each region to develop specific policies and initiatives. In the two cases where the just transition unit has provided support (to the Taranaki region and the Southland region), the regions faced different problems. In the Taranaki case, the goal was to adapt to the ban on new permits to drill for oil or gas offshore in New Zealand. In the case of Southland, the aim was to adapt to the planned closure of the New Zealand aluminium smelter at Tiwai Point. In both cases, the main topics discussed concerned endowing regions, their workers and businesses with the necessary resources to maintain employment levels and activity in the region, whilst transitioning towards greener businesses.

In the Slovenian case, participation in the elaboration of the national green strategy has so far taken the form of multi-stakeholder involvement through the creation of online platforms, without a negotiation process or formalized consultations. Thus, with a view to preparing the long-term national strategy for the restructuring and transition of coal regions in Slovenia, the Ministry of Infrastructure set up an online platform in July 2020 as the main communication channel for activities for that purpose. The strategy will define a plan for the closure of the coal mine in Velenje and the phasing out of coal in Termoelektrarna Šoštanj. In addition to the online platform, trade unions and employer organizations had the opportunity to participate in drafting the measures through a task force. However, some weeks after the creation of this task force, the

²⁷ See <https://www.industry.gov.au/policies-and-initiatives/australias-climate-change-strategies>

²⁸ See <https://energia.gob.cl/panel/mesa-de-trabajo-descarbonizacion>

²⁹ See <https://www.wri.org/just-transitions/colombia>

³⁰ See <https://dapre.presidencia.gov.co/normativa/normativa/LEY%202099%20DEL%2010%20DE%20JULIO%20DE%202021.pdf>

trade unions quit.³¹ Their reason for leaving the task force was their disagreement with the process (a lack of effective involvement) and also the policies proposed, with limited attention to the impact on workers' well-being of the closure of electricity plants without a restructuring strategy.

Countries where policies have addressed not only decarbonization, but also the promotion of green workplaces

A third group consists of cases where, in addition to policies aimed at tackling the impact of climate change and decarbonization, policies have been formulated to help businesses to change their production processes in order to reduce emissions and promote green workplaces.

In Ireland, several instruments and policies have been developed in order to assist local communities and companies in moving forward in their objectives to become more environmentally sustainable. In the report, *Addressing Employment Vulnerability as Part of a Just Transition in Ireland*,³² three priority areas are identified requiring a more proactive capacity to govern the impact of the transition: lifelong learning, training and education; effective support for viable but vulnerable companies; and ensuring that funding has the greatest possible local impact.

The Netherlands is one of the countries where institutionalized social dialogue through the Social and Economic Council (SER) has played an important role in adopting an integrated approach to the development of just transitions and green workplaces agendas. Already in 2013, the SER facilitated the signing of the Energy Agreement for Sustainable Growth.³³ This initiative provided a first negotiated input to the governance of decarbonization and fight against climate change. This Agreement constitutes an example of multi-stakeholder engagement, with the participation of employers, trade unions, environmental organizations and other civil society organizations and local communities. It contains provisions on energy conservation, boosting energy from renewable sources and job creation.

In relation to the impact on employment of the ecological transition, the advisory report "Energy transition and employment: Opportunities for a sustainable future" provided a key input for 2019 Dutch National Climate Agreement in relation to the theme of labour market and training. The advisory report tried to answer several questions posed by the Dutch Government, including the implications of energy transitions for employment opportunities in different sectors and regions, and the role of public authorities and social partners in providing effective responses to the challenges.

The role of social dialogue has been particularly important in the 2019 National Climate Agreement, which is part of the Dutch climate policy. The Agreement was signed by many actors and companies in the Netherlands to combat climate change. The Government's central goal in the National Climate Agreement is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Netherlands by 49 per cent by 2030 compared to 1990 levels. In Chapter 4 of the Agreement, reference is made to most of the recommendations made by the SER in the above-mentioned advisory report.

One of the best practices, when it comes to the role of social dialogue in promoting green workplaces, was the 2011 Green Accord in South Africa, signed in South Africa's National Parliament. It was launched at the COP17 talks and constitutes one of the most comprehensive social pacts on green jobs in the world, building a partnership to create 300,000 new jobs by 2020, in economic activities as diverse as energy generation, manufacturing of products that reduce carbon emissions, farming activities to provide feedstock for biofuels, soil and environmental management and eco-tourism.³⁴ The Accord included commitments by

³¹ See <https://english.sta.si/2923224/unions-quit-task-force-for-coal-restructuring>

³² See http://files.nesc.ie/nesc_reports/en/149_Transition.pdf

³³ See <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/ceslink/resources/docs/netherlands---agreement-on-energy-policy-in-practice.pdf>

³⁴ See a detailed explanation of the pact at <https://www.gov.za/south-africas-green-economy-accord>

stakeholders toward a greener economy in South Africa. At the same time, the parties will work together to ensure that the process of greening the economy promotes employment creation and improves conditions for the poor.

An interesting aspect of this initiative was the commitment in relation to the role of social partners to promote green workplaces. It was stated that business would actively promote retrofitting by companies and households to reduce energy use, especially in commercial buildings. By contrast, trade unions will establish joint workplace committees to discuss and implement energy efficiency plans.

With the support of the UN PAGE, the Government of Senegal organized in 2020 the Green Economy Days as a forum to present the strategy to sustain actions, beyond the work of PAGE, and further anchor the green economy in Senegal.³⁵ Adopting a multi-stakeholder approach, this initiative served to review existing policies in relation to green employment policies; green skills and green jobs; circular economy; and programmes for future skill development - all with a view to developing a road map for the continuation of green economy activities.

South Korea's 2020 Green New Deal has incorporated a stronger social dimension compared to its predecessor, the Green Growth Strategy (Lee and Woo 2020). The Green New Deal aims at eradicating social inequalities and poverty, especially when these are a consequence (direct or indirect) of the transition towards a low carbon economy. An important area of the Green New Deal is the innovation in the green industry (Lee and Woo 2020, 9). But it provides a detailed estimate of the potential number of jobs created out of the policy actions it promotes. Overall, it envisages the creation of 659,000 jobs in the three priority areas of the Deal: Green Transition of Infrastructures, Low-Carbon and Decentralized Energy Supply and Innovation in the Green Industry. Recent analysis of the impact of the Green New Deal has showed limited progress in attaining job creation goals.³⁶

Spain is one of the countries where social dialogue around the just transition has become more institutionalized and encompassed through just transition agreements. For example, the transition agreement between the Government, trade unions (Comisiones Obreras, the Unión General de Trabajadores and the Unión Sindical Obrera) and the National Federation of Coal Mining Businesses (Carbunion) covers Spain's privately-owned pits until 2027 (other agreements will cover public sector mining operations and other industries such as electricity). EU regional development funds are a key part of Spain's just transitions efforts. National and EU funding will support investments in business and clean energy initiatives (2019-2023); early retirement for miners over 48 years; retraining for green jobs; and environmental restoration of affected areas. This last point is worth noting since environmental restoration and land management are often absent from transition plans.

In March 2021, the Government, trade unions and electrical companies signed the Agreement for a Fair Energy Transition for the thermal power plants in closure, which includes the commitment of the parties to accompany the labour transition and the economic reactivation of the areas affected by such closures.³⁷ With the adherence of EDP, a global leading company in the energy sector, all the coal-fired power plants in Spain are incorporated into this agreement, the only one in the world due to the consensus reached with social partners.

Among the measures it includes, of note is the Government's development of a plan to support professional training and job placement for workers to facilitate the adaptation of training plans to the demand for new profiles. This is expected to have a positive impact on the possibilities to create new, greener jobs within the new activities and companies established. Through this agreement, the companies undertake

³⁵ See <https://www.un-page.org/third-edition-green-economy-days-held-senegal>

³⁶ See <https://hk.boell.org/en/2020/12/21/south-koreas-green-new-deal-has-failed-create-green-jobs>

³⁷ See <https://www.miteco.gob.es/es/prensa/ultimas-noticias/el-gobierno-firma-con-sindicatos-y-empresas-el-acuerdo-para-la-transicion-justa-que-ampara-desde-hoy-a-todas-las-centrales-termicas-de-carbon-de/tcm:30-524274>

to develop a plan to support workers and territories that includes proposals for new investments in the areas, and design relocation plans for their own personnel and give priority to the hiring of workers from auxiliary companies.

▶ 3 Conclusions and policy recommendations to enhance the contribution of social dialogue and NSDIs to just transitions and green workplaces

The analysis of the role of social dialogue and NSDIs in promoting green workplace initiatives in selected countries with different challenges stemming from climate change and diverse social dialogue traditions and institutions, allows us to extract some relevant conclusions and provide some policy pointers to help social partners to enhance the contribution of social dialogue to green job policies and processes.

First, the analysis shows how, in a good number of countries, social dialogue processes have been put in place to govern the just transition. However, there are significant differences between the characteristics of these processes and actors involved. The multi-stakeholder social dialogue approach, with the participation of diverse civil society actors, including social partners, is configured as the predominant model. This approach is a response to the complexity of the problems entailed by the just transition, requiring the incorporation of all these actors into the policy process. It is noteworthy that the creation of ad hoc participation and specific social dialogue bodies has been observed in some countries to deal with issues of the just transition. In some cases, these bodies are dependent on the government, while in other cases they have developed within the NSDIs. In some countries, a non-participatory approach is maintained in the design of just transition plans, although this is not the predominant approach among the countries surveyed. Just transition policies emanating from countries where this technocratic or government-led approach is dominant may have problems not only from the point of view of democratic legitimacy, but also due to limited effectiveness. It is precisely in these countries where the support of international organizations has proven to be key in initiating some social dialogue processes and giving momentum to others.

Furthermore, this Working Paper also shows that having a social dialogue approach to just transitions at the national level should facilitate the existence of similar processes at enterprise level. However, the limited evidence available in this regard shows that social dialogue at national level is not a sufficient condition for the development of green policies and agreements at company level. Besides, in a recent global review of collective bargaining, the ILO highlighted that just under a quarter of the agreements analysed address environmental transitions (ILO 2022). Examples of collective agreements including clauses relating to the green transition can be found in Spain, where the integrated “water cycle collective agreement” provided for the creation of a committee devoted to advice and consultation in matters related to the green transition.³⁸ In the Netherlands, the collective agreement of the Royal Dutch Touring Club (ANWB) shows very clearly the ways in which digitalization and the green transition interact and reinforce each other. In order to reach the zero emissions goal, the collective agreement of the ANWB stipulates that employees receive compensation not only when they travel to work, but also when they work from home. In fact, the ANWB’s hybrid scheme has been designed in such a way that the “greener” the employee’s work and travel, the higher the compensation. As of 1 January 2021, the existing scheme whereby the employee receives a fixed monthly allowance for commuting was replaced by an allowance per kilometer actually travelled, so that the longer distance travelled in public transport, the higher payment the worker gets. Negotiated just transitions at national level can have a positive impact on the extension of green workplace policies through two mechanisms. The first such mechanism is intra-organizational, whereby social partners use their structures in order to inform activities at lower levels and provide employees with the required technical skills. The second, which involves the participation of social partners in the elaboration and implementation of just transition plans, is a guarantee that these initiatives are carried out taking account of the specific institutional and organizational conditions to implement them, which will contribute to enhancing

³⁸ See <https://agua.fsc.ccoo.es/31f64f5f97286014d4f718796316f05f000050.pdf>

their effectiveness. However, the analysis has made clear the importance of including specific references in these national plans to support implementation at the lower level through, for example, training actions, awareness-raising campaigns and technical support. Otherwise, these plans run the risk of having a limited impact on the greening of workplaces.

The support and assistance of international organizations is particularly important for the development of social dialogue in the field of just transition and green workplaces, since such issues fall outside the social partners' traditional agenda. In many countries, social partners do not have qualified people and must develop organizational skills to be able to negotiate effectively on these issues. This problem becomes even more acute in the case of initiatives to develop green workplaces, since worker representatives at company level often lack the skills and knowledge necessary to negotiate on these issues.

Regarding the role of the NSDs, the analysis shows two important aspects of their activity.

First, as advisory bodies, or bodies with a role within the policymaking process, the cases analysed show a very diverse picture. In general, NSDIs have not always played an important role in the design of just transition plans. Moreover, their participation in the development of green workplace plans has been even less important. In some cases, NSDIs do not have a mandate to address these issues. In other cases, they have played a residual role, either because the government has not developed just transition initiatives or because it has not consulted them. But a number of countries in the analysis demonstrated a very active role of the NSDIs, participating in consultation processes related to the just transition, and providing analysis and studies in relation to these issues.

Second, the role of NSDIs in providing technical support, analyses and studies to identify key challenges, and in proposing policies, becomes even more important in the just transition and green workplace plans. Considering the green skills gaps that unions, workers' representatives, business organizations and companies may have, the role of NSDIs in providing analysis and facilitating the training of social agents can be significant. Through these studies and analyses, the NSDIs not only contribute to placing these issues on the agenda of social dialogue and social agents, but they also develop a training and capacity-building function of the utmost importance.

Main obstacles facing social dialogue to supporting and promoting green workplaces

The first obstacle observed for social partners and NSDIs to contributing to the promotion of green workplaces is a limited inclusion of these issues on the agenda of social dialogue. Several factors might explain this limited presence, with some variance across countries. In some cases, it is explained by the focus on short-term mitigation policies rather than medium and long-term orientation. In other cases, it is related to the low priority attached by governments to these topics, or to disagreements between social partners regarding their importance. In those countries where there are open social dialogue processes, they have normally focused on discussing just transition plans or adaptation to climate change. There are few references to specific policies and initiatives to develop green workplaces. The analysis of the policies and issues that have been the subject of social dialogue in the selected countries has clearly shown this aspect with a generalist approach, and with a lack of specificity in most cases. This problem intensifies in those countries more affected by climate change or decarbonization, where green workplace initiatives remain marginal on the policy agenda. Therefore, it would be important to identify concrete actions and resources in these plans to implement these policies in companies.

The second related obstacle is the weak articulation between different levels of social dialogue. Being an agenda that goes beyond the traditional focus of social dialogue on labour market and social issues, it is important that it gradually becomes incorporated into the different levels of social dialogue. To be more effective, trade union and business organizations themselves should extend the agendas related to green

workplaces in all areas of negotiation and dialogue: from the national to company levels, not forgetting the sectorial and local levels. For example, the analysis reveals a very limited presence of initiatives on green workplaces in collective bargaining, including sector and company bargaining. Thus, in most countries where social dialogue processes have been developed in relation to these issues, they have remained excessively general and abstract.

A third obstacle refers to the shortage of competences within trade union and business organizations related to the just transition and green workplaces. This shortage occurs at all organizational levels but is particularly important at the company level, where the policies agreed between employers and workers' representatives must be implemented. Even though several studies have shown how trade unions have increasingly incorporated green jobs and transitions into their agenda (Galgóczy 2020), this contrasts with the limited knowledge and skills of lower level representatives.

Recommendations to strengthen the role of social dialogue in facilitating and promoting green workplace initiatives

A first recommendation would be to facilitate continuity in social dialogue processes in relation to the green transition. As made clear by the analysis, there are different formulas and mechanisms that can contribute to achieving this goal. For example, in some countries special committees have been created within the NSDIs themselves. In other cases, task forces have been established within one of the ministries involved in the green transition. The experience of these countries shows the benefits of providing continuity, resources and capacities to this type of bodies. On the one hand, they contribute to adopting a transversal approach in relation to the green transition and facilitating the incorporation of aspects related to this into other policies. On the other hand, this type of body contributes to the creation of skills and knowledge in relation to the just transition and green workplaces within the participating organizations.

With regard to a second recommendation, a positive assessment has been made of the existence of social dialogue structures at the local level that allow for the provision of advice and support for companies and workers in the implementation of a green agenda. These local level structures would serve to convey the general guidelines at the national level, and apply them to the companies, taking into account their characteristics, as well as those of the territory. However, for these structures to be able to deliver green job policies, it is important to have the support (both financial and technical) from higher level structures and bodies.

A third recommendation would be further development of the green workplace agenda in collective bargaining. There are currently few experiences of inclusion of these policies and initiatives related to green workplaces in collective bargaining. In particular, the presence of these issues in sectoral collective bargaining can contribute to the expansion of practices across companies in a given sector.

Fourth, the analysis shows the importance of promoting training for trade union and business organizations to enable them to engage in dialogue and negotiate on green workplace issues at all levels: the national, sectoral, local and company levels. This is surely one of the most urgent aspects to push the expansion of the green workplace agenda.

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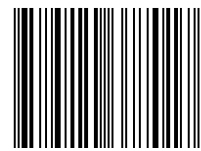
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