

A Just Transition for the gas sector: inclusive, future proof, flexible



As industries and the broader economy come through these challenging years, we remain committed to a Just Transition and quality employment in Europe. To achieve this, continued analysis, social dialogue, planning and investment are needed at European, national and company level. The launch of the Syndex report on skills in the gas sector marks the start of a long road of collaboration.

Inclusive

In the run up to 2023, the EU Year of Skills, Eurogas has been working with EPSU, IndustriAll Europe, and independent consultants at Syndex, towards a Just Transition. The transition in the gas sector is vital for climate objectives, and for quality, non-seasonal jobs. We want to see Europe lead in new gas technologies and make the most of this opportunity for jobs.

The Just Transition is a core objective of the Paris Agreement and was defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in its [Just Transition Guidelines](#) in 2015. We align with the ILO's vision as:

1. mainstreaming sustainability across sectors, focusing on local businesses and diversification of activities and using regulatory, financial and fiscal incentives.
2. developing solidarity mechanisms to support the sectors and regions most affected by the transition, including adequate social protection and training programmes for affected workers.

3. implementing rigorous socio-economic impact assessments and developing detailed long-term strategies for achieving climate neutrality within the EU by 2050.

4. effective social dialogue, strong collective bargaining, and the participation of social partners that will help design long-term strategies to anticipate the changes at all levels (European, national, sectoral and company level).

Future proof

Scaling up domestic energy production has taken on a new level of urgency at EU level since Russia invaded Ukraine. Hydrogen and biomethane have an important role to play in reducing dependence, and offering secure, affordable energy to industries and citizens.

With biomethane, there are the added benefits of net negative emissions, and diversification of rural incomes.



This project has received funding from the European Union under the grant agreement VS/2021/0044 – Challenges and opportunities for employment in the gas sector in the context of the European Energy Transition: Ensuring a Just Transition for workers.

Disclaimer: The sole responsibility for any error or omissions lies with the editor. This content does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information herein.

REPowerEU

In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the EU has stepped up efforts on hydrogen and biomethane. By 2030, the target is to have 35bcm of biomethane and 20mt of green hydrogen in our networks. Producing, transporting and using these gases has broad implications for the European workforce that must be managed properly.

Scaling these gases up and getting them to where they will be used presents challenges and opportunities for the gas sector. The decentralised nature of the work, and fast changing commercial environment, means that skills needs will need to be monitored and provided for.

We need to keep a strong focus on emissions reductions. CCUS will help develop the hydrogen economy and industries to decarbonise. This is a proven technology but one that needs to be rapidly scaled up to leverage its full potential. Concerning policy, clear targets and drivers are required, and investment will be needed in infrastructure and in people power.

CCUS strategy

2023, the EU Year of Skills, will see the EU Commission launch a CCUS strategy. There is a role for gas sector workers in CCUS for the production of blue hydrogen, and transporting industrial emissions to storage sites which can be done using repurposed oil and gas infrastructure.

Biomethane, hydrogen and CCUS are recognised as being key to secure, affordable energy, and for coal and oil phase-out. That will have skill implications as we decarbonise the networks, but the need doesn't end there.

Syndex's report shows that technical skills must be complemented by cross-cutting and soft skills, such as digitalisation, digital tools, cybersecurity, and project management.

Flexible

A dedicated new Eurogas taskforce will work through the recommendations in the Syndex report and feed into the EU Sectoral Social Dialogue for Gas as we continue towards a Just Transition. The Syndex report recommendations are as follows:

More granularity:

Syndex's report has gathered as much information about the state of play and trends in the sector as is possible at the macro level. It calls for such mappings to be repeated at national, regional and company level for the most granular understanding possible, as well as comprehensive scenario mappings that involve social partners for feedback.

The needs identified through these mappings would then be supported through appropriate HR tools such as competent frameworks for each job, and possible bridges between jobs or job families. They also highlight the need for dedicated financial resources and adequate recognition of local specificities.

Training:

Scaling up climate solutions like biomethane, hydrogen and CCUS will, according to Syndex, require relevant and clear training and retraining programmes covering geographical areas and company needs. These programmes should capitalise on the expertise in the gas sector and beyond.

There is a need to allocate specific budgets, set up internal training centres and share best practice on these points. Syndex note that this would be furthered by increased and prolonged interaction between the industry and education and training institutions at national level.

Very small enterprises (VSEs) and small- & medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are identified as being in need of dedicated support. Similarly, a tailored approach is required at the company, government and cross-sectoral level.

Social dialogue:

Syndex note the value of social dialogue and call for the involvement of the right actors at all levels. They highlight the value of input of such stakeholders in scenario mapping, anticipating skills needs, and building broad support for change. The report also points to the use of available tools at EU level to support a just transition.

The report highlights the need for capacity to deal with unexpected change. As Syndex note, “the war in Ukraine has demonstrated that there are unpredictable aspects that can strongly impact strategies.” They link this to a need to use new and existing social dialogue bodies at the company level with the full involvement of workers' representatives to establish just transition plans, monitor projects, and validate budgets. They also point to a need for steering committees, inspired by quality social dialogue, to steer these efforts.

Towards a possible EU framework agreement:

Eurogas intends to go one step beyond the recommendations and explore the possibility of an EU framework agreement on skills in the gas sector. If we succeed in this with our social partners it would allow the right approach to fostering talent and protecting workers carry through to national and company level.

Attracting and retaining diverse talent:

Syndex note that strengthening the attractiveness of the gas sector requires several levels of communication with public authorities and people living in the EU, particularly workers and job seekers.

This would explain the role of the sector in: the transition, domestic energy production, job creation, inter- and intra-sectoral bridges, and the technical and technological dimensions of the jobs.

More diverse and inclusive workplaces have more diversity of thought which, in turn, helps achieve climate and social goals.

Syndex stress that many people suffer from more than one type of discrimination. For that reason, gender inclusion cannot be properly managed without putting equal focus on anti-racism.

This logic, known as intersectionality, extends to ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and classism, etc. Intersectionality relates to any person who suffers from two or more types of prejudice, and who therefore stands at an intersection.

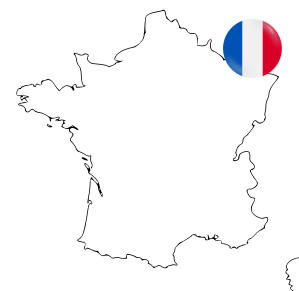
Possible actions to tackle this are outlined as including: equal share of voice for everyone in achieving a just transition; addressing pay gaps with a focus on several kinds of discrimination (not just on gender); tailored language to promote inclusivity in communications, including recruitment; joint action with universities and training institutes; incorporating diversity and inclusion into performance reviews, and; education for all stakeholders to support them through cultural change.

Communication with other sectors:

Given the challenges of the energy transition, it seems appropriate to adopt a global approach to energy jobs. They point to the need to facilitate reskilling and upskilling of employees from other sectors who could fill the recruitment gaps. Employees working in fields such as electricity, petroleum and chemicals could put their skills to good use in the gas sector as it decarbonises.

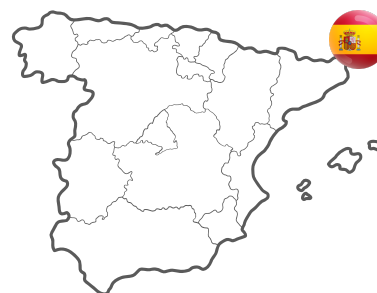
Best practice from across Europe

French company Engie has established a dedicated budget of EUR 100M for training and career development, as a part of a collective agreement signed in 2016. Social guarantees, support for voluntary mobility and reallocation in the event of geographical or functional transfer are also covered in the agreement.



Italgas' Strategic Plan 2022-2028 includes upskilling, reskilling and professional training investment. More than 600,000 hours of training are foreseen, including through their Managerial Academy. The programme is structured around the three axes of the new leadership model: People, Innovation, Excellence. Italgas Digital Factory is also helping to set the company apart in terms of digital skills.

Spain's Naturgy has implemented a Vocational Training Programme for Employability, as one of several tools foreseen in an agreement on Just Transition. The agreement seeks to guarantee employment in the areas affected by the closure of thermal power plants. These include plans for relocation of workers, including re-skilling and outplacement.



This project has received funding from the European Union under the grant agreement VS/2021/0044 – Challenges and opportunities for employment in the gas sector in the context of the European Energy Transition: Ensuring a Just Transition for workers.

Disclaimer: The sole responsibility for any error or omissions lies with the editor. This content does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information herein.