

PRESENTATION

Speech
Sustainability
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Taking Advantage of the Crisis: Synergies between Environmental Policy and Social Inclusion

TimeLoc

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Brussels

Belgium

[R. Andreas Kraemer](#) [1]

"Emerging Stronger from the Recession to Tackle the Challenges of Social Cohesion and Sustainable Development" was the theme of an expert workshop convened by the European Commission (DG Employment) in Brussels on 9 September 2009. Ecologic Institute contributed a background paper, and R. Andreas Kraemer was invited as keynote speaker on "Taking Advantage of the Crisis: Synergies between Environmental Policy and Social Inclusion".

In response to the financial and economic crisis, major recovery programmes were launched across the EU. In its European Economic Recovery Plan of November 2008, the European Commission underlined that measures to tackle the economic crisis should not only stimulate demand, but also foster structural change, notably to speed up the shift towards a low-carbon economy, thereby creating new green jobs and keeping energy bills in check. The crisis became to be seen as an opportunity for tackling also the longer-term challenges of sustainable development.

The aim of the workshop was to assess to what extent economic recovery programmes are likely to result in Europe emerging stronger from the current economic crisis and better equipped to tackle the longer-term challenges of sustainable development and social cohesion. The workshop also helped draw lessons from the economic recovery programmes across the EU on how public interventions can maximise synergies between sustainable development and social cohesion.

The workshop looked at examples of measures that can make a significant contribution to tackling the climate and environmental challenges while at the same time addressing major social issues such as unemployment, fuel poverty or the transport needs of an ageing society. The discussions identified orientations for future policy making aimed at strengthening Europe's capacity to tackle the challenges of social cohesion and sustainable development in three key areas:

Clean and affordable energy for residential buildings

A major share of energy is used for residential heating and warm water. Rising energy costs have hit low-income households particularly hard and fuel poverty has become a major social inclusion issue. The technologies for saving energy or using renewable (notably solar) energy in the residential sector are available and could be rapidly deployed. Investment in this sector could generate new employment, reduce households' energy bills and significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Clean, affordable and accessible transport

The transport sector is another major consumer of energy and emitter of greenhouse gases, air pollution and noise. Some countries have responded to the economic crisis by introducing car-scrapping schemes that subsidised car purchases and thereby sustained private demand. Regarding investments in transport infrastructure, the picture is mixed: some countries have explicitly prioritised investments in public transport, in other countries road infrastructure projects are predominant.

Skills for a low-carbon economy

During a recession, new labour market entrants see their chances of finding a job much reduced. Many school leavers and graduates have to face the prospect of prolonged unemployment. Additionally, displaced workers in declining industries will need to be re-trained for new jobs in industry with future employment potential. It will be necessary to design schemes that enhance or preserve the employability of workers and new labour market entrants so that they have good chances of finding a job when the economy picks up again.

Further links:

- [Emerging Stronger from the Recession to Tackle the Challenges of Social Cohesion and Sustainable Development](#) [2]
- [Links between the social and environmental pillars of sustainable development, Ecologic Institute project for DG Employment of the European Commission](#) [3]
- [Environmental Policies and Social Justice, Ecologic Institute](#)

[project for the German Federal Environmental Agency](#) [4]

- [Bringt mehr Umweltschutz mehr Gerechtigkeit? \[Better Justice from Better Protection of the Environment?\], Article \(in German\) by Nils Meyer-Ohlendorf](#) [5]

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Links

[1] <https://www.ecologic.eu/493>

[2] <https://www.ecologic.eu/3134>

[3] <https://www.ecologic.eu/2047>

[4] <https://www.ecologic.eu/2456>

[5] <https://www.ecologic.eu/2889>