



Parlement européen

Brussels
14th of October 2020

OPEN LETTER
TO THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GERMANY TO THE EU
ON THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE JTF

The Honourable Mr Michael Clauss
Permanent Representative of Germany to the EU

Dear Ambassador,

Germany has taken over the EU Presidency in challenging times. The role of the Presidency is therefore of paramount importance at this time to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all people living in Europe.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly exposed the vulnerabilities of our societies and economies, underlining the urgent need for the EU to invest in long-term solutions for our European territories and people.

We are convinced that we are able to face the current crisis, learn from it, and use it as an opportunity to speed up the transition towards a truly sustainable economy.

We must place people, their health and wellbeing at the centre of EU recovery policies.

If we fail to do so, up to 115 million people worldwide, including many European citizens, could slide into extreme poverty by late next year, depending on how severely our economies shrink during the COVID-19 pandemic¹.

Policymakers must therefore work to ensure that no one will be left behind in the transition and that effort will be shared fairly. This is what the Commission avowedly promised when it presented the Just Transition Fund (JTF) in January 2020.

¹ See *Reversals of fortune, poverty and shared prosperity 2020* report, World Bank, 7/10/2020

As Greens/EFA members of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee, we believe that in order for the transition to be successful, equal support must be given to green economic investments as to investments in social infrastructure and individuals in transitioning regions.

We therefore call on the German Presidency to uphold social measures within the JTF by endorsing three fundamental points of the European Parliament's mandate:

To focus on vulnerable groups via inclusive measures for job seekers

Labour markets are inclusive when everyone of working age can participate in appropriate and fair paid work, especially the vulnerable and people with disabilities, those in disadvantaged social situations, or facing marginalisation. In regions that are already economically stricken, support, training and reskilling measures must target all persons, including those seeking employment who are already marginalized. Specific attention to vulnerable groups (long-term unemployed, young people, NEETs, people with disability, single parents, etc.) is paramount to ensure a successful transition.

To invest in the creation or the maintenance of social infrastructure

Social infrastructure plays a critical role in economic activity and social wellbeing. We could define it as the assets necessary for the proper functioning of a society. It ranges from schools to hospitals, including transport networks, waste collection, nurseries, extracurricular and sports activities, etc. Beyond a job, this is what gives people reasons to stay in a territory.

To invest in fighting energy poverty

Housing has a huge impact on the environment and energy poverty is a stark reminder of the inequality in Europe. Not only do families suffer the negative health impacts of living in poor quality housing, but it also increases income inequality.

Both for reasons of social justice and for reasons of energy efficiency, the JTF must be part of the solution. The jobs created by thermal renovation provide the opportunity to develop “green engineering” in the construction industry. By their very nature, the jobs created are tied to a place and cannot be moved offshore. They also largely target segments of the population that are most affected by high levels of unemployment.

Europe now stands at a crossroads. The onus is on European leaders to act in the interests of people and planet to ensure a strong recovery. We believe that the Just Transition Fund can and must be part of the solution and reiterate our calls for a green and socially just energy transition.

In sincere cooperation,

Katrin Langensiepen, MEP, EMPL Committee Member, Greens/EFA

Kira Peter-Hansen, MEP, EMPL Committee Member, Greens/EFA

Mounir Satouri, MEP, Rapporteur of the EMPL Opinion to the JTF, Greens/EFA