Bottom-up or top-down? Governance arrangements and coherent policymaking for Just Transition

Organisers: Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), German Institute for Development and Sustainability, Real Instituto Elcano and POLEA

Date/time/location: 26th June 2025 / 12:00PM (CEST) / SB62, WCC, Room Berlin

Policy coherence is widely seen as a critical tool for countries to advance their climate and sustainable development commitments. Recent research has shown that the consequences from effective policy coherence efforts tend to deliver broader societal benefits and inequality reduction; while, in contrast, incoherent policymaking not only fails to deliver societal benefits, but also create benefits for polluting industries and political elites. Moreover, there is a strong perception among policymakers and experts involved in climate policy that coherence is crucial for advancing just transition at all levels and governance domains.

The multi-level and cross-sectoral character of just transition and its ambition to leverage synergies between climate action, social equity and labor rights puts strong emphasis on effective coordination, coherence and integration strategies. Despite this, the literature on governance arrangements for the implementation of just transition strategies have not sufficiently assessed the role of policy coherence.

This event will present novel empirical findings on the consequences of policy coherence and their implications for just transition strategies across governance levels. It will also showcase experiences and lessons learned from the development of regional, national and sub-national just transition strategies in Africa, Germany, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Spain and the UK. A panel of experts will discuss implications and explore how these insights could inform the UNFCCC Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) and enable progress towards a Global Just Transition Framework.

Speakers and presenters
- Animesh Kumar, Head of UNDRR Bonn office
- Alina Averchenkova (online), Grantham Institute, London School of Economics
- Raúl Alfaro Pelico, Lancaster University
- Ulises España (online), POLEA
- Lara Lázaro Touza, Real Instituto Elcano
- Alexia Faus Onbargi, German Institute of Development and Sustainability
- Adis Dzebo, Stockholm Environment Institute

Moderator: Richard Klein, Stockholm Environment Institute

Session outline

Time (CEST)	Session	Process
Introduction		
12:00pm	Welcome and Introduction (3-5 min)	**Richard Klein, SEI** - Opens the event - Introduces the topic and theme - Invites opening speaker
12:05pm	Opening Speaker (7 min)	**Animesh Kumar, UNDRR** - Insights from DRR, the Sendai Framework and Just Resilience - Implications for Just Transition at different levels of governance.
Policy Coherence – implications for Just Transition		
12:12pm	Policy coherence for Just Transition (12 min)	**Adis Dzebo, SEI** - Causes and Consequences of Policy Coherence - How can Climate-SDG Synergies support Just transition Strategies? - Cross-country evidence from 200+ interviews confirms policy coherence as a mechanism for social equity
		Alexia Faus Onbargi, IDOS - Survey results on Just Transition views at COP28 - Policy coherence emerges as experts' top governance priority for effective just transitions
12:25	Q&A (3-5 min)	Questions for clarification
National and subnational Just Transition Strategies		
12:30	Country case studies (24 min)	**Lara Lázaro, Real Instituto Elcano** - Leveraging of EU funding for an innovative vertical coordination architecture for Just Transition - Participation and stakeholder engagement in just transition strategy implementation.
		Ulises España, POLEA - Just Transition Strategies and institutional capacity of Mexican local governments - Implementation of JT across diverse local contexts.
		Alina Averchenkova Grantham Institute, London School of Economics - The importance of strong legal frameworks and deliberative participation for Just Transition. - Insights from multiple countries: New Zeeland, the UK, Ireland and Germany

12:55	Global Perspectives (5 min)	**Raúl Alvaro Pelico, Lancaster University** - The African case for Just Transition - Implications for a Global Just Transition Framework and pathway toward coordinated international support
13:00	Q&A (15 min)	Moderated Q&A with the audience
13.15	Closing of session	**Richard Klein, SEI** Richad concludes and thanks the panel and audience

Summary of presentations

Causes and Consequences of Policy Coherence, Adis Dzebo, SEI
This presentation will present insights from the first cross-country study on the consequences of policy coherence which empirically shows that coherent policymaking creates benefits to all societal groups, and particularly vulnerable communities. The study draws on more than 200 interviews, policy analysis, and stakeholder workshops in eight countries (Australia, Colombia, Fiji, Germany, Kenya, the Philippines, South Africa, and Sri Lanka). It confirms that effective policy coherence contributes to reducing inequality. In contrast, incoherent policymaking disproportionately affects vulnerable societal groups, while elites and large businesses, traditionally powerful groups, tend to benefit from it in some cases.

Expert perceptions on just transition, Alexia Faus Onbargi, IDOS
The paper presents results from a survey of experts and decision-makers on just transitions (JT), revealing strong stakeholder preference for JT approaches that integrate broader sustainable development goals beyond mere energy transitions. Policy coherence emerges as the most prioritized governance tool, underscoring the importance stakeholders place on integrated, cross-sectoral governance for advancing JTs. Among justice dimensions, restorative justice and accountability stand out, indicating a clear stakeholder demand for climate responsibility. Notably, stakeholders from low-income countries prefer more transformative JT approaches compared to their high-income counterparts. While there is limited support for radical economic restructuring, such as de-growth models, sustainable development frameworks are viewed as the most politically viable and widely accepted pathways toward achieving just transitions.

National and subnational Just Transition Strategies: Mexico, Ulises España, POLEA
This presentation reports on POLEA's analysis of data gathered from participatory processes in twelve Mexican states to inform climate change law revision proposals. Through a mixed-methods evaluation of expert interviews we identified key challenges, including deficits in institutional capacity, inconsistent emissions target-setting, and limited integration of justice considerations, alongside corresponding opportunities for policy enhancement. Applying a cross-cutting justice lens, we address Mexico's pervasive inequalities and demonstrate how equitable climate action can foster social inclusion. Our findings underscore the need to reinforce climate governance institutions and to define emission reduction and carbon neutrality targets tailored to each state's socioeconomic and environmental context. These recommendations aim to support ambitious yet just climate strategies that reflect Mexico's diverse regional contexts.

National and subnational Just Transition Strategies: Spain, Lara Lázaro Touza, Real Instituto Elcano
Spain's just transition governance framework features an innovative institutional architecture that emphasises vertical coordination and integrates EU financing. It comprises a Just Transition Strategy; the Just Transition Institute, which coordinates policy development; and Just Transition Agreements—co-governance tools uniting citizens, national, regional, and local administrations, and companies to reactivate regions affected by coal phase-out. Spain is the only Member State to allocate Next Generation EU funds explicitly to just transition via component 10 of its National Recovery and Resilience Plan. The forthcoming 2026–2030 Just Transition Strategy offers opportunities to expand this model through Elcano Royal Institute's proposals for Just Renewable Transition Agreements, adapting institutions to support renewable deployment and social

acceptance at regional and local levels. Elcano's 2024 Climate Survey confirms strong public support for national budget allocations to just transition and identifies key drivers of that backing.

Legal and governance framework for a just transition, Alina Averchenkova, Grantham Institute, LSE

The role of strong legal and governance frameworks in strengthening implementation of the Paris agreement while ensuring just transition will be discussed. Examples Will focus on recent studies on the impact of climate legislation and governance in Ireland, Germany, New Zealand, UK, and the experiences with deliberative public participation in Europe.

Africa and a Global Just Transition Framework, Raúl Alfaro Pelico, Lancaster University

This session comes at a critical time for the Africa, since findings from other regions help reflect on the unique challenges and opportunities for fossil-fuel dependent countries across the continent that are clean-energy endowed but remain electricity-deprived. Top-down and bottom-up approaches will both be needed to achieve African policy coherence while strengthening national and regional institutions to realize the promise of a just and equitable transition that is renewables-based. The potential for a Global Just Transition Mechanism will be discussed.

Participant biographies

Dr Animesh Kumar is the head of the UNDRR Office in Bonn. Animesh manages the UNDRR's global portfolio on climate action and comprehensive risk management, disaster data, and monitoring of the Sendai Framework and SDGs. Previously, he served as the Deputy Head of the UNDRR Regional Offices in Africa and Asia-Pacific. In these capacities, he led regional policy and coordination on disaster risk reduction, including inter-governmental and stakeholder mechanisms, and joint UN efforts on building resilience. Animesh has also worked in other UN entities in Africa and Asia, working on disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and food security. He is a Geographer and holds an MPhil and PhD in climate change adaptation and sustainability.

Adis Dzebo is a Senior Research Fellow at SEI Headquarters, where he specializes in aligning global agendas and integrating climate action with sustainable development priorities at both global and domestic levels. His work extensively covers policy implementation processes and outcomes, emphasizing the importance of policy coherence, coordination, and integration for the successful national implementation of climate, sustainable development, and biodiversity goals. He is also a lead developer of multiple policy analysis tools, including the NDC-SDG Connections and the SEI AI Reader. His PhD research delved into the emergence, effectiveness, and legitimacy of global and transnational governance, the risks posed by climate change across borders, and the role of non-state actors in climate change adaptation. Adis is also a consultant to the UN, working for the Department on Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) and the Project Office on Governance (UNPOG).

Alexia-Faus Onbargi is a policy researcher and advisor specialising in policy coherence for Just Transitions. She is currently based at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) in Bonn. With expertise in Just Transitions, energy transition governance, and synergies and trade-offs between climate action and sustainable development, her work has enabled her to advise the German government, the European Union, and the Global Environment Facility. Alexia is finalising her PhD at Utrecht University in the Netherlands and holds an MPhil in Development Studies from the University of Oxford.

Lara Lázaro is Senior Fellow at the Elcano Royal Institute. She holds a Ph.D. from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE). She was analyst for the Elcano's Energy and Climate Change Programme (2009-2011), and prior to this she was appointed Postdoctoral Fellow at the LSE and worked for Bloomberg. She has also consultancy experience, working for Abengoa Research in its 'Energy Transition and Climate Change' Project and for Repsol's Technology Centre on a project envisioned to develop a decision-support system to help optimise the company's future energy technology portfolio. Lara is also a Lecturer in Economic Theory at Cardenal Cisneros University College in Madrid.

Alina Averchenkova is a Distinguished Policy Fellow and Lead for Governance and Legislation at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment

at the London School of Economics. She leads Governance and Legislation research and engagement with policy and decision makers on these issues worldwide. Alina is currently a Visiting Senior Fellow at the Elcano Royal Institute in Madrid, Spain. She has extensive experience on climate change and international development. Alina's current work focuses on climate change governance and legislation around the world and capacity building and advisory to governments, parliaments, and international organisations on these issues.

Dr. Raul Alfaro-Pelico is a Senior Research Fellow at the Lancaster University School of Engineering. His research on energy, ecology and economy-wide dimensions of the net-zero transition specifically addresses just and equitable outcomes. Raul also undertakes consulting and volunteering assignments, for example, for the African Group of climate negotiators, the Climate Investment Funds, the Universal Energy Facility at Sustainable Energy for All among others. Prior to these roles, Raul has a long track record of sustainability leadership roles at the International Renewable Energy Agency, United Nations Development Programme, Rocky Mountain Institute, the World Bank and other multinational organizations.

Richard J.T. Klein is a Senior Research Fellow at SEI, based in Bonn, Germany. He is an internationally leading expert on the science and policy of adaptation to climate change, with 30 years of experience in original research, science assessment and policy advice. He sees adaptation as a global challenge and was one of the architects of Adaptation Without Borders, a global partnership working to strengthen systemic resilience to cross-border climate impacts. He has led a range of large international collaborative research and capacity-building projects and programmes, and advised governments, international agencies, civil-society organisations and private firms. He has published widely in top academic journals and is one of the world's most cited experts in his field. In 2016, he received the prestigious Burtoni Award in recognition of his work on climate adaptation. Before joining SEI, he spent almost eight years at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research. He began his career at the Institute for Environmental Studies of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in 1992. In 2003 he received his PhD from the University of Kiel.