

A territorial JUST TRANSITION PLAN FOR HEALTH PROTECTION

Health Assessment Tool



As part of the EU Green Deal, the European Commission has established a Just Transition Mechanism, to ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, leaving no one behind. The aim is to mobilise at least €100 billion over the period 2021-2027¹.

The Just Transition Fund foresees the granting of public money to EU member states, which in turn provide it to carbon-intensive regions. Member States and local communities are responsible to prepare (territorial) plans and submit them in 2021 to start the funding process.

In the process of the preparation of the Just Transition plans, stakeholders such as the health and medical community play a key role to inform, assess and advocate for health protective Just Transition plans.

Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) believes a Just Transition must include the health perspective, in order to shift the economy towards a climate-neutral and health promoting future, while leaving no one behind. It must also provide targeted support to the most affected regions to alleviate the socio-economic impact of the transition but not lose sight of the health side of investments.

This tool prepared by HEAL is a deep-dive tool on the health aspects of the territorial just transition plans, with six principles, and is based on the toolkit developed by WWF².

It allows health professionals including doctors and patients, health experts, and anyone interested in the health aspects of Just Transition to assess how public health protection and the well-being of populations are included in a given territorial or national Just Transition plan. In this tool we provide criteria on which to judge whether a plan is health-promoting or not.

JUST AND HEALTHY TRANSITION PRINCIPLES

- 1 Cut GHG emissions quickly and ambitiously, to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees
- 2 End public financing for all fossil fuels and avoid pollution lock-in
- 3 Help to reach the zero pollution ambition
- 4 Promote health equity
- 5 Involve health experts and the health community in the design and implementation of Just Transition
- 6 Carry out a health impact assessment for all Just Transition measures

¹ <https://www.env-health.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/HEAL-Just-transition.pdf>

² <https://just-transitions-plan.wwf.eu/upload/WWF%20Territorial%20Just%20Transition%20Assessment%20Tool-%20annex%20of%20indicators%20%28PDF%29>



PRINCIPLE 1

CUT GHG EMISSIONS QUICKLY AND AMBITIOUSLY, TO LIMIT GLOBAL WARMING TO 1.5 DEGREES

► Deliver on long-term climate commitments to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees for health protection

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: No continent, country or community is immune from the health impacts of climate change. The changing climate has already produced considerable shifts in the underlying social and environmental determinants of health. Evidence shows that Europe is the region most vulnerable to heat-related health impacts globally. For the EU, the science is clear that cuts of at least -65% GHG by 2030 are needed to protect health, yield on the health benefits and opportunities for disease prevention.

► Increase the share of renewable energy in the region

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: Every form of power generation has trade-offs with smaller or larger negative effects on human health. It is important to prioritise those energy forms that come with the least impacts on health, both in the long and the short term. The following renewable energy sources have minimal health risks and should therefore be prioritised: solar, wind, and geothermal. Energy forms that are polluting, such as biomass burning, should not play a part in the healthy energy transition.

► Increase energy efficiency and energy savings in the region

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: Reducing energy demand through energy efficiency and energy savings. This improves health in multiple ways; from reducing energy poverty to the reduction of air pollution. A healthy energy supply is needed to power our societies and our health systems in a sustainable way. Reducing our energy demand by improving energy efficiency and increasing energy savings should be an overriding priority.



PRINCIPLE 2

END PUBLIC FINANCING FOR ALL FOSSIL FUELS AND AVOID POLLUTION LOCK-IN

End fossil fuel subsidies by 2025

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: Ending fossil fuel subsidies would benefit public health through the reallocation of public funds to boost health, instead of supporting polluting industries and activities. Just Transition plans can only be fair and healthy if fossil fuels subsidies are ended and the money is instead specifically allocated to benefit public health and the public good.

Fossil fuel subsidies support polluting industries and cause air pollution and global warming, cutting the lives of millions of people short each year, and creating a significant burden on health and governments' budgets. In addition, the rich benefit more from these subsidies, leaving millions of people in energy poverty. Fossil fuel subsidies also increase the price gap between fossil fuels and renewables, which makes fossil fuels seem cheaper and discourages investment in green energy. Through public financing for fossil fuels, resources are diverted that could be used to promote better health. Last but not least, public financing for fossil fuels undercuts the landmark 2015 Paris climate accord, with its goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees.

According to the IMF, eliminating worldwide fossil fuel consumer subsidies would cut premature deaths from air pollution by more than half worldwide, saving 1.6 million lives per year. In Central Europe, even 60 percent of premature deaths from air pollution could be prevented. Aside from direct health benefits such as lives saved, the money freed up could be invested in the improvement of health systems as well as the transition to renewable energies. Consequently, this would have a positive effect on human health and the environment, through cleaner air.

Phase-out all coal use by 2030

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: As a guide, coal should be phased out by 2030 and not be replaced with other fossil fuels, such as waste or biomass burning. Coal and lignite come with huge health impacts and costs to the global population through emissions of enormous air pollution as well as GHG and impacts to the climate which then affects health. Timely phase-out of polluting sources must be a priority from a public health point of view to avoid premature death and associated health costs.

Phase-out fossil gas by 2030

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: Although gas combustion leads to less air pollution than coal or oil, it still comes with significant adverse health impacts. Under a zero pollution conditionality and coming closer to WHO guidelines on air quality, thus preventing unnecessary health effects, any investments in fossil gas must be excluded and gas usage and infrastructure must be phased-out. Gas cannot be considered in a Just and Healthy Transition.



PRINCIPLE 3

HELP TO REACH THE ZERO POLLUTION AMBITION

Exclude any (new) polluting infrastructure investment

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: The zero pollution ambition and commitment needs to be linked to Just Transition deliberations, with the following targets: Zero harm from pollution and protection of those most vulnerable; zero money for pollution, ending direct or indirect public financing of polluting processes and adopting a comprehensive climate and environmental conditionality for budgetary decisions; zero delay in stopping pollution, a short timeline to ban and phase-out toxic substances and transform polluting economies and ways of life and ensure projects deliver on climate neutral EU, good air quality and 100% non toxic material cycles.

Thus, any investments into infrastructure that would decrease CO₂ emissions but only be less polluting is not acceptable, as it would still add to the health burden. This means investments into gas, waste and wood burning would lead to a lock-in of pollution for decades to come, and thus should not be financed.



PRINCIPLE 4

PROMOTE HEALTH EQUITY

Address existing and avoid future inequalities

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: Inequalities need to be considered as part of Just Transition. There is ample evidence that social factors, including education, employment status, income level, gender and ethnicity have a marked influence on how healthy a person is. Those factors have been shown to have influence on a number of health impacts such as incidence of premature and low birthweight babies, heart disease, stroke, and some cancers in adults. In addition, social factors can also influence the amount of pollution a person is exposed to, as for example people living close to busy roads have a higher pollution impact.

The EU's Green Deal also includes social concerns, notably the goal of "Leaving no one behind" in the transition. Therefore, the intersection of health and social factors need to be addressed in the Just Transition Territorial Action Plans.

Promote Quality of Life

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: Health is not only the absence of infirmity and disease but also a state of physical, mental and social well-being, quality of life. Just Transition Territorial Action Plans should indicate how the main quality of life domains are impacted: the individual's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, and persons relationships to salient features of their environment.



PRINCIPLE 5

INVOLVE HEALTH EXPERTS AND THE HEALTH COMMUNITY IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF JUST TRANSITION

Engage the health community

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: Doctors, nurses, researchers, asthma patients and health groups have a unique role to play and can add a long neglected perspective to the debate about Europe's Just Transition. Just Transition action should be based on community engagement, and this must include the health community as well.

Engaging and amplifying health evidence and voices is necessary. Medical and health professionals can make an important contribution to the transition of our energy systems. They can achieve this by sharing knowledge about how different forms of energy generation are linked to health as well as the health risks from climate change, by informing policy processes and the development of health impact assessments, and by engaging in education and outreach activities with the general public.



PRINCIPLE 6

CARRY OUT A HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR ALL JUST TRANSITION MEASURES

HEALTH CONSIDERATION: Healthy energy decisions are underpinned by health impact assessments. Comprehensive health impact assessments, which cover all health risks should be developed and applied for all Just Transition decisions and concrete plans. This approach will minimise the adverse health impacts in the future and lead to the choice of options that provide for the smallest cumulative negative health impacts in the long and the short term.

Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

Avenue des Arts 7/8
1210 Brussels, Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 329 00 80
E-mail: info@env-health.org

 @HealthandEnv

 @healthandenvironmentalliance



HEAL gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the European Union (EU) and the European Climate Foundation (ECF) for the production of this publication. The responsibility for the content lies with the authors and the views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the EU institutions and funders. The European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA) and the funders are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained in this publication.

HEAL EU transparency register number: 00723343929-96

