

Green Jobs





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Foreword

In view of the dramatic scope of climate change to be expected and the absolute necessity of achieving the aims of the Paris Agreement, doing business in an environmentally friendly way has become a constant commandment. This principle is enshrined in many European countries and in the policies of the European Commission, and has become a permanent political process. To EZA as a network of workers' organisations acting on the basis of Christian social doctrine, this is a particular concern primarily from an ethical perspective: "The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all", says Pope Francis in his *Laudato Si* encyclical.

In the EU this aim is also expressed in the "Europe 2020" strategy, with which smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is to be attained as a means of overcoming structural weaknesses of the European economy, improving competitiveness and productivity, and strengthening a sustainable social market economy. Other EU initiatives are also pursuing climate and energy objectives, such as "A roadmap for moving to a competitive low-carbon economy in 2050" or the Energy Roadmap 2050. Reference is made expressly to the correlation of pursuing political approaches with regard to climate change, by formulating concrete targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to raise the share of energy from renewable sources and to increase energy efficiency.

It is evident that huge changes which will have a significant impact on the economy and the labour market are required to achieve these ambitious aims of the EU. These include the restructuring of industries that severely stress the environment, as well as the introduction and further development of green and energy-efficient technologies in many areas of business and life. This in turn will create new sectors for manufacturing, using and maintaining innovative techniques.

Of course, such changes also have an impact on the world of work: new jobs may arise and the need for vocational training may change. However, such economic transformation processes will also entail streamlining effects and result in job losses or structural changes.

All these questions call for workers' organisations to act and engage in social dialogue. Under the heading "Green Jobs", EZA carried out a number of seminars addressing very different aspects of environmentally sound action and the corresponding challenges for workers' organisations.

This brochure compiles the results of these educational events and intends to show – primarily from the experience of workers' organisations – the range this issue has in the social dialogue and to make appropriate recommendations for action.

Our aim with this publication is to pass on these findings mainly to other representatives of workers' organisations and politicians, and to help Europe fulfil its responsibility regarding global climate change as well as its economic policy and social responsibility on the labour market.

I wish you an interesting read!

Sigrid Schraml

EZA Secretary-General

1 Introduction

The European Commission understands “green jobs” as covering all jobs that depend on the environment or are created, substituted or redefined in terms of skills sets, work methods, profiles greened etc. in the transition process towards a greener economy.¹ It is therefore any professional activity that protects ecosystems, saves energy and raw materials, uses renewable energies, reduces waste and pollution, to help protect the environment and combat climate change.

It is important that green jobs can be understood as two types: firstly, jobs in ecology; and secondly, jobs that can be done as ecologically as possible. From the second perspective, every job can become greener.

However, it is not just about protecting the environment, it is also about making jobs more decent. That is a key component of green jobs.

Why is the issue important right now?

To be able to achieve the EU’s climate targets, efforts must be intensified, and that affects everyone: politicians, business people, social partners and every individual human being.

The European Union’s aim with the Europe 2020 Strategy is to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. The strategy sets ambitious targets, for instance the employment of 75% of 20-64-year-olds by 2020. The strategy’s employment package deals predominantly with the job-rich recovery from the crisis and defines three sectors with great employment potential, including the green sector.

¹ “Green jobs and occupational safety and health: Foresight on new and emerging risks associated with new technologies by 2020. Summary”, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, 2013, p. 5

Internationally, both the Paris Climate Agreement and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address the question of employment in the green sector.

“Such an economy kills”, Pope Francis accuses in his Apostolic Exhortation “*Evangelií Gaudium*”, drawing attention with these words to social division and the destruction of nature. He says that a point has been reached where “business as usual” no longer works and the destruction of nature and society has to be stopped.

For some years now, EZA has addressed the question of “green jobs” repeatedly. It receives a great deal of attention in an analysis of the EU’s employment package on the “Europe 2020” strategy², and various aspects of employment in this area were discussed in seminar projects. EZA also addresses the debate initiated by Pope Francis on the ethical dimension of the environment, society and employment.

In this context a particularly positive initiative is therefore to draw together all the seminars on ecology in a project co-ordination to give them due emphasis.

In 2016 a total of five seminars were organised in the “Green Jobs” project co-ordination:

1. “The challenges of the eco-social market economy”, CNV (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond), Belgrade, 19 to 21 April 2016

² The Quality of new Jobs and Challenges for Workers' Organisations: The Europe 2020 Employment Package and job quality in the green economy, the ICT sector and the care sector, Monique Ramioul, Lise Szekér and Sem Vandekerckhove; EZA: Contributions to social dialogue, No. 18, Königswinter 2014

2. “Sustainable development in the energy sector – Creating jobs”, AFB (Arbeiter-, Freizeit- und Bildungsverein), Bressanone, 6 to 8 May 2016
3. “Jobs in a green economy – trade union perspective. Social dialogue for green and decent jobs”, NKOS (Nezávislé kresťanské odbory Slovenska), Bratislava, 9 to 12 June 2016
4. “Creating skills and jobs for tomorrow’s green economy”, CET (Centre Européen du Travail), Brussels and Namur, 23 and 24 June 2016
5. “The solidary economy – doing business differently in Europe”, KAB Deutschlands (Katholische Arbeitnehmer-Bewegung Deutschlands e.V.), Linz, 28 August – 3 September 2016

A variety of methods both of theoretical and practical learning were used in the seminars. The theoretical part of the programme was carried out in presentations, country reports, presentations of projects and research, and discussions. Outstanding experts and practitioners were integrated, like Josef Riegler, co-founder of the concept of the eco-social market economy.

Practical aspects were mainly integrated in the shape of study visits. The participants had the opportunity to visit a biomass plant in South Tyrol, a training centre set up in a former power station in Slovakia, an “urban farm” in Linz and the trade union BIE (Bouw-Industrie & Energie) for Building, Industry and Energy in Brussels. The emphasis of the seminar in Linz was entirely practical, conducted predominantly using interactive and creative working methods such as theatre, collage, a poster exhibition, green check at the hotel and preparation of a pixie book.

2 The impact on jobs

Today's environmental phenomena, such as climate change as well as the ecological approach as a reply to it, are changing the structure of the labour market considerably.

So far there have been many jobs in the sector of generating energy from fossil resources. The transition to renewable energies is expected to cause job losses in this sector. The old jobs are disappearing, and totally new ones are required. This is a huge challenge. Even if the energy transition is expected to produce only minimal increases in net employment in the medium term, there will be a major shift in jobs both with regard to the regions and in terms of the sectors involved. The workers affected must also be taken into account in these changes, e.g. through specific vocational training; in particular, new activities are being created in renewable energies, but they require totally different skills.

Investments and comprehensive innovation strategies are key questions relating to maintaining and creating new jobs along the entire value chain in industry and services. Chiefly in "traditional" sectors like mechanical engineering and the chemical industry, jobs can be maintained and developed by innovations for the energy transition.

Climate change influences tourism and jobs in this sector. An example to mention is that in the mountains, vegetation has moved upwards because of global warming, and more and more ski slopes have no more snow. Jobs in such regions are under serious threat.

3 A different type of entrepreneurship for a solidarity-based, sustainable economy in Europe

A sustainable Europe needs alternative economic models that presuppose concepts of solidarity. The European Union is required to be and can be the pioneer for a different approach that provides for careful, sustainable management of nature and guarantees social justice. The following models are examples of such solidarity-based, sustainable business activity.

3.1 The eco-social market economy – a project for justice and peace

The concept of the eco-social market economy was developed for the first time in the 1980s by the Austrian politician Josef Riegler, who out of preoccupation for the environment insisted that the component “ecological responsibility” was added to the social market economy.

According to the proponents, the social market economy is a European success model, a successful economic concept and a basis for public good and quality of life. However, nowadays this is no longer enough. An eco-social market economy has to be introduced that requires the balance between three elements: market economy, ecology and social dimension. In other words: economy, environment and social peace. The aim is sustainable development.

The eco-social market economy is a model for a world in balance, a new synthesis between economic, social and ecological affairs, an added value for people, nature and society. In this concept, economic, ecological and social

affairs would be equal objectives. What is crucial, though, is the right balance between the three dimensions. However, cultural and religious aspects also have to be taken into account, as they could become the focus of conflict.

Contrary to some misgivings, the eco-social market economy could be introduced step by step in every country and take into account each country's particular features.

3.2 Regional economic systems – co-operatives as counter-balance to corporations

A way towards sustainability could be regional economic systems under the motto "As local/regional as possible, as global as necessary".

Nowadays, most jobs are offered by large corporate groups, which often severely harm the environment. Everything is subordinate to their interests, and their aim is just to maximise profits. Many companies boast of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, whilst they act unethically. Outwardly they show their social, environmentally friendly and charitable face. But this is often mere marketing, when they treat their workers badly and exhibit unecological behaviour. Often they prefer to pay fines for environmental pollution they are responsible for, as it is more profitable for them than changing the way they operate. More business ethics would be desirable and more successful than CSR.

Generally speaking, climate change has less impact on those who cause it, but to a much greater extent on the poorest. As an answer to the privileged position of the corporate groups, co-operatives are needed as a way of doing business to protect the environment and job quality. A good example of this is the energy and water co-operatives.

What is important here is supporting the development of rural areas and tourism, and the manufacturing and processing of local traditional products on a small scale. This can bring about many quality jobs, which are also environmentally friendly.

Regional economic systems can be regarded as a solution to problem of the heavy reliance of countries on one another as a result of globalisation. A greater proportion of regional business would make the collapse of export markets less problematical.

Deindustrialisation should be avoided, though, and we should build on what is already available. There should be reindustrialisation based predominantly on small companies that use renewable energies.

3.3 The sharing economy – a model against resource wastage

The hallmark of the sharing economy is the shared, time-limited use of resources that are not permanently needed. It is about sharing, exchanging and renting resources without owning them. Whether practised between individuals or between companies and associations, such models can help increase the time that resources and consumable goods are used. Firstly, this model protects the environment; secondly, it strengthens societal ties and interpersonal solidarity, when based on approaches oriented to the public good.

3.4 Precautionary entrepreneurship – prevention is better than repair

This concept values precaution instead of repair. The characteristic elements here are: caution, foresight, circumspection, oversight and respect. The requirements of all stakeholders are taken into consideration.

Precautionary entrepreneurship is also defined by the principle of “co-operation not competition”. The emphasis is on shared processes of understanding and the search for humane and ecologically friendly economic forms.

Another basic principle is the assumption of responsibility for the living planet and future generations, as well as orientation to a good life and the development in joint discourse towards what good life is.

4 What is needed

Much can be done to achieve sustainable development. It is fundamentally necessary, though, to change attitudes and ways of thinking. That is the most important thing and indispensable on the way to sustainability. The other thing is introducing concrete technical solutions where they can contribute to sustainability.

4.1 Values and laws

Creating jobs that produce social added value and protect the environment would be an impossible task if it were not accompanied by a change in values. The crucial questions must be: what is a good life? What do we need? What are the bases of good entrepreneurship?

The European societies share values, like human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Even though they are in theory recognised as important, they should be given a real, leading and practical role. “Unity in diversity”, a bedrock of common Europe, is the most successful peace project. The factor determining the success is the community of values. Environmental protection demands active solidarity and must become an international task. Frequently, though, ecological problems are becoming a regional matter – everyone cares only about what is happening around him/her.

What is required is a return to the principle of subsidiarity, i.e. solving major tasks together on a higher level, but solving smaller problems as closely as possible to the citizens.

It ought to be a mission for workers’ organisations to develop a sustainable economy based on solidarity in Europe. Yet solidarity is a challenge. It is

easy among equals, but difficult among unequals. In addition, sustainability calls for social justice.

There has to be a switch from an economy of exploitation to a civilisation of sustainability, where ethics and responsibility play a key role. A lack of both results in forms of behaviour that produce an ecological catastrophe. An example is that nowadays every possible piece of equipment is produced so that soon and often it breaks down irreparably, meaning that consumption rises increasingly. This has led to the development of a throw-away mentality instead of repairing goods. The consequence is a growing waste tip of almost new appliances. Initiatives are needed like that of the Swedish government, introducing tax relief for the repair of faulty items to reduce the volume of waste.

To live in harmony with nature, people also need a sustainable rhythm of life. To this end, Sunday is a shared day of rest, which is largely forgotten nowadays. It is up to workers' organisations to protect this rhythm of life. Greater implementation of appropriate flexible working time models could also enhance this rhythm of life.

4.2 Awareness and education

Environmental protection and sustainable development begin with a change in awareness from pure egoism and capitalism to responsibility and solidarity as a condition of sustainability. The development of globally binding values (global ethics) is necessary, and an attitude required in which each individual feels responsible. Ultimately, a change in awareness begins from the bottom up.

Thus, a change in awareness towards sustainable development requires good education. Environmental education is a footing for better environmental protection. It is important that education does not remain restricted to

merely conveying information, but also develops good practices and habits. What is essential is the involvement of schools, and education work with children and teenagers on issues like sustainable entrepreneurship and environmental protection. To do this effectively, more attention should be devoted to training the trainers in this respect. But the central role should be played by families as the communities in which practices and habits are lived, practised and cultivated³. That is why work should also be done with parents, for them to acquire an ecologically conditioned way of thinking which they pass on to their children.

On the one hand, raising awareness is of great importance; on the other hand, the core competencies should also be developed for environmental protection. To enable this, pupils and students ought to be encouraged to study STEM subjects⁴, which provide a basis for ecological knowledge and advanced environmental management skills.

People with well-developed environmental awareness often practise an attitude of minimalism – a simple life that sees itself as an alternative to the consumption-oriented affluent society. The key questions involved are: “Do I need everything I have? Do I need more than I already have?”. An honest answer can result in a type of ecological complacency particularly to do with changes in behaviour towards self-limitation and a reduction in consumption as a means of environmental protection.

Associated with this is the concept of conscious shopping. Consumers must know what they buy and have the right to decide whether to buy unethically manufactured products or inappropriately packaged goods, or rather boycott them. “Purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act.”⁵ It is

³ See: encyclical “Laudato si”, Pope Francis, 2015, § 213

⁴ Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

⁵ Encyclical “Caritas in veritate”, Pope Benedict XVI, 2009, § 66; quoted after: encyclical “Laudato si”, Pope Francis, 2015, § 206

an important influential matter which can make production and sales processes more ethical.

4.3 Abolish the myth of growth

It should be seen and admitted that economic thinking is often shaped by the concept of growth. According to it, the economy must grow constantly, and people must consume more and more. It is a majority view that without economic growth there would be no prosperity for everyone and that people wanted to consume more and more. The consequence of this is that in Europe so many goods are consumed that often there is no time to use them all.

“The idea of infinite or unlimited growth [...] is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth’s goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry every minute. It is the false notion that an infinite amount of energy and resources is available, that it is possible to renew them quickly, and that the negative effects of the exploitation of the natural order can be easily remedied.”⁶

Accordingly, it had to be acknowledged that mere growth should not be a priority. Economic growth leads to overconsumption, but not necessarily to more quality of life. The economy’s growth compulsion has led to more being produced than used, with consumption having limits. Only a few benefit from economic growth. Sustainable development is needed, not growth.

6 Encyclical “Laudato si”, Pope Francis, 2015, § 106

4.4 The greening of jobs

A fair and sustainable economy must protect the natural environment and provide well paid, decent jobs. There is potential for green jobs in every country and on every level of economic development. Green jobs demand a wide range of skills, educational backgrounds and occupations. They help lower the harmful environmental impact caused by economic sectors and companies to a sustainable level.

To create green jobs, sustainability aspects must be integrated in every occupation, which means analysing every job for how it can be made more ecological. After such an analysis, workers should be given basic and further training in these ecological aspects. Core competencies for a green economy must be named, analysed, acknowledged and created.

There are three groups of such core competencies:

- Knowledge-based competencies (natural sciences, finance, technologies)
- Behaviour-based competencies (problem-solving, critical approach, creativity, communication, co-operation),
- Personal skills (curiosity, initiative, persistence, adaptability, leadership, social and cultural skills).

Training is all the more important, as green jobs often include very specialised activities. A significant step would be changes in the education system to incorporate knowledge of creating a green economy in current curricula. Professional profiles must be reformulated if the skills required in a job change. Trade unions should play an important part in this process.

In the creation of quality jobs that would have a positive impact on the environment, two key factors are decisive: human resources and innovations. People are particularly innovative when they work together. That is why research and innovation centres are just as necessary as companies that not only create jobs, but are also value-based.

4.5 The energy transition

Core elements of the energy transition are: the decarbonisation of energy supply, the withdrawal from nuclear energy, and the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions whilst safeguarding a high level of prosperity. Concentrating on renewable and clean sources of energy should be right at the top of the priority list.

A sufficient, ecologically and socially fair energy supply is needed with modern, environmentally friendly infrastructures for producing and transmitting energy. In addition, we need the departure from fossil sources of energy and greater use of local, regenerative sources of energy.

An energy transition would have the prospect of permanently cost-effective, secure and environmentally friendly energy supply. The conversion is a costly process, though. Yet the current market launch costs for renewable energies should be regarded as major investments in the future for a cost-effective and secure energy supply. It is a question of “pre-financing” a transformation process over 30 to 40 years, at the end of which inexpensive, environmentally friendly and socially fair energy supply is possible.

But an energy transition could also have negative consequences, which would have to be prevented at all accounts, like the threat to jobs and prosperity, the increase in energy poverty, risks for the security of electricity supply, the aggravation of distribution conflicts or the emergence of unilateral economic gains.

4.6 Making environmental protection profitable

Environmental protection must be profitable, and environmental degradation must become uneconomical. It should be appreciated that environmental protection is profitable and money can actually be made with it. The tax system must make environmental protection attractive. Environmental criminal law must be applied more rigorously and more effectively; managers and companies must be punished, as personal responsibility could be more efficient in this respect.

Besides the price of energy, the volume of energy consumed is decisive for the level of costs. Energy efficiency and savings would therefore have to be given top priority to stabilise the costs of consumption. At present, energy is still being wasted to a great extent. Both household appliances and whole houses are being made more energy efficient.

Ecological solutions usually entail a saving of money. Renewable energies are becoming increasingly cost efficient as their production and distribution technologies are constantly improving. However, traditional power stations are becoming increasingly obsolete and call for substantial investments in renovation, which is often no longer affordable.

4.7 Greening houses

One of the solutions that could slow down climate change is the energy-optimised (energy-saving) construction of new living space and the “greening” of existing buildings. Even though constructing such buildings is more expensive, they are cheaper to use, i.e. profitable in the longer run.

When building, it is also important to use ecological materials and harmless insulating materials. Sustainable building and the use of environmentally friendly materials are advantageous both for the inhabitants’ health and for

the long-term operating costs of the buildings. The additional benefit for the environment is not to be forgotten.

Tax benefits and funding are of importance to the building of climate-friendly houses. An incentive could also be cheaper residential building loans for the construction of energy-efficient houses, as already practised in some countries.

4.8 Get rid of the obsession with cars

Another solution that can be applied widely is liberation from the “modern obsession with cars”, as stated by the Austrian Professor emeritus Hermann Knoflachner in his contribution. Car drivers enter into symbiotic relationships with their cars, are car-dependent, and it influences brain activity and perception. “People now think with their car”, with the car-centred transport system not having raised the quality of life, contrary to expectations. Investments in a car-dominated transport system have not brought the pre-saged increase in the quality of life.

There is currently an inner spatial separation of functions between living and working with a simultaneously compulsive spatial, financial and organisational functional tie to the car. Transport is dissociated from repercussions on land use planning and vice versa. As a consequence, the time nowadays spent on the move is the same as it was years ago. Beforehand, everything was near and could be reached on foot. Now everything is far away, and people travel by car. The time used is the same. Health, environmental and financial costs are much higher. It is also becoming increasingly clear that the freedom to choose means of transport is an illusion. It is without doubt determined by the structures.

The association in the mind between man and car has to be broken, and the car should also no longer be regarded as a status symbol. It can no longer

be a preferred means of transport. If the car was no longer viewed as a self-evident standard for transport policy, a development would come into operation in which communication rooms, social cohesion and local economic cycles were more important. One thing is certain: “going on foot” is more beneficial than “going by car”, and it is not just a case of health and ecological consequences. Studies the world over clearly show that pedestrians spend more money in towns than motorists, whereas cars take up more space and cause more costs.

5 Means of action for workers' organisations

Everyone is jointly responsible for creating environmentally friendlier jobs. A lot can be done if there is a will to live and work in a more eco-friendly way and to reflect on what can be done. Workers' organisations should themselves feel obliged to promote and spread the greening of jobs. The next section offers a few thoughts on this.

5.1 Education and training of workers and employers

An important challenge for workers' organisations should be to make workers aware that their jobs can be environmentally friendlier. It is a relevant educational mission for workers' organisations to show people how workers can become involved in making their jobs environmentally friendlier.

In addition, the trade unions play an important part in changing the attitude of employers. They should encourage them to make jobs environmentally friendly, and also make the case for a safer and healthier working and living environment. They could promote the best green solutions in this area and thus motivate other employers to such behaviour.

Workers' organisations should look for concrete fields in which sustainability can be ensured and new solutions created, and lobby for this. A good example can be public procurement, in which green aspects and decent working conditions could be demanded as eligibility conditions.

5.2 Green check

Every organisation and every workplace could be subject to a "green check". Is paper always printed on both sides whenever possible? Are name tags used several times? Are paper or plastic folders used? Are drinks served from

glass or plastic bottles? Are environmentally friendly hotels selected in the organisation of educational events? Are the participants encouraged to arrive by public transport? There is a plethora of such questions which can help everyone organise educational activities in an environmentally friendlier way.

5.3 Public relations

Workers' organisations pursue a broad spectrum of new forms of action like flash mobs and promotional clips through press relations and social media to national and European surveys and petitions in public relations. All this can be used effectively depending on the target group.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

'Business as usual' is no longer an option. A global system should be developed to explore sustainable economic practices that are ecologically responsible. Awareness must also be created that environmental protection is altogether advantageous. Such a change in awareness is very important and requires good education.

For this, three points are important: global awareness, globally connected ethical standards for human activity, and joint responsibility.

Politics must regain its creative force in the globalised economy. Collaboration in the transnational network is one of the factors deciding the success of sustainable development. Environmental protection demands action based on solidarity and must become an international mission. Proposed solutions must not be allowed to serve the interests of only a few countries.

The action must be defined by an attitude of responsibility for the current and future generations. What is required is not mere growth, but sustainable development.

A sustainable Europe needs alternative economic models based on solidarity, such as the eco-social market economy, the sharing economy dedicated to the public good, regional/precautionary ways of doing business.

The mission of politics is to develop job and innovation potential through active and sustainable industrial and structural policy.

Jobs must be built up on ethical bases. Where new jobs are created, "good work" must be established and bindingly laid down if there is state funding or funding induced by the state, or tax relief is granted.

The core competencies for the green economy must be stated, analysed, certified and created. Every job can be environmentally friendlier. To achieve this, “green checks” ought to be carried out for every job.

A prerequisite for the transition to a green economy is the involvement of the social partners on every level. Participation creates transparency and legitimacy for an ecological transformation. Partnerships and networks should be the basis of a new sustainability culture.

One of the crucial factors for sustainable development is social dialogue. The regions that consume many renewable energies usually have a long history of social dialogue. Where social dialogue is weak, it is difficult to switch to a low-carbon economy. It is also necessary to strengthen the role of social dialogue primarily where it is weakest.

The future scenarios of climate change will both have an impact on the industrial sectors and construction methods and call for new energy supply systems as well as impact on the daily life of many people, because comfortable mobility, heating and cooling habits and the consumption models determining them are challenged.

The change towards sustainability must actively involve the stakeholders concerned and the state, to prevent social hardship and create new employment opportunities.

The cost distribution of the energy transition should receive more attention. The aim should be to distribute the requisite costs of the reorganisation more fairly and avoid one-sided strains on individual consumer groups. In principle, financing of the energy transition should stem primarily from tax revenue.

For energy audits made compulsory by EU legislation on large companies, the small and medium-sized companies should be able to receive financial assistance.

Structural distortions must be avoided, especially in regions with a very one-sided economic structure.

Building energy retrofits along with the use of renewable sources of energy like wind and solar energy are essential measures for climate protection in the endeavour for a future without fossil fuels.

A remarkable idea of how towns and cities could be incentivised for greater protection of the environment are competitions for green towns and cities like the “European Energy Award” and similar initiatives on a national level such as the “Energienstadt” (Energy Town) competition in Switzerland.

The start must be with local experiments and pilot projects, to find and test other models.

Social and psychological questions are very strongly associated with environmental issues. How we deal with one another is often linked with how we deal with the environment. “If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships.”⁷

The following African adage applies to the creation of green jobs: “If a lot of small people, in a lot of small places, do a lot of small things, they can change the face of the world.” These words could be the motto for those who feel strongly about sustainability.

7 Encyclical “Laudato si”, Pope Francis, 2015, § 119