

Case Study



Spain's Just Transition Strategy, Urgent Action Plan and Just Transition Agreements

Guiding Coal-Dependent Regions through Decarbonization



The [Future Skills Centre \(FSC\)](#) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to driving innovation in skills development so that everyone in Canada can be prepared for the future of work. We partner with policymakers, researchers, practitioners, employers and labour, and post-secondary institutions to solve pressing labour market challenges and ensure that everyone can benefit from relevant lifelong learning opportunities. We are founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada, and are funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).



The [Institute for Research on Public Policy \(IRPP\)](#) is one of the most trusted and influential think tanks in Canada. In addition to its research programs, the IRPP publishes Policy Options magazine and is the home of the Centre of Excellence on the Canadian Federation. Based in Montreal and established in 1972, the IRPP is one of the only Canadian organizations of its kind to operate in both official languages. Through in-depth research reports, articles and essays, public events, and one-on-one briefings, the IRPP connects decision-makers with the research they need to make sound policy decisions, and amplifies the work of a diverse array of thinkers.



Spain's Just Transition Strategy, Urgent Action Plan and Just Transition Agreements: Guiding Coal-Dependent Regions through Decarbonization is funded by the Government of Canada's [Future Skills Program](#).

The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

To cite this document: Yassin, S., Jackson, A., & Male, H. (2025). *Spain's Just Transition Strategy, Urgent Action Plan and Just Transition Agreements: Guiding coal-dependent regions through decarbonization*. Future Skills Centre and Institute for Research on Public Policy

Authors



Shaimaa Yassin

Shaimaa Yassin is a senior research director at the Institute for Research on Public Policy, where she leads the [Toward a More Equitable Canada research program](#) and the IRPP's role as a research and knowledge mobilization partner of the [Affordability Action Council](#), of which she is also a member. She also contributes to IRPP's [Community Transformations Project](#). A labour economist by training, she holds a PhD in economics from the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and a MSc in empirical and theoretical economics from the Paris School of Economics. Shaimaa has an extensive record of publications, including peer-reviewed journal articles and books. She previously served as senior director at the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC) in Montreal and has consulted for several governments and organizations such as the World Bank, Chaire "Sécurisation des Parcours Professionnels" in France, and the Economic Research Forum in Egypt. She was also a research fellow in the economics department of several academic institutions, namely McGill University (Swiss National Science Foundation Fellow), the University of Lausanne and the University of Neuchâtel.



Abigail Jackson

Abigail Jackson is a research associate at the Institute for Research on Public Policy, where she has worked on a number of initiatives, including the [Toward a More Equitable Canada research program](#) and the [Community Transformations Project](#). Abigail served on the secretariat of the [Affordability Action Council](#) and contributed to the research and writing of five policy briefs related to housing, transportation and food in the context of climate and affordability challenges. In 2023, she received the Jack Layton Prize for a Better Canada. Previously, Abigail worked at Habitat for Humanity, administering programs related to energy efficiency, affordable housing and community development. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in business and international political economy from the University of Puget Sound and a Master of Public Policy from McGill University.



Hannah Male

Hannah Male recently completed a Master of Public Policy at McGill University, where her research focused on strengthening Canada's defence industrial base, advancing net-zero transition frameworks, and supporting the UN Agenda on the Protection of Civilians. Originally from Vancouver, she holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Simon Fraser University. Hannah has held positions across several Government of Canada departments and most recently served as a Senior International Development Officer with Global Affairs Canada's Haiti Bilateral Program, advancing security, stability, democracy, and sustainable development.

Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge input and insights provided by Tamara Krawchenko and Megan Gordon. The manuscript was copy-edited by Paul Carlucci.

Publication Date:

December 2025



Table of Contents

2	Foundations of the Transition Background and context
3	Further drivers and enablers Place-based strategy
4	Addressing net-zero transition workforce challenges
7	Program Implementation Delivery
8	Governance Funding mechanisms
9	Implementation challenges
10	Impact and Relevance Outcomes and impact
11	Lessons learned and relevance to Canada
13	Appendix A
14	References

Overview



Location	Spain (regions historically reliant on coal mining and coal-fired power plants, such as Aragón, Castilla y León, Asturias, Andalusia, Galicia and the Basque Country)
Initiative	Spain's <i>Just Transition Strategy</i>, including the <i>Just Transition Agreements</i>, <i>Job Banks</i> and <i>Urgent Action Plan</i>
Program snapshot	Spain's <i>Just Transition Strategy</i> emerged to manage the phase-out of publicly subsidized coal production and coal-fired plants, in line with national and European climate goals. Designed to mitigate the impacts of decarbonization on coal-dependent communities, the strategy promotes employment creation, up-skilling and re-skilling and sustainable growth. Overseen by the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge and the autonomous Instituto para la Transición Justa ("Just Transition Institute"), the strategy engages multiple partners, including Spanish regional governments, local authorities, trade unions, companies and the National Federation of Coal Mining Businesses. An <i>Urgent Action Plan</i> addresses immediate challenges in regions with closures of coal mines and coal and nuclear power plants. Tripartite agreements among governments, unions and companies have produced sectoral accords to guarantee compensation for lost jobs as well as new employment opportunities and vocational training, thereby maintaining local employment levels. Two <i>Job Banks</i> provide affected workers with advisory services, individual career counselling and priority hiring for site-restoration activities. Local business projects receive higher subsidies if they hire the <i>Job Banks</i> registrants. Complementary to the sectoral accords, <i>Just Transition Agreements</i> are place-based co-governance tools with extensive social participation. They ensure cross-government commitment and co-ordination at the national, regional and local levels, providing tailored, place-based support for economic diversification, thereby preserving employment and stabilizing rural populations. Currently, 15 agreements are in place. Funding comes from the European Commission's Just Transition Fund, the Spanish government and the European Commission's NextGenerationEU fund.
Sector focus	The focus is on coal regions, coal-fired power plants under closure and nuclear power plants without reconversion plans.
Time frame	The <i>Just Transition Strategy</i> was approved in February 2019, and the <i>Just Transition Agreements</i> were established in 2020. The <i>Urgent Action Plan</i> spans 2019-21 but remains active, continuing efforts in the 2018 <i>Framework Agreement for a Just Transition for Coal Mining and the Sustainable Development of Mining Regions for the Period 2019-2027</i> . Two <i>Job Banks</i> opened in 2019 and 2020; by 2021, their employment-improvement services were operational. As of 2023, a support plan for re-skilling and job placements was still under development.



Foundations of the Transition

Background and context

Over the past three decades, Spain's coal sector has declined significantly (del Río, 2017). In 2010, the European Union mandated member states to end financial support for uncompetitive coal mines and to close them by 2018 (Council of the European Union, 2010). Meanwhile, national commitments to the Paris Agreement, growth in renewable energy, evolving European Union regulations, rising carbon dioxide prices in emissions markets and business investment decisions further accelerated coal-fired power plant closures (del Río, 2017; Instituto para la Transición Justa [ITJ; "Just Transition Institute"], 2023).

These closures had substantial socio-economic repercussions in coal-dependent regions, especially where no clear replacement industry existed. In 1990, Spain's coal mining sector employed around 45,000 workers across 200 companies, sustaining local economies that sometimes doubled in population due to mining (ITJ, 2023; Rentier et al., 2019). By 2009, the domestic coal mining industry had just 5,000 employees, with local utilities increasingly relying on imported coal (Rentier et al., 2019). In 2018, only 1,700

people were directly employed in coal mines and 3,210 people in coal power plants; indirect coal-related jobs totalled 6,700 that same year (Alves Dias et al., 2021). Spanish communities with coal mine closures are mostly rural and have experienced declining population rates as the industry phases out (del Río, 2017). In 2016, depopulation reached 40 per cent in some areas (del Río, 2017). As of 2023, all coal-fired power plants in Spain have either shut down, are closing or are scheduled to close in the near term (ITJ, 2023).

In response, the Spanish government launched its *Just Transition Strategy (JTS)* in 2019, aiming to maximize the social benefits of the net-zero transition while mitigating negative impacts on specific communities. Under this strategy, an *Urgent Action Plan* targeted the immediate challenges in regions with closures of coal mines, coal power plants and nuclear power plants. Tripartite sectoral accords among government, unions and companies ensured tailored, place-based supports for affected workers, including compensation after job loss, employment opportunities and vocational training (ITJ, 2023). The *Urgent Action Plan* expanded on a 2018

framework agreement for workers affected by coal mine closures, adding supports for workers affected by closures of coal-fired power plants and nuclear power plants without reconversion plans (ITJ, 2023).

The *Urgent Action Plan* also includes the *Just Transition Agreements (JTAs)*, which are co-governance tools that align public administrations at national, regional and local levels (ITJ, 2023). These place-based agreements involve significant social participation and serve as comprehensive action plans for vulnerable regions, supporting economic diversification and job opportunities to maintain employment and stabilize rural populations in areas most vulnerable to the coal phase-out (Cirillo et al., 2024). Currently, there are 15 JTAs in place across various regions in Spain.

Further drivers and enablers

In the context of the 2015 Paris Agreement and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Spanish government put several measures in place to curb climate change, including the 2019 Strategic Framework for Energy and Climate (International Energy Agency, 2023). This framework rests on three pillars: (1) the *Climate Change and Energy Transition Law* (Government of Spain, 2021a), which requires carbon neutrality by 2050; (2) the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan (Government of Spain, 2021b) outlining Spain's path to decarbonization; and (3) the *JTS*, which supports communities transitioning toward a green economy, maintains employment in vulnerable areas and enhances skills training opportunities (ITJ, 2023). Aligned with national and European Union climate goals, Spain's *JTS* addresses the phase-out of uncompetitive, publicly subsidized fossil fuel production (Krawchenko & Gordon, 2022). Historically, coal mines in Spain relied on taxpayer subsidies amounting to 22 billion euros between 1992 and 2014 (World Resources Institute, 2021).

In 2018, prior to the *JTS*, the Spanish government worked with trade unions and the National Federation of Coal Mining Businesses to establish the *Framework Agreement for a Fair Transition of Coal Mining and Sustainable Development of the Mining Communities for the period 2019-2027* (Framework Agreement, 2018). In

support of the agreement, the European Union provided 250 million euros for compensation payments and early retirement for affected workers, aid for environmental restoration work and local infrastructure projects and vocational training and job placements for affected workers (Alves Dias et al., 2021). Under the *JTS*, the country's *Urgent Action Plan* largely builds on this framework agreement.



Place-based strategy

The *JTS* takes a regional approach, identifying coal-dependent regions, such as Aragón, Castilla y León, Asturias, Andalusia, Galicia, the Basque Country and Castilla-La Mancha, which face the greatest impact following the sector's phase-out. To address each region's specific needs and context, the autonomous Instituto para la Transición Justa ("Just Transition Institute") manages place-based JTAs that provide regional and local governance for affected regions, make direct investments into strategic sectors and minimize the negative effects on communities and workers (Miranda & Touza, 2023). This includes repurposing abandoned mining land and assets, providing direct aid to local populations and promoting local employment opportunities (Miranda & Touza, 2023).

JTAs are integrated into Spain's territorial action plans to support economic activity, diversification and employment in areas at risk from closure and job loss (Krawchenko & Gordon, 2022). Extensive engagement with coal miners and power plant workers is key to the *JTAs*' success (Krawchenko & Gordon, 2022). The process starts with socio-economic diagnoses of each area that are launched with a public participation process for local actors to contribute to the diagnosis and to propose projects to reactivate their area (ITJ, 2022). Over 800 stakeholders have participated in this process across the targeted regions, generating more than 2,000 ideas and proposals (ITJ, 2023). Agreements are updated every five years, maintaining flexibility to address evolving local conditions (Krawchenko & Gordon, 2022).

Addressing net-zero transition workforce challenges

Similar to other net-zero transitions, Spain's coal phase-out poses a potential series of workforce and community challenges. Table 1 outlines these potential challenges and shows how Spain's *JTS*, including the *Urgent Action Plan* and *JTAs*, addresses them while supporting workers, ensuring local resilience and fostering inclusive growth.



TABLE 1:
Spain's strategies to mitigate potential workforce challenges associated with the net-zero transition

Potential challenges	Spain's strategies to mitigate potential challenges
Workforce displacement	For many workers, the decline of Spain's coal sector since the 1990s has resulted in job losses and relocations. However, when managed well, transitions can spur job creation via innovation and new investments. The <i>Urgent Action Plan</i> and <i>JTAs</i> offer affected workers priority hiring on restoration and reclamation projects at closed sites, thereby maintaining local employment. Local business projects proposed under the <i>JTA</i> -support schemes also receive higher application scores and grant subsidies for hiring affected workers, further boosting investment and local employment. These projects range from circular economy ventures (such as recycling plastics, tyres and batteries) to tourism development (such as rural lodgings and heritage promotion) and socio-health services (such as senior care homes and physiotherapy clinics). With measures deployed as of 2023, it was expected that an equivalent number of local jobs would be created in communities impacted by coal closures.
Skills mismatches	As high-emitting sectors are phased out, coal workers' skills may not directly align with the requirements of low-carbon jobs. While new green jobs will emerge through new investments, workers may lack the training to move directly into these sectors. In Spain, two <i>Job Banks</i> support workers affected by the closures, providing individual counselling and job-transition assistance. In 2023, the Instituto para la Transición Justa identified it as a priority to develop a formal re-skilling program in green occupations for unemployed workers in just transition areas.
Lack of diversity and inclusion	In 2022, only 31 per cent of workers in Spain's energy sector were women. Spain's <i>JTS</i> targets women and aims to reduce gender inequalities in affected areas. For example, calls for municipal projects under the <i>JTAs</i> include several evaluation criteria that prioritize projects promoting women's employment, encouraging women-led economic revitalization or expanding infrastructure that reduces the gender digital divide and boosts women's access to new technologies. Projects funded through the <i>JTS</i> can receive social security contribution rebates for generating female employment. The government of Spain collects and disaggregates data on gender to enhance women's integration into future strategies.
Insufficient training infrastructure and delivery	Shortfalls in training facilities, trainers and resources to meet the growing demands of the green economy can hamper skills development and create worker shortages. The <i>Job Banks</i> provide personalized employability support, including career counselling, job search assistance and notifications of training opportunities. Under the <i>Urgent Action Plan</i> , agreements with companies also include requirements for vocational training. By 2023, companies had trained over 800 people, with 13,700 accumulated hours of training.

Potential challenges	Spain's strategies to mitigate potential challenges
Barriers to geographic mobility	Since the 1990s, Spain's coal mining and power sectors have declined, prompting steep population outflows in many coal-dependent, often rural, regions as residents sought jobs elsewhere. To curb out-migration, decommissioning and restoration projects create local employment opportunities, with hiring priority in these and other new investments reserved for affected workers. Displaced older workers receive early retirement, providing predictable stable incomes so they can stay in their community. Economic diversification and new investments in the coal communities promote long-term opportunities for residents.
Lack of cross-sector collaboration	A lack of cross-industry and intergovernmental co-ordination can fragment workforce development and hinder efficiency. The <i>JTAs</i> are place-based co-governance agreements in 15 regions, with protocols signed among national, regional and local administrations. These agreements guarantee co-ordination across public administrations and commit to specific regional supports tailored for economic diversification, skills training and workforce development as well as infrastructure to maintain and create economic activity and employment. Their development involves a wide range of stakeholders, ensuring cross-sectoral and community-wide collaboration throughout the transition.
Income insecurity	When coal miners are displaced from their jobs, they may face loss of income and increased financial instability. The <i>Urgent Action Plan</i> ensures social aid in the form of early retirement and job placements for affected workers, aiming to provide these workers with stable incomes through the transition.

Source: Institute for Research on Public Policy based on del Río, 2017; European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.; *ITJ*, 2020, 2022, 2023; Serrano et al., 2023.

Note: *JTAs* = *Just Transition Agreements*; *ITJ* = *Instituto para la Transición Justa*; *JTS* = *Just Transition Strategy*.



Program Implementation

Delivery

Spain's *Urgent Action Plan* established two *Job Banks* in 2019 and 2020 to support workers impacted by closures of coal mines and coal and nuclear power plants. These *Job Banks* provide priority hiring on projects such as restoration activities and positions created through the *JTAs*. One *Job Bank* serves workers and subcontractors from mine closures (308 participants as of 2023), and the other supports ancillary workers from coal-fired power stations (633 participants as of 2023; ITJ, 2023).

All *Job Banks* registrants receive priority consideration for decommissioning and restoration activities as well as individual counselling to improve their employability. They also receive personalized guidance to create individual learning paths for job transitions. Local business projects funded through the *JTAs* receive higher subsidies if they hire the *Job Bank* registrants. By 2023, 80 per cent of workers registered in the power plant *Job Bank* were already employed (ITJ, 2023).

To further support these workers, advisory services connect them with training and professional re-skilling, and companies are required to provide vocational training under the *Urgent Action Plan*'s tripartite sectoral

accords. As of 2023, 829 workers had been trained through this company-led effort, which totalled 13,760 hours of training (ITJ, 2023).

Under the *JTS*, each vulnerable region enters into a *JTA*. The agreements are signed by the national government and representatives from state, regional and local administrations, guaranteeing commitment and co-ordination across these public bodies. Each agreement proposes specific regional transition supports tailored to economic diversification, skills training and workforce development as well as infrastructure to maintain and create economic activity and employment in the affected regions. Currently, 15 *JTAs* are active (ITJ, 2023). The agreements prioritize the maintenance and creation of activity and local employment, supporting sectors and groups at risk, preserving rural populations and promoting diversification or specialization consistent with the region's socio-economic context (ITJ, 2020).

As of 2023, the projects in progress via *JTAs* have included municipal projects, ranging from social housing and communal entrepreneurship spaces to tourism development and job training facilities; support for

workers in the form of *Job Banks*, early retirements and grants to improve employability; environmental restoration projects, such as the protection of natural landscapes and the restoration of mining and waste sites; renewable energy projects, such as solar farms and hydrogen hubs; and small and major local business projects, ranging from agri-food and manufacturing to industrial production facilities (ITJ, 2023).

Governance

Spain’s Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge manages the *JTS* through the autonomous Instituto para la Transición Justa (ITJ, 2020), formerly known as the Institute for Restructuring Coal Mining and Alternative Development of Mining Regions, the mandate of which was broadened to support restructuring and economic development in areas vulnerable to the impact of the transition. To equip the rebranded Instituto para la Transición Justa with the technical, financial and legal tools needed for the *JTAs*, the government amended existing laws (ITJ, 2020).

The Instituto para la Transición Justa oversees an advisory board that co-ordinates and monitors the implementation of the *JTS*. This board includes representatives from key ministerial departments, autonomous communities, local entities, major trade unions and business organizations (ITJ, 2020).

Funding mechanisms

In 2021, through the Just Transition Fund, the European Commission (n.d.) began providing 868.7 million euros and will continue to do so until 2027 to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of Spain’s energy transition. Spain contributes an additional 334.5 million euros, with the combined funds targeting six areas most impacted by the coal phase-out (see table 2). This is in addition to 300 million euros from the European Union’s NextGenerationEU Fund, which supports business projects in *JTA* areas that are aligned with the country’s post-pandemic Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (ITJ, 2023). The Instituto para la Transición Justa allocates these funds among the regions, weighing emissions, mining employment and industrial employment proportions with the same criteria that European institutes use when distributing funds to European Union member states (ITJ, 2023, n.d.). Regional governments directly manage the investments.

TABLE 2:
Distribution of European Commission Just Transition Fund

Location	Investment
Andalusia	€154 million
Aragón	€92 million
Principality of Asturias	€263 million
Castile y León	€197 million
Galicia	€111 million
Balearic Islands	€17 million
Management of the Instituto para la Transición Justa	€52 million

Source: *ITJ*, n.d.

Projects initiated through the *JTAs* can access technical assistance from the Instituto para la Transición Justa and may qualify for preferential access to existing programs and funds, including European Union funds (World Resources Institute, 2021). As of 2023, before deploying these Just Transition Funds, Spain had already spent 760 million euros in designated Just Transition areas and mobilized 7.85 billion euros of private investment in those areas (ITJ, 2023).

Implementation challenges

By 2018, employment in Spain's coal industry had declined significantly from the 1990s, and over the course of two decades, the Spanish government introduced various economic revitalization initiatives to assist the affected regions. Yet these interventions have had mixed outcomes (del Río, 2017). By 2017, despite a range of policies having been introduced, no detailed assessment of their impact on affected regions had been carried out (del Río, 2017). Population decline in many areas persisted despite social policies that sustained public services and consumption in communities, and some experts have criticized an overemphasis on infrastructure projects (del Río, 2017). Some unions also complained that the national government had not followed through on past framework agreements that supported company transitions (del Río, 2017). Going forward, it will be important for Just Transition Funds to spur economic diversification and long-term economic opportunities for affected regions (World Resources Institute, 2021).



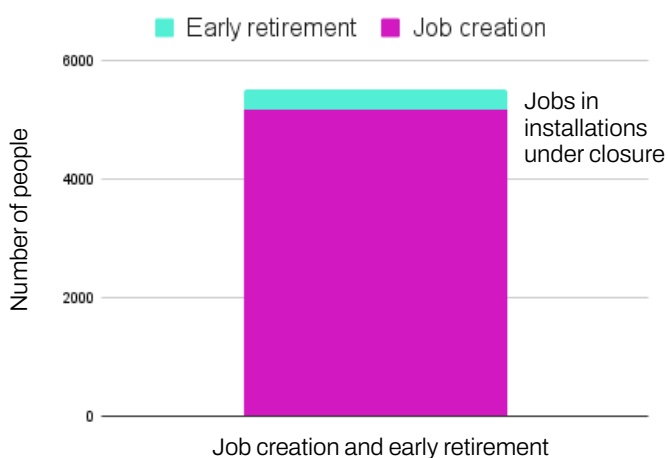


Impact and Relevance

Outcomes and impact

The 2023 update to the *JTS* notes that deployed measures in at least nine of the 13 coal communities covered by *JTAs* aim to fully mitigate the impact of installation closures on local employment (ITJ, 2023). This includes the creation of 5,176 direct jobs and the early retirement of 324 miners (see figure 1). Relocation assistance was provided to workers who did not receive early retirement packages and auxiliary workers impacted received priority hiring for decommissioning activities. At the time of the update, there were five coal power plants still in operation, while nine were being decommissioned (ITJ, 2023). With measures deployed as of 2023, it was expected that an equivalent number of local jobs would be created in communities impacted by closures (see figure 1; ITJ, 2023).

FIGURE 1:
Estimated job creation with the projects
announced as of 2023



Source: ITJ, 2023.

Through the measures introduced via the country's Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan, there is expected to be 1.7 per cent job growth per year until 2030, adding between 253,000 and 348,000 jobs each year (World Resources Institute, 2021). However, distribution of these jobs will be uneven across the country, with some regions still facing steep employment challenges.

JTAs are updated every five years to reflect shifting local contexts, enabling the government to engage meaningfully with regional governments and affected communities (ITJ, 2020). However, monitoring and evaluation frameworks remain insufficiently transparent; improving them would facilitate knowledge sharing and improve the future *JTS* (Touza et al., 2025). Longitudinal studies could improve this (Krawchenko & Gordon, 2022). Unions monitor compliance under the *JTAs* as part of the Committee for Monitoring the Agreement, which includes representatives from the government, unions and companies (International Energy Agency [IEA], 2023). Examples of these trade unions include the Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras de Industria ("Industrial Workers' Union") and the Federación de Industria, Construcción y Agro de Unión General de Trabajadores ("Federation of Industry, Construction and Agriculture of the General Workers' Union"; ITJ, 2023). The committee meets to evaluate implementation progress every six months (IEA, 2022).

Lessons learned and relevance to Canada

✓ Lesson 1

Addressing the coal phase-out with an overarching framework

Spain legislated its transition under the *Law on Climate Change and Energy Transition*, enshrining just transition principles and mandating the *JTS* (ITJ, 2023). The legislative footing protects policies from abrupt shifts between administrations (Barreira, 2020). In Canada, the *Sustainable Jobs Act* requires a sustainable jobs action plan every five years, with the first one due at the end of 2025 (Natural Resources Canada, 2024). As Canada develops this action plan, it can learn from Spain's approach, which combines tripartite agreements,

vocational training requirements for companies and investment incentives for local employment and economic diversification. In Spain, investment incentives come in the form of non-refundable grants awarded to business projects that meet specific criteria, such as high social and environmental benefits for communities, the hiring of the *Job Banks* registrants and the employment of target groups, such as women (ITJ, 2023).

✓ Lesson 2

Forming tripartite agreements helps co-ordinate transition efforts

Formalized accords among national ministries, regional and local administrations and unions and industry can ease workforce adjustment. By bringing all parties to the table, Spain's *JTAs* ensure commitment, stable resources, clear governance and co-ordination across all levels of government for each region, rather than relying on a piecemeal or project-by-project approach. Place-based supports include aid for workers through early retirement and direct training, municipal projects that drive social and economic innovation, restoration projects, renewable energy projects and grants for small and major business projects (ITJ, 2023). In Canada, co-ordination between federal, provincial, and municipal governments can be complicated by siloed government departments and top-down approaches that sometimes clash with local jurisdictions. Having established processes in place to set up tripartite agreements in advance of closures would be particularly beneficial for communities facing phase-outs of emissions-intensive industries — especially coal-fired electricity by 2030 — while safeguarding affected workers and communities.



✔ Lesson 3

Supporting rural communities reliant on a declining sector

Spain's focus on stabilizing rural populations (via decommissioning and restoration projects that offer priority hiring for displaced coal workers) maintains local employment and infrastructure. However, a focus on long-term economic diversification in these communities will be key to their long-term resilience. Many Canadian mining and energy towns face the parallel risks of depopulation and an economic downturn if a primary industry closes. Offering place-based job creation during closure and clean-up phases and incentivizing new industries to hire locally could mitigate out-migration. Generating new sources of employment to replace declining industries will often require significant public and private investment. Strategies that combined short-term clean-up jobs with long-term investment in new industries would align with Canada's commitment to leave no one behind, especially in regions dependent on coal power (Barreira, 2020; Corkal & Beedell, 2022).

✔ Lesson 4

Leveraging priority hiring and job banks

Spain's *Job Banks* co-ordinate hiring of displaced workers in site reclamation or new business ventures connected to *JTAs* (ITJ, n.d.). They provide individual advisory services, career counselling and priority hiring for site-restoration activities. Local business projects receive higher subsidy grants if they hire the *Job Banks* registrants. This ensures local economic benefits remain in affected communities. In Canada, local organizations often find it difficult to access or co-ordinate funding and training programs (Corkal & Beedell, 2022). Implementing a similar single-window system for workers affected by the transition at the local level could streamline re-employment processes and create greater transparency around available opportunities.

✔ Lesson 5

Ensuring an autonomous and legislated agency

Spain's Instituto para la Transición Justa provides technical, financial and legal assistance to regions in transition. In Canada, relevant bodies such as the Sustainable Jobs Secretariat, the Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council and the Net-Zero Advisory Body serve in advisory roles but have limited binding authority. While creating a new organization with the necessary legislative mandate and stable resources could streamline transition efforts, this might also be possible through better co-ordinating and directing existing organizations, such as Regional Development Agencies. The Instituto para la Transición Justa's role in identifying and co-ordinating funding offers a possible blueprint for how Canadian organizations might similarly tap into federal or provincial programs and private investments.



Appendix A.

URLs and Official Websites

Programs, Initiatives and Strategic Frameworks

Just Transition Strategy (JTS)

https://www.miteco.gob.es/content/dam/miteco/es/ministerio/planes-estrategias/transicion-justa/Just%20Transition%20Strategy_ENG.pdf

Framework Agreement for Coal Mining (2019-2027)

https://www.industrialunion.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/2018/SPAIN/spanish_plan_for_coal_eng_oct_2018.pdf

Climate Change and Energy Transition Law

<https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2021/05/20/7>

Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan

https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2021-5106

Job Bank - For workers in coal-fired power stations

<https://www.transicionjusta.gob.es/en/bolsa-trabajo/centrales-termicas.html>

Job Bank - For surplus workers from the closures in the coal-mining sector

<https://www.transicionjusta.gob.es/es/bolsa-trabajo/mineria-carbon.html>

Just Transition Zones with *Just Transition Agreements*

<https://www.transicionjusta.gob.es/es/convenios-transicion-justa/zonastj.html>

European Commission's Just Transition Programme for Spain

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/in-your-country/programmes/2021-2027/es/2021es16jtpr001_en

Organizations and Implementing Bodies

Instituto para la Transición Justa (ITJ)

<https://www.transicionjusta.gob.es/>

Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge

<https://www.miteco.gob.es/>

Canadian Policies, Bodies and Initiatives Mentioned for Comparison

Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act

<https://lois-laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-23.25/FullText.html>

Sustainable Jobs Partnership Council

<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/corporate/planning-reporting/partnership-council>

Sustainable Jobs Secretariat

<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/corporate/planning-reporting/sustainable-jobs-secretariat>

Regional Development Agencies

<https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/ised/en/canadas-regional-development-agencies>

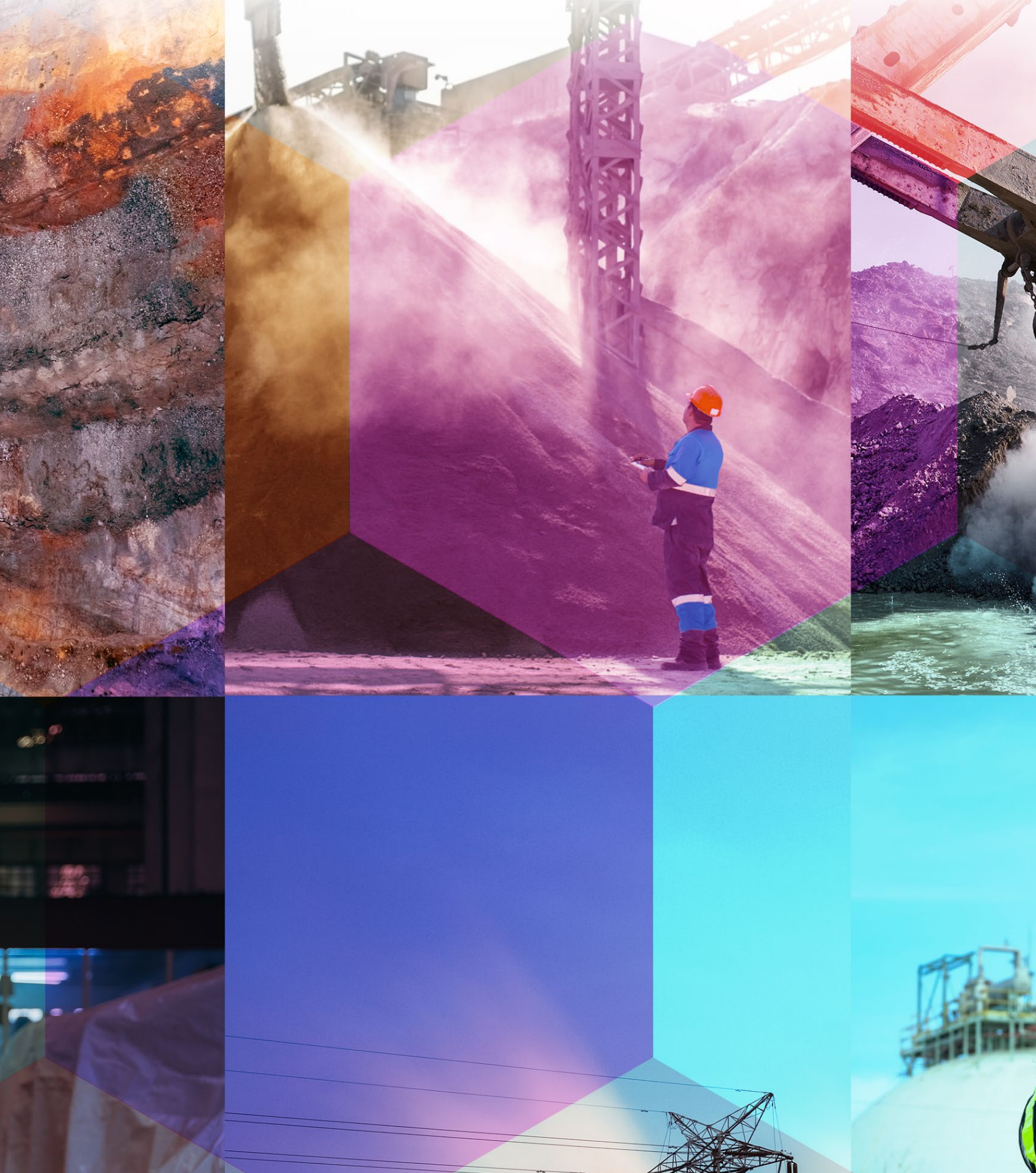
Net Zero Advisory Body

<https://www.nzab2050.ca/>

References

- Alves Dias, P., Conte, A., Kanellopoulos, K., Kapetaki, Z., Mandras, G., Medarac, H., Nijs, W., Ruiz Castello, P., Somers, J., & Tarvydas, D. (2021). *Recent trends in EU coal, peat and oil shale regions*. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC123508>
- Barreira, A. (2020). *In the right direction but lacking ambition: The Spanish Climate Change and Energy Transition Bill*. Euractiv. <https://www.euractiv.com/section/climate-environment/opinion/in-the-right-direction-but-lacking-ambition-the-spanish-climate-change-and-energy-transition-bill/>
- Cirillo, V., Divella, M., Ferrulli, E., & Greco, L. (2024). *Active Labor Market policies in the framework of Just Transition Programs: The case of Italy, Spain, and Germany*. Austrian Foundation for Development Research. <https://doi.org/10.60637/2024-wp79>
- Corkal, V., & Beedell, E. (2022, January). *Making good green jobs the law: How Canada can build on international best practice to advance just transition for all*. International Institute for Sustainable Development. <https://www.iisd.org/system/files/2022-01/green-jobs-advance-canada-just-transition.pdf>
- Council of the European Union. (2010, December 10). *Council decision of 10 December 2010 on state aid to facilitate the closure of uncompetitive coal mines (2010/787/EU)*. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2010/787/oj>
- del Río, P. (2017). *Coal transition in SPAIN: An historical case study for the project “Coal Transitions: Research and Dialogue on the Future of Coal.”* IDDRI and Climate Strategies. https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20Iddri/Rapport/201706-reportSpain-iddri-climatestrategies-coal_es_v04.pdf
- European Commission. (n.d.). *Just Transition Programme Spain 2021-2027*. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/in-your-country/programmes/2021-2027/es/2021es16jtp001_en
- European Institute for Gender Equality. (n.d.). *Gender Equality Index*. Retrieved April 10, 2025, from <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2023/country/ES>
- Framework Agreement. (2018). *Framework agreement for a fair transition of coal mining and sustainable development of the mining communities for the period 2019-2027*. https://www.industrialunion.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/2018/SPAIN/spanish_plan_for_coal_eng_oct_2018.pdf
- Government of Spain. (2021a, May 21). *Ley 7/2021, de 20 de mayo, de cambio climático y transición energética* [Law 7/2021, of May 21, on climate change and energy transition]. Head of State. <https://www.boe.es/eli/es/l/2021/05/20/7>
- Government of Spain. (2021b, March 25). *Resolución de 25 de marzo de 2021, conjunta de la Dirección General de Política Energética y Minas y de la Oficina Española de Cambio Climático, por la que se publica el Acuerdo del Consejo de Ministros de 16 marzo de 2021, por el que se adopta la versión final del Plan Nacional Integrado de Energía y Clima 2021-2030* [Resolution of March 25, 2021, jointly by the General Directorate of Energy Policy and Mines and the Spanish Office for Climate Change, publishing the Agreement of the Council of Minister of March 16, 2021, adopting the final version of the National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030]. Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge. https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2021-5106
- Instituto para la Transición Justa (ITJ). (n.d.). *Fondo de transición justa UE* [EU Just Transition Fund]. Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, Government of Spain. Retrieved April 10, 2025, <https://www.transicionjusta.gob.es/es/la-transicion-justa/fondo-de-transicion-justa-ue.html>

- Instituto para la Transición Justa (ITJ). (2020). *Just Transition Strategy*. Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, Government of Spain. https://www.miteco.gob.es/content/dam/miteco/es/ministerio/planes-estrategias/transicion-justa/Just%20Transition%20Strategy_ENG.pdf
- Instituto para la Transición Justa (ITJ). (2022). *Spain, towards a just energy transition*. Executive Report. Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, Government of Spain. https://www.transicionjusta.gob.es/content/dam/iti/files-1/Documents/Noticias/common/220707_Spain_JustTransition.pdf
- Instituto para la Transición Justa (ITJ). (2023). *Spain, 4 years towards a just energy transition*. Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, Government of Spain. https://www.transicionjusta.gob.es/content/dam/iti/files-1/Documents/Publicaciones%20ES%20y%20EN/Spain_4%20years%20towards%20a%20just%20energy%20transition.pdf
- International Energy Agency. (2023, August 3). *Spain's Just Transition Strategy*. <https://www.iea.org/policies/17830-spains-just-transition-strategy>
- International Labour Organization. (2015). *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*. <https://www.ilo.org/media/435091/download>
- Krawchenko, T., & Gordon, M. (2022). *How to implement a just transition? Leading practices in policy and governance*. World Bank's Social Sustainability and Inclusion Global Practice in the Europe and Central Asia Region.
- Miranda, I. L., & Touza, L. L. (2023). *Just Transition: Strengthening cooperation between the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean*. Real Instituto Elcano. <https://media.realinstitutoelcano.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/policy-paper-just-transition-strengthening-cooperation-between-the-eu-and-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-lac.pdf>
- Natural Resources Canada. (2024, June 20). *The Canadian Sustainable Jobs Act becomes law*. Government of Canada. <https://www.canada.ca/en/natural-resources-canada/news/2024/06/the-canadian-sustainable-jobs-act-becomes-law.html>
- Rentier, G., Lelieveldt, H., & Kramer, G. J. (2019). Varieties of coal-fired power phase-out across Europe. *Energy Policy*, 132, 620–632. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2019.05.042>
- Serrano, G., Gago, E. G., & Lupiáñez, M. T. R. (2023, March). *Women's green entrepreneurship and women's entrepreneurship in rural areas*. Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, Government of Spain. https://www.miteco.gob.es/content/dam/miteco/es/ministerio/planes-estrategias/igualdad-de-genero/archivos-base/executive_summary_MITECO_women_entrepreneurship_green_rural_2023.pdf
- Touza, L. L., Briones, A., Sarti, S. T., Averchenkova, A., Gunn, E. L., & Escribano, G. (2025). *From phasing-out to phasing-in: Lessons from Spain's just transition governance framework*. Real Instituto Elcano. <https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/analyses/from-phasing-out-to-phasing-in-lessons-from-spains-just-transition-governance-framework/>
- World Resources Institute. (2021, December 23). *Spain's national strategy to transition coal-dependent communities*. <https://www.wri.org/update/spains-national-strategy-transition-coal-dependent-communities>



Future Skills
Centre
Centre des Compétences futures



IRPP
INSTITUT
DE RECHERCHE
EN POLITIQUES
PUBLIQUES

IRPP
INSTITUTE
FOR RESEARCH
ON PUBLIC
POLICY