NICE
Net Zero Industrial Cluster Exchange

CONFERENCE SUMMARY

3RD NICE CONFERENCE ON SKILLS FOR A JUST TRANSITION

21 November 2023

The Net Zero Industrial Cluster Exchange (NICE) had its third conference on 21 November 2023, where policy, research, and business partners from nine countries discussed the topic of investing in a skilled workforce for a just net zero transition.



Figure 1 – Photo of some of the participants of the 3rd NICE conference on 21 November 2023 at the Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc in the UK.

DUNDEE, 21 November 2023. The third NICE conference was held on Tuesday 21 November 2023, from 9.00 to 15.30, at Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc (MSIP), Scotland, United Kingdom (conference agenda below). It was organised by the European Policies Research Centre (EPRC), in conjunction with the Scottish Government and Michelin. The conference gathered over 30 participants both in person and online (participants' list below), including policy and business partners from nine countries, and academic experts from EPRC, the Centre for Energy Policy (CEP) of the University of Strathclyde, among others. The conference reviewed and discussed challenges and strategies for investing in and enabling a skilled workforce for a just net zero transition, exploring labour market constraints and opportunities, and associated factors related to policy, finance, education, and capacity. Session 1 focused on the international experience of green skills development, and Session 2 on the United Kingdom's (UK) experience. In the afternoon, a tour of MSIP's Skills Academy was provided to delegates, demonstrating the infrastructure available for collaboratively delivering educational programmes.

The conference kicked off with framing thoughts by Philip Raines, Deputy Director for Domestic Climate Change at the Scottish Government, followed by welcome and introduction by Rona Michie, Senior Knowledge Exchange Fellow at EPRC. The **first morning presentation** was given by Dr Liliana Fonseca, Research Associate at EPRC, who presented the NICE briefing paper co-authored with Hannah Corbett (CEP) on "Investing in a Skilled Workforce for a Just Net Zero Transition". Fonseca set out some of the opportunities, challenges, and issues for places and regions undergoing transformation to a low carbon economy, associated with supporting the creation and development of a skills workforce for the just transition. She highlighted that there is no agreed definition on what a green job is, and there is a great unmet demand for people trained in green skills and energy related fields. Some national and regional examples of green job observatories, competence frameworks and initiatives were mentioned, with several of these from NICE network partner organisations. Key issues discussed include:



Figure 2 – Photo of attendants during break at the MSIP Innovation Hub, where the conference sessions took place.

The pilot phase of the NICE Network is being funded by Michelin and Scottish Government whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

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- The importance of knowledge exchange on what works and what doesn't work, especially in the light of past experience with transition out of coal in the UK;
- The challenges facing small businesses trying to pivot towards low carbon activities, and the challenges in supporting them with this;
- The need for policy to lead and drive change as well as respond to it;
- The need for just transition to include age, gender, and race equality considerations.

Session 1 focused on the international experience of green skills development, with contributions from three organisations regarding their research and skills development delivery at various levels – OECD, EUREC and SZ REDA[1] (Bulgaria). It was highlighted that change is often too fast for companies and educational organisations to manage, which makes it important for there to be anticipatory support frameworks and services (policy, finance, training, etc.) available. Additionally, the potential role of micro credentials in helping address some skills challenges was raised, and the key role of stakeholder engagement and collaboration was highlighted.



Figure 3 – Classroom at the MSIP Skills Academy.

Session 2 was devoted to the UK experience, with presentations from the University of Chester, the Wales Centre for Public Policy, and Strathclyde's Centre for Energy Policy. The main points outlined include problems around the supply of skilled workers, the need to change the narrative around how we talk about green jobs and the need for industry to work at scale and pace with higher and further education in the UK. Recent developments in Wales around the recently launched Net Zero Skills consultation were also discussed.

In the afternoon, attendants were led on a **site visit** of MSIP's Innovation Hub, where the main conference sessions took place, and the park's Skills Academy. The latter tour was led by Caryn Gibson, Economics Partnership Manager at Dundee & Angus College, who are the key organisation leading the academy at MSIP. The curricula and delivery of the Skills Academy is developed in cooperation with employer organisations, and builds on the joint legacy of Dundee and Michelin.



Figure 4 – Tour of the MSIP Skills Academy, with input from wind turbine company Coast Training.

Conclusions

Key takeaways from the conference include:

- **Defining and measuring green jobs:** a significant amount of work is underway on defining and measuring green jobs, and getting the right metrics is important. For example, it is not enough to measure jobs in energy sectors, but also the green skills that jobs in other sectors are incorporating. Additionally, considering there is a need to assess, for example, the quality and

[1] SZ REDA's presentation was provided in the form of a recording, which can be accessed here.

location of jobs, as well as the boosting to local supply chains, aside from just the number of jobs created;

- **Urgency and scale:** The urgency of preparation for the transition cannot be overstated. The conference emphasised the need for swift and comprehensive action, addressing both the scale and pace of skill development. The availability of meaningful employment is central to the success of a just transition.
- **Collaborative partnerships and knowledge sharing:** there is an important role for working in partnership (across border), and for knowledge sharing to help coordinate activity and avoid overlap. Involving stakeholders in the design and implementation of curricula was also highlighted as key to ensuring skill supply is connected to real needs, and important to boost interest in the programmes;
- **Inclusivity and job creation:** the conference introduced a new dimension to the discussion – the importance of inclusivity in the transition process and ensuring that the benefits of upskilling and reskilling are accessible to all members of society, including women and other marginalised groups. Furthermore, there was a call to focus not only on creating job opportunities for the newly skilled workforce but also on skill development in existing positions. This dual commitment to skills and job creation reinforces the holistic nature of a just transition.
- **Continuous learning and adaptability:** participants stressed the ongoing nature of the transition process. As industries and job landscapes evolve, individuals and organisations must be prepared to embrace change, fostering a culture of lifelong learning to navigate future challenges successfully.
- **Ethical considerations:** the conference shed light on the ethical dimensions of reskilling, especially, emphasising the importance of considering the values and preferences of individuals and communities undergoing transition. Ethical reskilling practices involve respecting the dignity of workers and ensuring that the transition process aligns with their personal and professional aspirations.

These themes all have in common the important role knowledge exchange can play – helping move awareness to action and building capacity.

Some questions pertaining to these emerging themes are highlighted to be addressed:

- How can governments, industries, trade unions and others collaborate to develop effective frameworks for anticipating future labour and skills requirements in the ever-evolving green job market?
- How can educational programmes and workforce development initiatives incorporate these green skills effectively?
- What skills will be most in demand in specific region(s) and which level – national/regional/local – is best suited for the different forms of action to ensure a steady supply of skilled workers?
- How to promote skills development and job opportunities so as to guarantee inclusive access to them (e.g. age groups, gender, migrants, etc.)?

CONFERENCE AGENDA:
SKILLS FOR THE JUST TRANSITION

MICHELIN SCOTLAND INNOVATION PARK, BALDOVIE ROAD, DUNDEE, DD4 8UQ

21 November 2023, 09.00-15.30

8.45	Registration
9.00	**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION** • *Philip Raines, Deputy Director, Domestic Climate Change, Scottish Government* • *Professor John Bachtler, European Policies Research Centre*
9.30	**LOW CARBON SKILLS DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT INDUSTRIAL TRANSFORMATION** • *Dr Liliana Fonseca, European Policies Research Centre*
10.00	**GREEN SKILLS AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE** Moderator: *Professor John Bachtler, European Policies Research Centre*
	• **Job Creation and Local Economic Development: Bridging the Great Green Divide**, *Lukas Kleine-Ruechkamp, Analysis of Labour Markets and Skills, OECD LEED Programme* • **Skills Development in Renewable Energy and Sustainable Energy System Management**, *Rafaela Araújo, Association of European Renewable Energy Research Centers (EUREC)* • **Communication in Reskilling and Regional Development**, *Dr Rumyana Grozeva, SZ REDA, Bulgaria*
	Discussion
11.00	Coffee break
11.30	**GREEN SKILLS AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: UK EXPERIENCE** Moderator: *Dr Pauline Anderson, Work, Employment and Organisation, University of Strathclyde*
	• **Pathways to skills for industrial decarbonisation supply chain**, *Eleanor Lewis, University of Chester* • **Skills for Net Zero and a Just Transition in Wales**, *Greg Notman, Wales Centre for Public Policy* • **Delivering the Net Zero Transition in the UK: Implications for jobs and skills**, *Hannah Corbett, Centre for Energy Policy, University of Strathclyde*
	Discussion
12.50	**CONCLUSIONS** • *Dr Pauline Anderson, Work, Employment and Organisation, University of Strathclyde* • *Hannah Corbett, Centre for Energy Policy, University of Strathclyde*
13.00	Lunch
14:00	**STUDY TOUR OF MSIP**
15.30	Close

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*VIRTUAL ATTENDEES.