

Position paper of the COMECE Secretariat
**A Just Transition that protects
Human Dignity, Work and Communities**

Europe's commitment to ecological transformation is both necessary and urgent. At the same time, it raises profound social, economic and ethical questions. Among workers in Europe's industrial regions, a recurring concern is whether this transition will leave them behind and whether their children will be forced to leave their home regions in search of decent work.

For the ecological transition to succeed, it must be experienced by citizens not as a threat, but as a shared and hopeful endeavor. It must be shaped with those affected by change, not imposed upon them. **A transition perceived as unjust risks further weakening already fragile democratic trust and undermining long-term public support for climate action.**

From the perspective of Catholic social teaching, ecological responsibility and social justice are inseparable. Human dignity, the value of work, solidarity between generations and territories, and care for the common good must remain at the heart of Europe's response to ecological and industrial transformation.

The dignity of work and anticipation of change

Work is not merely an economic activity. It is a source of dignity, personal fulfilment, family stability and social participation. Abrupt and poorly anticipated industrial restructuring, including sudden closures, last-minute announcements and improvised redundancy plans, can deeply harm workers, families and entire communities, especially in regions already facing structural challenges.

A just transition therefore requires anticipation. Planning change before it becomes a crisis is an expression of prudence and responsibility. Policies accompanying the ecological transition should promote early assessment of skills needs, access to training and reskilling, and the meaningful involvement of workers in shaping their professional futures. *Anticipation is not an administrative burden, but a safeguard against social dislocation and long-term economic loss.*

Social dialogue and participation as foundations of social peace

Social peace is not achieved by chance, but through justice, dialogue and shared responsibility. Meaningful social dialogue between public authorities, employers, workers and their representatives is essential to ensure that transitions are fair, credible and socially sustainable.

When workers and communities are involved in anticipating and managing change, reforms are more likely to be understood and supported. Conversely,

transitions carried out without adequate consultation risk fueling fear, resistance and social fragmentation, creating fertile ground for narratives that promise to halt the transition altogether rather than improve it.

Protecting communities and Europe's productive capacity

The ecological transition takes place in a context of geopolitical uncertainty, strategic dependencies and economic competition. Europe must pursue its climate objectives while ensuring the dignity of its workers through tailored support and improved skills for the green transition. **The loss of quality jobs and industrial know-how weakens not only competitiveness, but also regional cohesion and social resilience.**

Supporting quality employment, retaining skills within Europe, strengthening value chains and accompanying regions and communities facing structural transformation are therefore matters of social responsibility. This approach reflects the vision of integral ecology articulated in *Laudato Si'*, which calls for transitions that leave no one behind.

Rebuilding trust through fairness and solidarity

Public support for ecological transformation depends on whether people experience it as fair and credible. When change is anticipated, accompanied and shared, confidence and engagement can grow. When workers and communities feel exposed to unmanaged risks, trust in institutions and in climate policies erodes.

In this light, COMECE sees value in legislative initiatives that provide concrete tools to support a just transition, such as **training during working hours, early planning of industrial change, targeted support for regions and communities in transition, stronger European value chains and measures to retain skills within Europe**. Such tools help ensure that climate action can go hand in hand with human dignity, social cohesion, long-term resilience, and a strong economy.

A just transition is therefore not only a technical or economic challenge, but a moral one. It calls for solidarity between generations, territories and social groups, and for particular attention to those most exposed to change.

Conclusion

Europe's Christian tradition reminds us that lasting integration is built through concrete expressions of solidarity. In assessing initiatives related to just transition, policymakers are invited to consider whether they genuinely **protect the dignity of work, strengthen social dialogue, respect subsidiarity and support those most affected by transformation**.

Only a transition that is humane, inclusive and socially just will be able to unite Europe and secure lasting support for the ecological transformation needed for the common good.