

Just transition: Make it work Towards decent and high quality work in a green economy

G7 Employment Ministerial Meeting
Communiqué, Wolfsburg, 24 May 2022

Chapeau

We, the Ministers of Labour, Employment, and Social Affairs strongly condemn Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of choice against Ukraine. It constitutes a serious violation of international law and a grave breach of the United Nations Charter. We are deeply concerned about the far-reaching economic, social and political consequences of the Russian aggression both regionally and globally. We strongly support the ILO Resolution on the "Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine from the perspective of the ILO's mandate" from March 2022 as well as the statement of the OECD Council on the "Russian aggression against Ukraine" from February 2022. We underline in this regard the importance of ILO Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience and its effective implementation.

We gathered in Wolfsburg on 24 May 2022 to agree on concrete actions and joint steps towards a just transition and the creation of decent, high quality work for a green economy. We acknowledge that the global COVID-19 pandemic has hastened the structural change of our labour markets and societies in an unprecedented way, which in some cases has required significant adaptations to labour market policies and social protection systems to meet new needs. Taking into account the ILO Guidelines for a just transition and the OECD policy approach for a human-centred green transition, we underscore the need for increased efforts to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and we reiterate our commitment to the rules-based multilateral system and sustainable development grounded in international human rights obligations and commitments.

To promote continuity and prioritize coordinated action across the G7 on critical labour, social and employment issues, we establish a standing Employment Working Group within the G7 and will aim to convene as ministers on an annual basis in accordance with the agenda of the G7 presidencies.

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Ensuring Employability

1. In light of the interlinkages and the significant impact of the three key drivers of structural change – digitalisation, decarbonisation, demographic change – on labour markets and employment, we commit to promoting decent and high quality work including for a green and digital economy. We will address the labour market – challenges of structural change in our economies in recognizing the importance of addressing the needs of all people so that no geographic region or person irrespective of their gender, age, disability, race, sexual orientation or economic status, is left behind. We will pursue this in close cooperation with the social partners and by paying special attention to the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
2. We commit to significantly strengthening efforts to foster continuing education and training (CET)¹ and agree on an Action Plan for Inclusive Continuing Education and Training of Adults towards a Green Economy (Annex A). This plan provides a roadmap to adequately train and equip all working-age adults in order to meet the needs of a changing labour market for a green economy. We acknowledge in particular that low-skilled adults face greater barriers and are less likely to participate in CET. We will strive to substantially raise the participation rate of low-skilled adults in CET measures and reduce the gap with other groups. We ask the OECD to monitor this progress in G7 countries in a statistically coherent manner.²
3. We acknowledge the role of the public employment services within the G7 and beyond in facilitating an inclusive and just transition. Public employment services can make an important contribution by adjusting their support services to new labour market challenges and expanding their cooperation to promote employability. In this regard we acknowledge and endorse the bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the employment services in G7 member states and acknowledge the role of World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES) in facilitating cooperation, exchange of data and knowledge sharing among the employment services worldwide. We particularly encourage the cooperation of the employment services in the areas of green jobs and realising a just transition.
4. We agree that it is important to monitor the creation of decent work and good quality jobs that are contributing to a green, nature-positive economy and a just transition. We ask the OECD and the ILO to develop a methodology and definition to do this, including for identifying the quality for these jobs, sectors and worker characteristics. In doing so, the ILO and OECD should take into account relevant existing definitions and frameworks in coordination with relevant stakeholders. Jointly with the Development Ministers, we also call upon the ILO and OECD to identify indicators and methods for measuring the employment impact, of future programmes and investments on job quality and quantity that aim at driving forward a green and just transition in countries receiving development assistance by G7 members.

1 Continuing education and training (CET) is learning undertaken by adults who have already completed their initial education and training and entered working life. CET can include formal and non-formal education and training. See for example: <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/ec98075e-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/ec98075e-en>

2 The monitoring will be conducted as described in the technical note of the OECD from 20 May 2022.

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Improving Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)

5. The COVID-19 pandemic has again highlighted the urgent need to protect the lives and the health of workers as well as to ensure safe and healthy working conditions and environments around the world. Effective occupational safety and health measures are essential to protecting workers, ensuring decent work, maintaining high productivity and promoting employability. We therefore commit to strengthening and improving OSH in the face of structural and climate change and environmental degradation by implementing the G7 “Roadmap towards Safe and Healthy Work in a Green Economy” as outlined in Annex B to this declaration. We emphasize the importance of close cooperation with social partners on the matter of OSH.
6. We share a strong commitment to advance decent work for all around the world, including in global supply chains. We therefore strongly support the inclusion of safety and health at work in the ILO framework of fundamental principles and rights at work and the integration of relevant OSH convention(s) in the ILO core labour standards.
7. We acknowledge the important contribution the Vision Zero Fund makes to improving OSH in global supply chains. We express our renewed commitment to support the Fund’s work and welcome a greater focus on climate change and OSH in global supply chains, including through the implementation of a new pilot project within the Vision Zero Fund.

Strengthening Universal Social Protection

8. Universal access to social protection is essential to accelerating progress towards achieving the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We emphasize that the “right of everyone to social security, including social insurance” is a human right, enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations (1966), which the social protection systems of the States Parties should progressively realise. We reaffirm the principles set out in IL O Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202 and the ILO Global Call to Action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis of June 2021.
9. We emphasize the value of universal and adequate social protection systems in general and even more so in times of crises, pandemics, aggravated inequalities and increasing climate change and environmental degradation. We seek to identify and implement measures to improve their resilience and responsiveness in close cooperation with the social partners. We also recognize the role of the social economy in complementing actions to deliver quality social services.
10. We each design and implement employment and social policies at national level that underpin necessary climate action in a socially just and gender-responsive manner. We acknowledge the important role these policies play in offsetting disproportionately high social and economic burdens for the most vulnerable in society as we transition to a carbon neutral economy.

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11. In addition, in cooperation with other relevant ministries, we commit to continuing our intensive efforts to mitigate the social impact of the rising energy and food prices, which have been exacerbated as a result of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war of choice in Ukraine, giving special attention to disproportionately affected households.
12. On the basis of ILO Recommendation No. 205 we aim to take measures, in accordance with national and applicable international law, to facilitate the integration of refugees from Ukraine into the labour market, to protect and ensure their equal labour rights, and to provide access to adequate social protection while also strengthening the resilience of our social protection systems.
13. Achieving universal and adequate social protection for all requires both financial mobilisation and coordination among international organizations, multilateral donors and other actors. Together with the Development ministers, we welcome the UN Secretary-General's initiative for a "Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transition" to create 400 million jobs and to extend social protection including floors to the people currently not covered by any social protection system or measure by 2030, and support the process towards its establishment.

Ensuring Respect for Human Rights and Labour and Environmental Standards in Corporate Operations and Value Chains

14. Sustainable value chains are of paramount importance for achieving human rights, decent work for all and protecting the environment. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises have given us a shared framework for how businesses should identify, prevent, mitigate and account for their negative impacts on people and the environment with which they are involved. We welcome current efforts to ensure that the OECD Guidelines remain fit for purpose.
15. We recall our commitment to respect, promote and to realize the ILO fundamental principles and rights at work, namely freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
16. We recognize the vital role of independent trade unions and a strong voice for workers in effective remediation and broader due diligence, yet violations of the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining remain too common. We remain deeply concerned about the increasing, unacceptable use of violence against human rights defenders, including those working on labour, land, environmental and indigenous issues. Moreover, access to justice remains challenging for many victims and survivors of severe abuses.

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17. Child labour and forced labour are among the most severe and pressing human rights issues and are at the same time economic concerns. We welcome the Durban Call to Action agreed by social partners, governments, civil society and youth participating in the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour to end child labour by tackling its root causes and promoting transparency, due diligence, and remediation in value chains.
18. As the G7, we have a particularly important role to play in achieving better outcomes for people and planet through a smart mix of mandatory and voluntary measures including legislation, incentives and guidance for business. Implementation of the authoritative frameworks of the UN, the ILO and the OECD, including through mandatory measures, to ensure corporate due diligence and the elimination of child labour and forced labour along value chains, including such as through import bans on products made with child or forced labour, have gained traction among G7 members and at the EU level. This momentum offers an opportunity: to ensure coherence in regulatory measures taken at the national level, provide legal clarity to business, reduce compliance costs for companies and, most importantly, prevent business involvement with harms to people and planet in the first instance, and enable access to effective remedy wherever they occur.
19. We strive to contribute to a global level playing field aligned with the authoritative standards of the UNGPs, ILO's MNE Declaration and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. In cooperation with relevant ministries, we are committed to working towards an international consensus on business and human rights to strengthen compliance with these standards, including through, but not limited to, mandatory measures, that
 - are implementable and proportionate for businesses and provide fair competition,
 - avoid the risk of legal fragmentation and competing interpretations, thereby strengthening international coherence and enhancing predictability for businesses,
 - effectively protect rights-holders, in particular those at heightened risk of vulnerability or marginalization, and bear in mind the different risks that may be faced by women and men,
 - provide for greater multilateral cooperation to address instances of abuse in global value chains, share information, and support effective remedy,
 - encourage and facilitate a broader range of states to adopt and enforce corporate due diligence measures.
20. We will work on a coherent and coordinated G7 approach and stand ready to engage constructively in discussions at the UN and the ILO in close consultation with all relevant stakeholders to explore ideas and options for a consensus-based legally binding instrument at the international level that adds value to the existing legal and policy approaches and is implementable.

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Annex A

Action Plan for inclusive Continuing Education and Training of Adults

With the 3D (e. g., digitalization, demographic change, and decarbonisation) affecting economies and societies around the world, the skills that people need in everyday life and in the labour market are changing rapidly. To help workers adapt, we must develop forward-looking policies that equip every individual with the necessary competencies to perform the work of today and tomorrow, thereby allowing them to play a more productive and active role in society. Continuing education and training (CET) is a key answer to these developments. Today, a number of structural barriers hinder participation in CET. We must enable and actively promote inclusive access to CET, especially for those who face systemic barriers to accessing CET advisory services and programmes.

We, the G7 Employment Ministers have identified and will therefore consider the following roadmap as we strive to remove barriers and make continuing education and lifelong learning, more inclusive and accessible:

1. **Foster a better alignment between CET and skill needs in the labour market:** Underline the potential and importance of developing and implementing ambitious national and/or regional CET strategies together with relevant stakeholders. This will include enhancing skill anticipation tools as well as evaluating the outcomes of upskilling and reskilling programmes.
2. **Strengthen the nexus between education and labour market policies and the concrete world of work** by involving and including the social partners and all other key stakeholders in developing and implementing ambitious national and/or regional CET strategies. The goal is to promote a culture of life-long learning and enable stakeholders to anticipate re- and upskilling needs.
3. **Improve participation in CET by providing targeted support for specific groups:** Promote the participation in CET, especially for those populations and target groups whose participation rate is low, e. g. through family-friendly and accessible CET programmes and well-targeted strategies for people further away from the labour market and those no longer accustomed to studying.
 - Improve basic and core skills to reduce the number, of low-skilled workers: Examine continuously how people with low basic and core, skills (including reading, writing and arithmetic skills, digital skills, problem-solving skills and social skills) can be better reached to enable them to acquire these skills.
 - Open up paths for unemployed persons to regain employment: Analysing and identifying, ways to remove barriers that may exist for unemployed persons when regaining employment.
 - Periods of unemployment should be used as opportunities for skills development and CET delivery, when appropriate.
 - Review whether information and guidance services and incentives sufficiently highlight and support skills development opportunities.

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- Promote gender equality and fight all types of discrimination: Reduce structural barriers to CET programmes (e.g. in STEM occupations) and barriers caused by gender stereotypes and other forms of discrimination including the unequal distribution of care responsibilities and the digital gender divide.
 - Support workers at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): Take effective measures to encourage dialogue and networking on CET among SMEs together with education and training providers and the social partners, thus enabling the highest possible number of workers to access learning opportunities.
4. **Enhance CET information and guidance services:** Expand information and guidance services and strengthen the right to access these services. Tailor services to the needs of groups with particularly low participation, e. g. through providing advisory outreach services in communities and the work-place; initiate CET informational campaigns, including through cooperation with social partners and civil society organisations depending on national circumstances.
 5. **Strengthen support for CET for individuals:** Identify opportunities and create incentives for skills development; such initiatives may include, e. g., targeted government funding for CET opportunities, including financial incentives, the introduction or expansion of government-sponsored full-time and part-time education and training leave, and the strengthening of public-private partnerships in the area of skills development and CET.
 6. **Expand digital CET programmes:** Engage in capacity building, further developing technical capacities while tailoring those to the needs of target groups. This includes issues of developing blended learning opportunities to reach populations with low digital skills as well as providing these target groups where necessary with the technical infrastructure. Identify and harness many new practices accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic in developing digitally-based information and guidance services in the field of CET. Validate and recognize learning outcomes, including providing credentials.

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Annex B

G7 Roadmap towards Safe and Healthy Work in a Green Economy

The three drivers of structural change – digitalisation, decarbonisation and demographic change – pose new challenges in the field of occupational safety and health (OSH) all over the world. The health of many outdoor and indoor workers will be put at risk due to heat stress, UV radiation, altered patterns of air pollutants, increased spread of vectors carrying infectious diseases and new allergens caused by higher average temperatures. This risk will be particularly acute for workers in developing countries and emerging economies, many of whom are working as part of global supply chains. At the same time, climate change also increases the likelihood of extreme weather events such as floods, storms, droughts and heat waves which also pose risks for workers.

In addition, there are many OSH-related challenges involved in transforming the economy through resource-saving, climate-neutral processes. These include the exposure to chemical substances (especially hazardous substances) and the move to new green industries, such as using low-carbon hydrogen fuel.

Recognizing that effects vary across different countries, it is important to work closely with national and international social partners and international organisations to enable appropriate management of occupational safety and health in the face of structural change and climate change. We, the G7 Labour and Employment Ministers, have identified the following priorities to promote good occupational safety and health in the face of climate change through better anticipation, prevention and regulation.

Promoting research and networking amongst occupational safety and health institutions

- Identify research gaps concerning the occupational safety and health dimension of new climate change-related challenges and address them in relation to specific sectors and regions;
- Promote research and networking in the field of occupational safety and health in particularly affected sectors and hazardous activities;
- Exchange information on ongoing and future research projects and identify synergies and areas for potential cooperation;
- Support interdisciplinary projects in order to broaden research and develop adequate technologies, preventive measures and effective enforcement policies and methods;
- Identify technologies and measures that maintain safety and health at work despite the effects of climate change.

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Supporting companies and workers in realising preventive measures

- Promote effective, sustainable occupational safety and health measures in companies, especially SMEs including through inclusion of joint worker-management dialogue;
- Emphasize preventive measures as a central element of OSH management depending on national circumstances and differing climate change-related challenges: e. g. by adapting workplaces (e.g. taking the overall indoor atmosphere into account, sustainable cooling systems in offices, climate-active buildings that are suitable for higher temperatures), reviewing working arrangements (e.g. temperature-dependent break times, guidelines for working from home), adapting equipment (e.g. personal protective gear to shield workers from UV radiation, suitable work clothes to prevent heat accumulation), ensuring access to adequate drinking water, and promoting education and training;³
- Adapt information and early warning systems to the challenges of climate change and integrate the resulting information into occupational safety and health management that take effect when warnings are in place (e.g. concerning extreme weather conditions);
- Promote awareness-raising campaigns and training programmes as well as guidance materials in cooperation with social partners to equip management and workers with vital occupational safety and health precautions in the face of climate change;
- Increase education of workers on safety and health at work, as well as on measures to reduce their own climate footprint in the workplace, e. g. by including occupational safety and health in apprenticeships as well as in continuing education and training programmes;
- Strengthen incentives for employers to improve occupational safety and health measures;
- Strengthen compliance with requirements of occupational safety and health by different mediums, e.g. enforcement through labour inspections and through strategic public procurement policies in order to set incentives for companies to act in a socially sustainable manner.

Strengthening social partnership and finding sector-specific solutions

- Encourage dialogue forums and processes involving the social partners, industry associations, workers' representatives and other stakeholders to develop common measures, standards, and practices that ensure safety and health at work in sectors particularly affected by climate change;
- Develop joint OSH solutions related to heat stress, UV radiation and biological risks in particularly affected sectors, including risks related to outdoor work (e.g. agriculture, forestry and construction), and heat stress for office workers;
- Work towards joint OSH solutions related to innovative new materials in green industries (including hazardous substances) and weighing the need of their continued use in, for example, the growing recycling industry, new raw material extraction and the renewable energy sector.

3 Cf. European Commission (CORDIS): Periodic Reporting for Period 3 – HEAT-SHIELD.
<https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/668786/reporting>

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Review and adaptation of legal frameworks

- Review and adapt laws, ordinances and statutory regulations as needed;
- Involve the social partners, sector representatives, occupational safety and health authorities as well as labour inspectorates when adapting legal frameworks and evaluating measures;
- Ensure that the rules take into account the provisions of relevant ILO standards and are clear so that employers and supervisory authorities have a reliable basis to take action.