

Delivering an offshore renewable energy strategy that guarantees good jobs in Europe

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With the devastation of the COVID-19 crisis, recovery packages and climate action must address the core concerns of working people. They must prioritize social protection and good jobs.

The pandemic is accelerating structural changes in the energy sector and the energy transition, already imminent due to the need for climate action and the ongoing digitalisation. Renewable energy and its supply chain will be a core part of the EU's recovery plan and industrial and export strategies. Renewable energy will also be key to achieving EU climate targets. These require decarbonisation at scale, including an aggressive buildout of renewable and other zero emissions power; electrification of most sectors; and large-scale production of clean hydrogen. IndustriAll Europe actively welcomes the EU's new offshore energy strategy and the priority being given to these technologies by successive EU Presidencies.

Offshore renewable energies – primarily wind energy – is likely to be a backbone of EU renewable energy, electrification, and hydrogen strategies, particularly but not only for coastal member states. The manufacturing supply chain of these industries stretches across Europe and offers opportunities for industrial workers in regions further from the sea and land-locked countries. The sector and its supply chain also have high export potential, for example towards the United States and China.

Done right, ambitious renewable energy strategies can create millions of good jobs in many sectors, from mining, maritime, transport, and construction to power and manufacturing. Deployment of renewable energy in regions that depend on carbon-intensive activities can provide new, good jobs; promote new industrial development; and support a Just Transition.

We have learned from our national members represented in the European Works Councils of multinational renewables equipment manufacturers that there is a tendency to divest from the EU and move to third countries with lower production costs and lower employment standards. industriAll Europe deplores these developments and insists that the EU Offshore Wind Strategy and the review of the RES directive should be based on domestic content and high employment standards.

IndustriAll Europe supports the EU Green Deal, including an aggressive buildout of renewable energy and offshore wind, but on the condition that it delivers a Just Transition for all workers, leaving no one or community behind. For the Green Deal to be Europe's true growth strategy, not only does it need to deliver on the energy and industrial transition, it must deliver on maintaining and creating high quality employment within Europe. We must see the opportunities that the historic EU Recovery Plan

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is providing. The budget made available for a green recovery will be instrumental in achieving the Green Deal objectives.

We will build alliances with those who are working to deliver a Just Transition. Therefore, we demand that EU and national policy deliver on five key principles:

1. **Strong social dimension** of the Offshore Wind Strategies. All strategies on Offshore wind, at national, regional and sectorial level must include a strong social dimension. This is not just vital for the workforce of the sector, but crucial for the public legitimacy of the energy transition in general.
2. **Social dialogue and union recognition** at all levels – company, national, sectorial, and EU.
3. **Industrial strategy** with ambitious, long-term, stable targets and support regimes for renewable energy and its supply chain, including commitments to domestic content and the respect of social provisions in tendering agreements. Experience from mature industries in Europe shows the value of different forms of ownership and state involvement in developing offshore renewables (including plural, public, cooperative and worker ownership). The goals should be both decarbonisation and creating many good jobs across the renewable energy value chain in every European country. This will demand a specific industrial policy agenda of investment and diversification in our ports, shipbuilding and marine technology sectors. Strong retraining and upskilling programmes should ensure that skills gaps don't hinder the potential job creation. Indeed, the further development and training of employees is vital in the light of technological change, in particular digitization, and security of supply. A just transition must be guaranteed for all energy sector and equipment manufacturing workers.
4. **Strong labour standards** as part of renewable energy targets and strategies at all levels – national, regional and sectorial. This includes compliance with the ILO Core Conventions, particularly the rights to organize and to effective collective bargaining; wage guarantees; social protection, including health care and pension; training; and security of contract. Common minimum standards must be seen as a safety net not ceilings for rights. A cabotage agreement for the European continental shelf – similar to initiatives in Canada and elsewhere – should ensure these minimum standards. Collective agreements must provide the same framework conditions to all workers alongside the offshore wind value chain, from the construction of installations to their operation and maintenance.
5. **A safe working environment** for all workers in renewable energy, including workers for subcontractors and in the supply chain. For offshore wind, the health and safety regime should build on the standards and experiences of the offshore oil and gas sector.

If managed well, Europe can lead the way in achieving climate neutrality and a Just Transition, ensuring wealth, well-being and good working conditions for its people. Whereas strong transnational coordination on working conditions and health and safety came as a result of horrendous accidents and deaths in the offshore oil and gas sector, the Commission and European decision makers should set out from the start to create a globally competitive industry based on the best working conditions,

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the highest health and safety standards and offering local employment not only for those hit by the transition today but for future generations.