

The Case for a Commissioner Responsible for the Just Transition & Climate Action



Context

The 2019 – 2024 European Commission has been one of the most ambitious on climate policies. The European Green Deal has been a landmark milestone in transforming Europe to a low carbon economy, but it has lacked a strong social dimension.

Ambitious climate policies must continue as climate change is already deepening socio-economic and gender inequality, and affecting the economy and public finances. The 2024 – 2029 mandate must deliver on a Green & Social Deal, to harness the social benefits of the transition towards climate neutrality and a circular economy, while actively identifying and mitigating potential adverse social consequences – and maximising positive social synergies. This Deal should promote a socially just, prosperous, and resilient Europe, that respects planetary boundaries.

The Problem

The social dimension of climate policies is currently too often an afterthought. The driving force behind the European Green Deal has been the urgency to cut carbon emissions, without due consideration for the fairness of how policies impact vulnerable and marginalised groups. Typically, the needs of low-income groups are insufficiently considered, which has led to the creation of inconsistent policy making. For example, the introduction of the Emissions Trading Scheme 2 putting a carbon price in the fields of transport and housing, will negatively and disproportionately impact low-income groups, who spend a higher proportion of their income on transport and housing than more wealthy households. The Social Climate Fund is seeking to compensate these groups and help them to access renewable heating and cooling or sustainable transport modes. However more needs to be done.

Eurobarometer surveys consistently show that the fight against poverty and social exclusion and the cost-of-living crisis are the number one issues facing voters. Climate action boosts air quality, improves the quality of housing and will avoid the worst damage on health, people and prosperity from climate change. Faced with today's fossil-fueled energy price crisis, energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy investments can lower energy bills. But to maximise the full social benefits, climate action must be designed with social, distributional and employment impacts in mind. It should also be implemented methodically, be targeted and be accompanied by measures that help to share the upfront costs equitably.

A New European Commissioner for the Just Transition & Climate Action

Broadening the mandate of the climate commissioner to integrate the Just Transition, will ensure an alignment of climate and social policies.

6 Priorities for the new European Commissioner for the Just Transition & Climate Action

The European Commissioner responsible for the Just Transition & Climate Action should oversee the drafting and delivery of a new **Green and Social Deal** to meet our social and climate targets. This would include addressing the following priorities.

1. Ensure quality **social, employment and distributional impact assessments** of initiatives for the green transition, in coordination with the Commissioner in charge of energy.
2. Introduce a **Just Transition Directive** building on the existing Council Recommendation on a fair transition towards climate neutrality. This Directive will protect workers' rights in the transformation of the economy towards carbon neutrality and full circularity, with the creation of quality jobs for women and men in new emerging green sectors.
3. Ensure the EU adopts **ambitious 2040 climate targets** and exerts a prominent and constructive role on climate action in international spaces.
4. Oversee the development of the **Just Transition Observatory**, which will monitor progress towards joint climate and social goals, collect quantitative and qualitative data about the social benefits and possible adverse social impacts of climate action and inaction, provide technical support to allow member states to better identify the people who need support.
5. Support member states to develop high-quality and participatory **Social Climate Plans** ensuring EU funds are used to mitigate the social consequences for vulnerable and marginalised groups.
6. Foster the development of **Universal Basic Services**. Rather than individual compensation for climate policies, there needs to be a re-think about the provision of public services to ensure they are affordable, accessible, available and green.¹ This includes investing in energy efficient social housing, low-carbon public transport and green social and care services that help to lower everyday living costs for all people.

[1] <https://www.consiliium.europa.eu/media/ny3j24sm/much-more-than-a-market-report-by-enrico-letta.pdf>



Contact Information

Robbie Stakelum, Head of Policy & Advocacy,
Social Platform – robbie.stakelum@socialplatform.org

Isabelle Brachet, Senior Fiscal Reform Policy Coordinator,
Climate Action Network Europe - isabelle.brachet@caneurope.org

This publication has been supported by the European Climate Foundation.
Responsibility for the information and views set out in this publication lies with the authors.
The European Climate Foundation cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained or expressed therein.

