



Just Transition Platform Working Groups

Action 7: Guidelines to engage with
people living in vulnerable situations

November 2023

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Action leaders: FEANTSA, Social Platform

Category: Horizontal

The **Just Transition Platform (JTP) Working Groups (WGs)**, established in November 2021, bring together all stakeholders from across Europe with a common concern for the people and places affected by the transition to a climate-neutral economy. The WG for **Steel, Cement and Chemicals** each have a focus on a specific carbon intensive sector that is heavily impacted by the transition, while a fourth Working Group focuses on **Horizontal Stakeholder Strategy**.

After finalising their [Scoping Papers](#), outlining the focus areas and objectives of their WGs, the WG members developed a [common Implementation Plan](#), which sets out their 17 actions. This plan was finalised and published in April 2023. Throughout the rest of the year, the Action leaders, together other WG members contributing to the Action, have been implementing their respective Action.

This document presents the final output of Action 7.

Disclaimer:

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Introduction

Challenges addressed by Action 7

The targets posed by the European Union on climate neutrality by 2050 and reduction of emissions by 2030 requires Member States to rethink climate, economic and social policies. The concept of a 'just transition' is considered a cornerstone to the European Green Deal as policy makers highlight that any deal must be socially equitable and cannot leave people behind or exacerbate existing inequalities. To ignore the needs of the most vulnerable in this transition risks social peace and the sustainability of the European Green Deal in the future as it is implemented in the years ahead. To do this, it is essential for policy makers to capture the voices, needs and perspectives of vulnerable communities.

The costs of the transition will disproportionately affect people and households living in vulnerable conditions, since they are the least able to adapt and cope and they are expected to be impacted the most by regressive impacts of the transition. These people are frequently excluded by decision-making and policymaking processes, making it impossible for them to raise awareness of their situations and their needs. This can lead to increased poverty, energy poverty, severe material deprivation and financial distress.¹

Indeed, one of the challenges that has been identified to achieve a just transition is the reaching, inclusion and engagement of the **hard-to-reach groups**. Hard-to-reach groups are those that usually, stand the farthest from the arena where decisions are taken, such as rural communities, youth, ethnic minorities, people living in poverty or unfit housing, people with mental health challenges or physical disabilities.

Objectives of Action 7

The primary aim of this document is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the best practices for reaching and engaging hard-to-reach groups living in vulnerable situations. A series of practices and methodologies are examined, and existing examples are shared in order to show that supporting the hard-to-reach group is only hard when there is a lack of willingness to do so. Ultimately, the goal of this document is to **promote greater inclusivity and equity in research and policymaking processes**.² Meaningful involvement of vulnerable communities benefits them and is a defining factor of a just transition. But it is also important to highlight that often-inclusive policies provide benefit for a larger segment than their specific target. Inclusive policies also guarantee the acceptance and success of the transition and can have multiple benefits, such as reduced health costs due to improved health conditions, improved employment, performance at school and work.

Stakeholders targeted by Action 7

This Action aims to provide valuable insights into effective strategies for engaging with groups living in vulnerable situations, with insights that will be useful for policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders interested in ensuring that the voices and

¹ European Commission (2021), Just Transition Platform: Working Group on Horizontal Stakeholder Strategy – Scoping Paper.

² Goedhart, N. S., Pittens, C. A. C. M., Tončinić, S., Zuiderent-Jerak, T., Dedding, C., & Broerse, J. E. W. (2021). Engaging citizens living in vulnerable circumstances in research: A narrative review using a systematic search. *Research Involvement and Engagement*, 7, 1-19.

perspectives of these groups are heard and considered; specifically for achieving a just transition.

How this Action was implemented

These guidelines were developed following desk research and an analysis of best practices by the Action leaders.

Guidelines to engage with people living in vulnerable situations

JTP and inclusion

Inclusion and energy justice

The primary target group of this guide include the authorities, institutions, and bodies at the national and/or regional level that are responsible for planning and implementing just transition policies and projects. However, it is crucial that all relevant national and regional stakeholders commit themselves to planning and implementing just transition processes in the most inclusive way possible.

Vulnerable groups are often the hardest to reach, however, often they are the ones that would most benefit from just transition processes. To guarantee a just transition it is important that needs and challenges of vulnerable groups are recognised, they are actively involved in the process of planning and implementation and that benefits of the transition are distributed fairly, thus the most vulnerable groups receive the highest possible benefit from the transition. Furthermore, it is crucial to ensure that vulnerable groups are represented in the decision-making and appraisal bodies and that just transition projects bring benefits to them.

The needs and challenges of vulnerable groups might not be as well recognised as other, more powerful stakeholder groups' needs. The needs of people in vulnerable situations might remain hidden as their representation is obstructed by their challenges in life, economic and social situation, disability, or because they face discrimination. Consequently, as a first step for a just transition, it should be ensured that vulnerable groups and their needs are monitored and recognised. For just and inclusive processes, every group impacted by transition should be represented at the decision-making table, and once at the table, everyone's voice should be heard. Regarding the outcomes of the transition, the benefits and burdens of the energy system should be distributed equally and shall not put a higher burden on vulnerable groups or benefit the already better-off groups more. Finally, a transition process provides an opportunity to harness restorative justice, thus providing relief and solutions for groups that have been facing challenges for a long time. For example, by focusing decarbonisation policies on the worst-performing stock of the residential stock, energy poverty can be alleviated. This will not only benefit energy-poor households but will bring larger benefits. Energy poverty alleviation has been proven to reduce health costs and improve school and work performance.

The [Energy Justice Workbook](#) defines energy justice and provides a useful scoreboard to help those engaging with the energy transition to determine if a policy incorporates energy justice principles, specifically procedural and distributive justice.

Hard-to-reach groups under the Just Transition Mechanism

Vulnerable communities are often underrepresented in policy processes. It might also be difficult to reach out and involve them due to multiple barriers. Some examples of hard-to-reach groups are the following:

Households living in (extreme) poverty face everyday financial struggles, often have lower education levels, and might have hard but underpaid jobs. These are all factors that can prevent households living in poverty to actively participate in public and democratic processes.

Ethnic minorities often face spatial and educational segregation and discrimination. Previous negative experiences with institutions can reduce trust in public bodies and processes, thus consequently their motivation for participation can be lower.

Elderly households on low incomes or living in rural, remote areas, and especially widows.

Adults having low chances to access the legal job market, thus get their income from participating at activities offered by the grey and black job market.

Many women tend to have more workload at home than men, which might prevent them from actively participating in democratic processes.

Solid fuel users: low-income households rely on a higher share of solid fuels. Coal or firewood use is often a time-consuming activity compared to modern heating methods. Buying, chopping and putting fuel in the stove or boiler are regular activities needed for heating, which might reduce the free time of households – time that could be used to participate in democratic processes.

Despite multiple difficulties arising when engaging with hard-to reach groups, the effort put into increasing engagement will bring multiple benefits, including:

- increased acceptance of transition policies
- increased quality of life
- reduced levels of poverty and energy poverty
- greater level of social integration
- reduced public health costs
- increased incomes from tax.

Synergies between green and social policies bring multiple benefits and contribute to better livelihoods. In the following chapter we overview methods and projects that can serve as inspiration for involvement of hard-to-reach vulnerable groups.

Involvement and inclusion of vulnerable groups in the energy transition process: overview of the methods

In order to ensure that the voices and needs of marginalised groups are heard and taken into consideration while implementing reforms or any other policy initiative within the green transition, their inclusion in policy making processes is of vital importance. To do so, some local authorities activated processes of cooperation and co-decision coupled with hard-to-reach groups, involving them in planning, design and implementation of

programmes. Their inclusion is needed to foster greater equality among communities and fairer opportunities for all.

These processes are known as participatory methods and include initiatives fostering greater collaboration and consequently greater consideration of the needs of groups living in vulnerable situations. Typically, participatory methods include the presence of discussions, meetings and forums set up by researchers or policy makers. Indeed, allocating sufficient time for social interaction and facilitating mutual learning amongst participants is crucial, as well as demonstrating that their suggestions and feedback are a valued and incorporated.³ Policy makers should not engage in participatory methods as a box ticking exercise or seek to tokenise the experiences of vulnerable people but should view them as experts in how to ensure policies support the most vulnerable and directly address their challenges.

It is recommended to recruit participants through locations and via contacts who may be familiar to the targeted participants, as this approach serves to engage citizens who may be unfamiliar with research, as well as those who lack the motivation to participate.

Some examples of participatory methods are outlined below. Firstly, Focus Group Discussion has been identified as a useful tool to get in contact with hard-to-reach groups. It is a qualitative research method where a group of people, facilitated by an external moderator, discuss a given topic or issue in-depth. The primary aim of focus group discussions is to solicit participants to share their perceptions, knowledge, and experiences, while also stimulating an exchange with other participants. It has been observed that relying on group discussions makes it easier to get to know peoples' opinions, needs, and desires; compared instead to individual interviews. Once policy makers are able to widen their knowledge of possible issues of groups living in vulnerable situations, they may be able to take them into consideration during the policy making process.⁴

Another participatory method to be taken into consideration is participatory action research. It involves researchers/policy makers and participants' collaboration to understand social issues and take actions to bring about social change. It engages stakeholders in every step of the research process, including defining research problems, developing questions, gathering, and analysing data, and preparing recommendations. The aim of participatory action research is the inclusion and engagement of those affected by the issue at stake, in order to understand the challenges it causes and to develop actions to mitigate these risks and perhaps identify actions which can have a positive impact.⁵

Tailoring programmes: inclusive approaches, consultation and co-design

Adopting inclusive approaches is fundamental to foster hard-to-reach groups' participation. This can include adapting activities to meet the needs of different groups, providing transportation or childcare support, or using accessible venues. It is important to use a combination of these methodologies and tailor them to the specific context and needs of the groups living in vulnerable situations being engaged. Additionally, it is

³ Goedhart, N. S., Pittens, C. A. C. M., Tončinić, S., Zuiderent-Jerak, T., Dedding, C., & Broerse, J. E. W. (2021). Engaging citizens living in vulnerable circumstances in research: A narrative review using a systematic search. *Research Involvement and Engagement*, 7, 1-19.

⁴ Van Eeuwijk, P., & Angehrn, Z. (2017). How to... Conduct a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). *Methodological Manual*.

⁵ Delve (2021), *Participatory action research*

essential to involve them in the evaluation and monitoring of activities to ensure their ongoing feedback and participation.

A critical analysis of these approaches suggests more inclusive planning processes correspond to higher climate equity and justice outcomes in the short-term, but the results also indicate that an emphasis on building-dedicated, multi-sector governance institutions may enhance long-term programme stability, while ensuring that diverse civil society actors have an ongoing voice in climate adaptation planning and implementation.⁶

There are two distinct approaches to public involvement that embrace an inclusive approach.

The first emphasises participation of experts, affected communities, and a wide range of citizens to ensure a broad support for inclusive programmes that incorporate the needs of several different actors, with a special focus on the needs of individuals living in vulnerable situations.

The second approach focuses on building targeted partnerships between government, private, and civil society actors. It may help to institutionalise robust decision-making structures, enhance abilities to raise funds, and increase means to directly engage with local community and international actors.

On their behalf, it is necessary that local authorities actively consult with groups living in vulnerable situations to ensure that their needs are being heard and addressed, also by directly co-designing tailored programmes and services. This can include holding public meetings, focus groups, and one-to-one conversations.

This section outlines examples of how policy makers can reach out and include vulnerable people in the policy making process.

Tower Hamlets, United Kingdom

A good example of consultation is delivered by the Tower Hamlets Council in the United Kingdom, which uses a variety of consultation methods to engage groups living in vulnerable situations, including online surveys, focus groups, and face-to-face meetings. It works with community organisations to ensure that hard-to-reach groups are included in the consultation process. The local authorities in Tower Hamlets have a commitment to involve residents in all that they do and strengthen their relationship with their diverse communities. It has a community engagement strategy that aims to support strong, active, and inclusive communities that can influence and shape the district. The four key priorities of the strategy are to ensure that communities lead the way in making Tower Hamlets a great place to live, that they have the power to influence issues that affect them, that activities to involve communities are focused and purposeful, and that Tower Hamlets is digitally active. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how residents can get involved in the preparation of local planning policy documents and decisions on planning applications. Local authorities in Tower Hamlets use a range of methods for consultations, surveys, and engagement to get input from residents on projects, proposals, and other issues. It also provides opportunities for residents to attend

⁶ Chu, E., Angelovski, I., & Carmin, J. (2016). Inclusive approaches to urban climate adaptation planning and implementation in the Global South. *Climate Policy*, 16(3), 372-392.

council meetings, ask questions to the mayor, and supervise planning applications and decisions.⁷

Luatasaari, Finland

A good example of co-design is the one developed in Helsinki by the Luutasaari district. New practices have been developed in order to support independent living for older people by establishing an integrated service centre through the Customer-oriented Service Network project. This project involved the Council, users, and the third sector in co-designing services and programmes, with a focus on personalising services for over-65s receiving informal care in their homes. By involving users and providers in every stage of planning and using personal care planning and budgeting, the new service system was centred around users rather than individual services or organisations. The project improved the quality of life for older people, and the City of Helsinki has now decided to offer co-design of service systems for older people as an option throughout the city.

Barcelona, Spain

Another leader in the field is the City of Barcelona (Spain), which uses a range of engagement methods to reach groups living in vulnerable situations, including community meetings, online platforms, and mobile units that provide services directly to neighbourhoods. This approach ensures that all people have a voice in the city's decision-making processes. One example is the [Citizens Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona](#), which is a shared space between government and civil society to promote social inclusion in the city. The goal of the agreement is to increase the city's social capital by promoting cooperation and networking for the common good of social inclusion. The agreement is based on shared values, including cooperation, social cohesion, creativity, community, democratic governance, and quality work. Signing the agreement means committing to sharing knowledge and experiences, proposing important projects, and participating in relevant areas of work and relationships. The agreement was created in 2006 as part of the Municipal Plan for Social Inclusion and is currently working on a strategy to reduce social inequalities for the next 10 years. The agreement is the result of combining two previous initiatives, including the Association Barcelona for Social Action, which aimed to promote cooperation between public and private entities for social projects in the city.⁸

Tailoring services: community-based outreach

Community-based outreach programmes are designed to improve access by bringing services to hard-to-reach communities. This involves reaching out in their local language, building trust, and developing relationships. One example of this is the use of community ambassadors, who act as trusted representatives in charge of building bridges between hard-to-reach communities and a community organisation, such as a church, local business, or civic club. Outreach programmes are designed to connect with groups living in vulnerable situations who might not otherwise engage with conventional services. These programmes can include mobile services, street outreach, or online engagement.

Vulnerable Children and Youth programme, Denmark

One good example of community-based outreach in Europe is the Vulnerable Children and Youth programme led by the [Danish Red Cross Youth](#) (DRCY). Its main objective is providing support to children and young people living in vulnerable situations by building

⁷ Laitinen, I., Kinder, T., & Stenvall, J. (2018). Co-design and action learning in local public services. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 24(1), 58-80.

⁸ Ayuntamiento de Barcelona: acord ciutadà per una Barcelona Inclusiva

strong linkages with them, creating a safe space for them to share their experiences and offering social activities in order to engage them. In addition, the project trains young people to act as ambassadors within their communities, reaching out to other members living in vulnerable situations and hard-to-reach groups, and building trust.

The Danish Red Cross Youth has a multidimensional approach that supports young people as leaders, volunteers, and beneficiaries, employing participatory and evidence-based methodologies. The organisation has experience coordinating with local stakeholders and authorities through national and international activities such as summer camps, mentor projects, telephone hotlines, sport and health projects, and support for children at asylum and women crisis centres. DRCY's core competencies are life skills, peer-to-peer support, and gender responses, with a focus on sustainability of its activities. The organisation works in partnership with the International Federation of The Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) to strengthen youth capacity and involvement globally, with a focus on youth influence and inclusion within and beyond Red Cross.⁹

Health Care, Netherlands

Another good example of community-based outreach is exemplified by the EU project Health Care in NowHereland (Amsterdam, Netherlands). Its main aim is to provide healthcare to hard-to-reach groups living in vulnerable situations, such as undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, who may not have access to healthcare services. The project uses community-based outreach strategies to build trust and engage with these groups, including through mobile clinics and partnerships with community organisations.¹⁰

Capacity building

Capacity building is the process of providing guidance, training, and resources to individuals or groups to improve their skills, knowledge, and abilities in a particular area. This can help groups living in vulnerable situations to become more competent, confident, and to better participate in activities related to that area, empowering them to advocate for their own needs and participate in decision-making processes.

For instance, transformative communication between marginalised communities and those in positions of power is a key strategy for building capacity and promoting sustainable social change. Transformative communication consists of a different form of communication that is rooted in the cultivation of traits such as empathy, integrity, responsibility, assertiveness, and leadership. Stressing on these factors enables individuals to experience an alternative approach to communication that has the potential to transform relationships and interactions positively. By embodying these qualities, individuals can create more authentic, effective, and meaningful connections with others.¹¹ It helps to create self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as understanding of, and respect for, others. It also makes it possible to alter material, symbolic, and relational contexts and enable transformative communication.¹²

⁹ Danish Youth Red Cross

¹⁰ Björngren Cuadra, C. (2010), Health Care in Nowhereland: Policies on Health Care for Undocumented Migrants in EU27.

¹¹ Campbell, C., & Cornish, F. (2021). Public health activism in changing times: Re-locating collective agency. *Critical Public Health*, 31(2), 125-133.

¹² Campbell, C., & Cornish, F. (2012). How can community health programmes build enabling environments for transformative communication? Experiences from India and South Africa. *AIDS and Behavior*, 16, 847-857.

Another example of capacity-building processes is that of community mobilisation, which empowers communities to improve their needs by creating an environment that fosters ongoing dialogue, equitable participation, and partnership. Community mobilisation is a process that brings together various societal groups, including government, NGOs, religious groups, businesses, and individuals, to deal with issues that impact the whole community. The benefits of community mobilisation include sharing of resources, more effective problem-solving, better representation of community voices, and accountability. The process involves participation, community assessment and dialogue, building a community coalition, defining goals and strategies, and evaluating progress. When a community mobilises, it is more likely to achieve effective solutions, pressure governments to change policies, and empower people to participate in making change a reality.¹³

Community mobilisation activities typically involve conducting a needs assessment to build local knowledge, hiring field facilitators to engage the community, communicate project goals and rules, and provide support in developing project proposals. Additionally, transparent and open procedures must be in place to prioritise investment proposals. Community mobilisation processes may either be a one-time effort to prioritise investments for a specific programme or have a broader mandate to support the decentralisation process by integrating with municipal government planning. In general, capacity building is an important tool for empowering groups living in vulnerable situations and promoting sustainable social change. By providing training, support, and resources, individuals and communities can develop the skills and confidence they need to fully participate in activities related to their wellbeing and advocate for their own needs. To initiate community mobilisation, it is essential to engage community members and leaders from the very beginning of an emergency response plan, using a variety of community engagement approaches such as door-to-door outreach and public meetings. By following these principles and using effective community mobilisation tools and techniques, programmes can successfully engage communities to support communication efforts during emergencies.

Capacity, United Kingdom

A good example of capacity building is represented by Capacity, an English NGO working as a catalyst for social justice and sustainable development. Its mission is to empower marginalised people who suffer from social, environmental, and economic deprivation. It is also the founder of the United Kingdom's Environmental Justice Network, which comprises community groups, NGOs, business, and public bodies. Capacity supports the network by running seminars and workshops on environmental justice with network members, reaching people living in vulnerable situation and raising their awareness and that of the entire community.¹⁴

Social economy and cooperatives model

A huge part of reaching and involving hard-to-reach individuals is played by social economy actors and social cooperatives. Indeed, most social enterprises and cooperatives employ between 45 % and 80 % individuals from groups in vulnerable situations in their operations. Social economy could provide a model to guide the transition towards inclusive

¹³ Soken-Huberty, E. (2023), Community Mobilization: What Is It and How Does It Work?. Social Impact Guide

¹⁴ Agyeman, J., & Evans, B. (2004). 'Just sustainability': the emerging discourse of environmental justice in Britain?. *Geographical journal*, 170(2), 155-164.

opportunities for low-skilled workers, those mainly affected by the job losses generated by a switch to a low-carbon economy.

Not only do social enterprises contribute to facilitate access to work for people living in vulnerable situations, but they also contribute to creating opportunities for up- and re-skilling; supporting them with those skills – manual, digital, cognitive – which are crucial for a circular economy.¹⁵

In addition, social enterprises often carry out an important work of psychological support and professional guidance to deliver a coverage of certain needs of people living in vulnerable situations.¹⁶

Considering the guiding values of social cooperatives – importance of ensuring access to quality jobs; and a strong social commitment and an impact on the community – their role is fundamental and must be recognised and supported.

Below are some examples of organisations that function according to the main principles of social economy and cooperative models. Eight examples are provided in total. The initial four are examples of social economy and cooperative models that focus predominantly on the social integration of vulnerable and marginalised groups, while the remaining four examples are more explicit examples of social economy and cooperative models related to sustainable community energy provision.

Humana Nova, Croatia

[Human Nova](#) is a social cooperative operating in environmental, social, and economic fields in Croatia. It employs socially excluded individuals and groups living in vulnerable situations in their textile social enterprise. It also engages in the organisation of workshops aimed both at promoting the cooperative and its leading values (environmentalism, social inclusion, solidarity, integration, sustainability). As such, it functions as a leading example in the field of social entrepreneurship.

It practices open membership and participative democratic decision making. At the heart of the governance system are the workers, who also form part of the majority of the general assembly and are educated to be active members of the democratic structure of the organisation.¹⁷

Dobrze, Poland

Another example is found in [Dobrze](#), in Poland. It involves a consumer cooperative providing affordable organic food to people living in Warsaw. However, the cooperative is not only limited to social entrepreneurship, but also engages in an active educational programme aimed at promoting alternative food systems, in particular food cooperatives. Its main goal is to support a food system that fulfils the needs of consumers and producers, taking care of the environment. Indeed, cooperation between consumers and producers is believed to be a great contribution for the strengthening of active citizenship and the creation of a fair economy.

¹⁵ Reuse (2022), Delivering a Just Transition to a Circular Economy.

¹⁶ Reuse (2023), Putting people and skills at the core of the circular economy: 18 stories from social enterprises.

¹⁷ Humana Nova: <https://humananova.org>

It is composed of both real members, five of whom form the management board, and supporting members. The board not only deals with financial and human resources issues, but also engages in the creation of training and workshops.¹⁸

Rainbow, Italy

The cooperative [Rainbow](#), in Italy, delivers services for environment and provides services for digitalisation and storage of documents, offering an occupation to individuals living in vulnerable situations. However, the idea of the cooperative is to support individuals not only through employment, but also through education, training and with practices for reintegration in the society. The cooperative pays particular attention to sustainability, trying to operate with green instruments such as photovoltaic systems.

Rainbow Cooperative is also engaged in social housing projects, for instance that of CasaTO, through which it financed the purchase of a 24-apartment building for both members and non-members.¹⁹

Consorzio Macramè, Italy

[Consorzio Macramè](#) is a consortium of different social cooperatives, mostly located in Southern Italy, aimed at promoting active inclusion and social integration of people living in vulnerable situations. It focuses on different areas, for instance employment, supporting new active policies to favour inclusion in the labour market of individuals living in vulnerable situations – for instance through tailored training, strengthening of social enterprises and increasing number of employable people. It also provides socio-sanitary assistance and more in general delivery services to local communities. The consortium is committed to the implementation of social inclusion projects relying on integration of experiences, co-planning and participatory policies. Additionally, it actively promotes and supports cooperation among its members, targeting interventions for the wellbeing of the community and the socio-occupational reintegration of people.

Specifically, it developed the project INSIDE (insertion, integration North-South Inclusion) for the socio-occupational integration of migrants. The objective of the intervention is the promotion, on the entire national territory, of actions aimed at the socio-work integration of persons granted international protection, hosted in the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR).

In addition, it launched in 2016 the project 'Pathways for the training, employment and integration of young migrants', financed by the Migration Policy Fund – Year 2015. It has a two-fold aim of promotion of integrated active policy paths aimed at unaccompanied foreign minors and young migrants; and intervention model for the socio-occupational integration of unaccompanied foreign minors.

Consorzio Macramè also develops a project for the inclusion of young people (15–29) to make them stipulate an activation pact with a job centre under the form of job or education.

Lastly, the consortium has launched a project (Print in the South – Welfare LAB) to strengthen the links between people, families, institutions, non-profit organisations and economic entities, creating a protection network capable of mobilising resources that can combat vulnerability, support fragility and prevent hardship, outlining the contours of a

¹⁸ Dobrze: <https://dobrze.waw.pl/english/>

new community. The idea is to create a community with people, their resources, their responsibilities and their relationships at its heart.²⁰

Enercoop, France

[Enercoop](#) is a network of French cooperatives which proposes a solidarity citizens' alternative in the electricity market. It considers energy as a common good which should belong to citizens and not exclusively to companies. It offers a 100 % renewable energy and founded its cooperative model on transparency and participative democracy. Green energy production is locally constituted, and therefore permits citizens to reappropriate their goods. The cooperative net also aims to fight energy poverty through a campaign of micro-donations.

Low Carbon Hub, United Kingdom

[Low Carbon Hub](#) is a social enterprise in the United Kingdom working to create an energy system that is good for both people and the planet. Trying to ensure a low carbon future, it builds and manages renewable energy installations, deliver and support energy-related programmes, and work on innovation pilots to move community energy forward in Oxfordshire. Low Carbon Hub develops renewable energy projects and schemes engaging businesses, the public sector, and communities to put local power in the hands of local people.²¹

Ènostra, Italy

[Ènostra](#) is a non-for-profit energy cooperative in Italy producing and delivering to its members sustainable, ethical and 100 % renewable energy through a participation and sharing model. It invests in the realisation of new renewable energy systems through collective capital. It engages in a bottom-up energetic transition, constructing a democratic, shared, participative model, building on shared values of mutuality, transparency, sustainability, sharing and participation.²²

Coopérnico, Portugal

[Coopérnico](#) is an energy cooperative producing exclusively green energy aimed at achieving energy democracy. Its aim is to involve citizens and enterprises in the creation of a new energetic paradigm, which is renewable and decentralised, benefiting society and the environment. It focuses on a renewable, fair and responsible energetic model which contributes to a social, environmental and energetic sustainable future. It relies on transparency and integrity to build its projects; additionally it gives priority to local partners to create green employment at local level, promoting a transition towards a fairer, greener and more sustainable economy.²³

Sensitisation

Sensitisation uses all the processes of awareness-raising and understanding about the issues faced by groups living in vulnerable situations, in order to build empathy and support from other external community members. By learning about the challenges faced by groups living in vulnerable situations, community members are better able to understand and relate to their struggles. This can help to break down stereotypes and prejudices and create a more inclusive and supportive community. Overall, it is a critical component for building a more inclusive and supportive community. The final goal of

²⁰ Consorzio Macramè: <http://www.consorzioacrame.it>

²¹ Low Carbon Hub: <https://www.lowcarbonhub.org>

²² Ènostra: <https://www.enostra.it>

²³ Coopérnico: <https://www.coopernico.org>

sensitisation is that of ensuring a call for action is supported not only by members of the communities affected by an issue, but from its entirety. Sensitisation may occur through campaigns, advocacy, or community education programmes.

Gender equality

Women can form part of the hard-to-reach groups as well, since they are most often excluded from decision making. Indeed, to ensure that the transition to a low-carbon economy is a just one, gender equality must take a prevalent role in the process. This involves incorporating women into decision-making processes and implementing gender-sensitive policies.

The [Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants \(PICUM\)](#) advocates for an inclusive gender-responsive approach that adheres to several principles. These include intersectionality, inclusiveness, participation, rights-based, effectiveness, and partnership. Women face discrimination based on various factors such as their sex, disability, ethnicity, religion, and migration status. Therefore, appropriate legal, policy, and practical measures are required to address the negative impact on their opportunities and wellbeing.²⁴

Despite the fact that around 80 % of those displaced by climate-related disasters are women, gender is often overlooked in just transition initiatives. This leads to gaps between ambition and tangible outcomes at impact. [Considering gender in regional transformations](#) is a toolkit developed to support regions and local governments in managing the gendered impacts of the just transition.

Developing competencies and raising awareness are both crucial to achieving gender balance and advocacy in political assemblies. Gender quotas and other measures can be implemented to ensure women's equal participation, while integrating gender mainstreaming mechanisms into political assemblies can lead to greater gender equality in decision-making. The increasing trend of establishing formal commissions or committees, as well as informal caucuses or WGs, highlights the importance of promoting gender balance in political decision-making. In addition, advocacy efforts by civil society are critical to promoting women's equal participation and advancing gender equality in political decision-making.²⁵

The [Global Green Growth Institute \(GGGI\) and members of the GGKP Gender Expert Group \(GEG\)](#) are working together to develop a concept for Gender-Just Transitions. The GEG provides research and capacity building to support evidence-based policy development for integrating gender equality in green growth. Currently, the group is developing a Gender-Just Transitions Outcomes Framework, which will identify gender equality outcome domains and set process and results indicators for just transition. The framework aims to achieve the transformative goal of transitioning to low-carbon societies and economies, with gender equality outcomes being a manifestation of this transition.²⁶

La Corriente, Spain

[La Corriente](#) is a Spanish social cooperative of users operating in the Madrid Social Market. It aims to provide low-expensive and low-impacting renewable energy to its users, while also engaging in information campaigns on energy consumption. It puts a special eye on women's participation in energy field, one in which they often end up being excluded. It

²⁴ <https://picum.org>

²⁵ European Institute for Gender Equality (2016), Advancing gender equality in political decision-making: Good Practices.

²⁶ Global Green Growth Institute, No "Just Transition" Without Gender Equality

considers the engagement of women to be a winning combination for a just energy transition. It aims to deconstruct the patriarchal model and fight gender discrimination: doing so, it hopes to make the transition for just, not only in energetic terms, but also political, social, and environmental.²⁷

Support for participation

In order to support the participation of hard-to-reach people it is in certain cases necessary to include in the meeting forms of support such as providing childcare during the meeting, compensation for the time or other incentives.

Examples of incentives include offering food, transport, or other forms of support to participants such as monetary contribution for the time spent. Incentives can be particularly effective in engaging vulnerable groups such as refugees or homeless people. There are several incentives that can encourage participation among vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. Additionally, offering transportation assistance by providing free bus passes, taxi vouchers, or reimbursing transportation costs can make it easier for these groups to attend events or participate. Financial incentives, such as cash or gift cards, can also be effective in engaging vulnerable populations. Providing childcare services can be critical for parents, especially those from low-income households or single parents, to participate in community events or consultation meetings. Finally, offering training or educational opportunities, such as job training or skill-building workshops, can be effective in engaging refugees or homeless individuals who are seeking to improve their employment prospects.

YouthAOD Toolbox explains that meaningful incentives for involvement could also be tangible. For example, there are programmes that reward engagement and participation materially by offering something useful like a cap, t-shirt or backpack to mark milestones in engagement. An opportunity to participate in a rewarding activity might also be used in the same way. Other more structured, longer-term programmes reward participation with greater trust and responsibility as well as opportunities to participate in service planning and development.

Overall, incentives can be an effective way to encourage vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups to engage with stakeholders. By providing support, resources or rewards, stakeholders can build trust and relationships with these groups and create a more inclusive and participatory process.

Conclusions

Overall, effective engagement with groups living in vulnerable situations or hard-to-reach individuals requires a range of approaches, and a willingness to be flexible, responsive, and inclusive. European local authorities have developed a range of innovative approaches to engaging with these groups, including social enterprises, co-creation, one-stop-shop services, and tailored engagement methods that reflect people's comfort levels.

The mapping of best practices for reaching and engaging individuals that are far removed from decision makers is important to ensure that their voices are heard and that their needs are met. When these perspectives are included, it can lead to more inclusive and sustainable policies that can contribute towards a just transition that is more equitable towards the needs of everyone, including the most vulnerable.

²⁷ La Corriente: <https://lacorrientecoop.es/somos/la-cooperativa/>

Annexes

Further relevant examples of good practices

Šent, Slovenia

The Slovenian association for mental health (ŠENT) is a Slovenian NGO established to help individual with mental health issues, those in temporary mental distress or to support their relatives. It is active in the social welfare field: health, education, and employment. Indeed, it offers several programmes aimed at re-integrating people with mental health issues, by for instance involving them in employment or training programmes or in programmes which foster social inclusion. The NGO has a participatory system allowing members to be directly involved in the management.

Employment is considered as an important part of rehabilitation for people with mental health problems and affects the quality of life of all people. ŠENT offers the possibility of integration into various programmes of active employment policy (on-the-job training, public work) and programmes of social inclusion. The goals of these programmes are integration into the working and social environment, preservation and development of new skills, and social and economic independence.

For the execution of programmes in the fields of employment rehabilitation, work training, and employment of people with mental health problems ŠENT founded the social enterprise Dobrovita plus d.o.o., employment centres (Dlan, Karso, and Šentplavž), ŠENTPRIMA – Institute for employment rehabilitation execution and supported employment, and the institute Premiki – Institute for counselling, promotion, and development of accessible tourism Ljubljana.

It also has a social inclusion programme intended to support and preserve the working abilities of people with disabilities. This programme supplements the organised care of social welfare for the elimination of psychological and social distress, helps them to lift and maintain their motivation, teaches them new ways of social participation, and helps them lift their self-confidence.²⁸

La Formica, Italy

La Formica is a social cooperative based in Rimini, Italy, which aims at promoting active citizenship and social inclusion. Particularly, it manages the recycling collection and supports other environment-friendly initiatives.

The leading idea is promoting the active inclusion in labour market of individuals living in vulnerable conditions, for instance through projects of environmental or social solidarity.²⁹

Il Bettolino, Italy

Il Bettolino is an Italian social cooperative. Before, its primary aim was to pursue empowerment and social integration of people with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations, though experiences in agricultural, industrial, commercial and services fields. Starting from 2013 it also promoted educational services and socio-sanitary assistance to people. The social cooperative aims at promoting integration of individuals living in vulnerable situations, enhancing their working skills. It promotes a specific training path

²⁸ SENT: https://www.sent.si/index.php?m_id=svab_commcare

²⁹ La Formica : <http://www.laformica.rimini.it/it/home/>

to activate people in the labour market. It operates together with other not-for-profit organisations in order to promote and pursue community wellbeing.

For what concerns the activation paths, Il Bettolino social cooperative has entered into agreements with some municipalities in Emilia Romagna region, and with the Department of Mental Health for the insertion of disabled people in the cooperative in order to activate socio-therapeutic rehabilitation insertion paths. Thanks to these agreements, every year a good number of young people living in vulnerable situations are placed in the various sectors of the company.³⁰

La Fageda

La Fageda is a social project in Spain aimed at improving life quality and promoting social integration of people living in vulnerable situations in Garrotxa (Girona). To do so, it relies on an entrepreneurial structure working to create value both in the organisation and in the society as a whole. It believes employment is a fundamental part of people's dignity, improving self-confidence, and helping people to acquire a role in society. It employs a large number of individuals living in vulnerable situations, for instance people with intellectual disability, mental illnesses or at risk of exclusion.

It offers a wide range of services and activities the people who are part of the organisation, which are aimed at promoting their personal and professional growth, their wellbeing, and reconciliation of family members.

Particularly, in 2007 it launched the employment integration service with the aim of guiding and supporting integration of people in the labour market.

Within the project, tailored paths are offered to people through a competency assessment. Then, La Fageda offers training and a real working environment in which people can develop their work skills. It works as a mediator between offer and demand and it is in a network with key actors and entities in the territory.³¹

Group Terre

Another good example is that of Group Terre, a social enterprise in Belgium. It operates as a system of direct democracy where workers from all the operating companies are invited to join the general assembly (GA) – currently counting 108 members. The aim is that of reinforcing social concertation, legally recognising the model of direct democracy and developing both responsibility and solidarity.

GA undertakes several functions, being the guarantor of group's charter, appointing the boards of the operating companies and agreeing on transversal policies.

Several meetings take place during the year to discuss topics such as strategic decisions, societal issues, or company management. With the attention to the integration of the beneficiaries. Participation is also done through the involvement of trade unions, representing the workers.

³⁰ Il Bettolino: <http://www.ilbettolino.it>

³¹ La Fageda: <https://www.fageda.com>

