

Joint Declaration by the Polish and German Trade Union Confederations

Shaping a Fair Change – Creating Decent Work and Ensuring Climate Action

In the framework of the annual Polish-German Trade Union Forum and with the regards to the upcoming Climate Change Conference in Katowice (COP24) the Polish (FZZ, NSZZ "Solidarność" and OPZZ) and German (DGB) Trade Union Confederations commit to social justice, inclusive prosperity, and effective climate action in order to advance sustainable development.

The trade union movement supports the goals set by the Paris Climate Agreement and participates actively in international and national efforts for ambitious climate action. There are no jobs on a dead planet. Current scientific research demonstrates that there is no alternative to a greenhouse gas emission neutral future in order to protect our natural livelihoods. This process, however, must be fair and reasonable so that no one is left behind. Decent work and climate action are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they must be considered equally in the process of transition.

The Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) constitute a respected framework for this process. We are confident that this necessary transition entails enormous opportunities for decent work and new forms of sustainable employment. However, a social agreement in this regard needs to be ensured.

Just Transition as the Guiding Principle for Change

In order to reach these goals, it is fundamental to formulate active structural, industrial, and service sector policies, which include an environmental perspective as much as a social and economic point of view. It is short-sighted merely to compensate potential social hardships resulting from climate action programs. Instead, it is crucial to provide a mix of investments, modernization of traditional sectors, innovations, and sustainable infrastructures in order to maintain and create future-orientated fields of employment and economic prosperity. Sustaining a strong and innovative industrial sector is of central importance for providing and implementing solutions to the great challenges stemming from transitions in energy supply, mobility, and transportation. We need investments in new technologies and increasing the energy efficiency and making the use of all fuels more climate-friendly in the transition process.

Trade Unions and Workers Facilitate Change

Unions advocate globally for country-specific implementation of Just Transition. They are, together with workers and employees, central agents of transition processes.

- We know the challenges in respect to the processes of creating supply structures, which, at the same time, protect the climate.
- We want to embrace the opportunities connected to the creation and protection of high-quality jobs.

- We demand a political strategy in order to ensuring the competitiveness of industrial sectors. Industrial production is important and enables transition. Therefore risks of carbon leakage should be taken into account. Products, irrespective of their origin, could be evaluated according to their whole life cycle and including their carbon footprint.
- We want to participate in the transition of energy supply and transportation systems – for decent work and a higher quality of life.
- We demand that long term goals of climate action and energy policy are closely linked to the goals of labor market policies. When it comes to shaping a Just Transition, we want to ensure that workers and their interests are not neglected.
- We demand that countries take more accountability for implementing the agreement. The monitoring mechanism on the implementation should be improved to achieve more transparency and eliminate unrealistic forecasts and commitments.

Europe Needs a Sustainable Investment Program

It is clear that there is no choice to be made between jobs and protecting the environment. Regions and industries whose welfare largely depend on CO₂-intensive products and production as well as CO₂-intensive energy supply are facing massive changes. Instead and in order to avoid having affected regions, sectors, and workers paying the price and thus losing support within society, it is crucial to shape a Just Transition to a sustainable economic system accordingly. Investments in new technologies and fields must boost new job opportunities. Nation states and the European Union are, in our view, under the obligation to align their spending coherently along climate and Sustainable Development Goals. This guiding principle must also be part of the European Structural Funds.

Dedicated Government Action with Union Participation is Key

We are aware that industrial nations must meet their outstanding responsibility in respect to this process. This is why we demand that the heads of government forcefully fill the Paris Climate Agreement as well as other agreements previously signed with life, focusing on a fair implementation of a Just Transition and being accountable for the implementation of the commitments they have undertaken.

In closing, the signing trade unions declare that they will continue and deepen their sharing of experiences, collaboration, and exchange of ideas in respect to shaping a sustainable Just Transition.

NSZZ

SOLIDARNOŚĆ

OPZZ

forum

DGB

JUST
TRANSITION
Sprawiedliwa
Transformacja

NSZZ "Solidarność"

OPZZ

FZZ

DGB

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