

## THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF GREEN ECONOMY AND GREEN JOBS. FROM A GLOBAL TO A EUROPEAN APPROACH

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**Abstract.** This article represents a theoretical approach to the analysis of two concepts: the green economy and green jobs, between which there is a causal relation: the development of the green economy, a concept developed since the end of the 20th century, brings with it opportunities for the global labour markets and, thus, leads to the emergence of green jobs. For this article we have used systemic approach (transition from global to European level) to show how the green economy is seen and how societies have developed initiatives to create and develop green jobs. The idea around which the article is articulated is that the development of the green economy and, implicitly, of green jobs, must not be seen only as a saving solution to the crises (economic, climatic, social, health) facing global society, but also as normal social realities, specific to the society of the XXI century, a society built on the pillars of growth, inclusion, and environmental protection.

**Keywords:** Green Economy; Sustainable Development; Green Growth; Green Jobs; Green Skills

## CONTEXT

The accentuation of global problems such as the depletion of natural resources, the deterioration of the natural environment, the repeated economic and financial crises, the increase of consumption (Trevino, Marvasti, 2019: 9-11; Macionis, 2019) led to the change of the development paradigm, from consumption to sustainable development (Ibisch, 2019), and to the recognition of the new direction of action, respectively green economic growth. The idea of green economy has appeared in times of the opposite perceptions and attitudes regarding the globalization (Breaz, 2019: 67) and involves using natural resources, energy and new technologies along with non-polluting production methods in order to foster growth and create new jobs. The transition to a green economy involves the practice of an economy based on policies and investments that link economic development, biodiversity, ecosystem, climate change, health and welfare of the population in the medium and long term (Babonea&Joia, 2012: 98).

The development of the green economy can be observed at the level of all social subsystems: Currently, there is also an objective of promoting a green principle even at the level of prisons, which must be built according to "green standards" (Jewkes, Moran,2015:451); arranging contributes to some extent to improving the living conditions of people in prisons, for whom prisons are no longer an "isolated environment"(Breaz, 2018:1-2), helping them to adapt to prison environment. (IlieGoga, 2016: 49-50). Thus, sustainable development requires dynamism, requires permanent change, adaptation and research, all these elements being closely linked to the conservation of the environment and the proper use of natural resources.

## **EFFECTS OF GREEN ECONOMY ON EMPLOYMENT: PROMOTING “GREEN JOBS”**

Restructuring the global economy will create not only new industries but also new jobs - completely new professions, but also new specialties within the professions (ILO, 2011; Williams, 2010), because green economy represent one of the determining factors for employment growth (Apergis N, Payne JE, 2010: 658). The Green Jobs Initiative is a joint initiative of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) of the International Labour Organization (ILO), of the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Unions Confederation (ITUC). This initiative supports the concerted efforts of governments, employers and trade unions to promote, in a world of climate change, coherent and sustainable environmental policies and effective programs aimed at generating green jobs and decent work for everyone (ILO, UNEP, 2008). Decent employment is employment that guarantees safe work, fair wages, respect for workers' rights and social protection and represents an indicator of quality of life assessment

The initiative for Green Jobs and Decent Work advocates for a “fair and just transition” (Marieke, 2016: 81), in which new opportunities are enjoyed by employers, employees, communities and other relevant social actors.

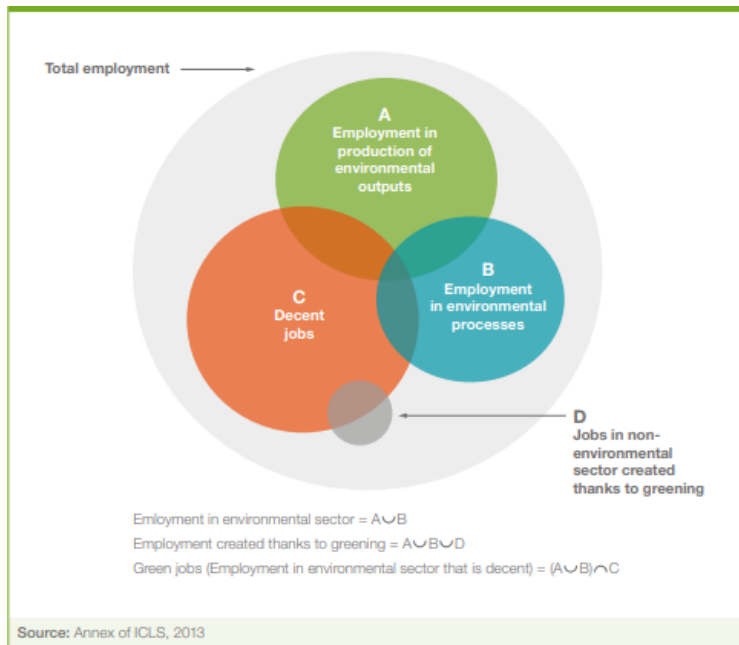
According to ILO, Green jobs give hope that humanity will be able to meet the two major challenges of the twenty-first century: “avoiding dangerous and potentially unmanageable climate change and protecting the natural environment [...] and promoting decent work” (ILO, 2008; ILO, 2009b). In 2013, the ILO's definition of green jobs was that they are decent jobs that reduce negative environmental impacts and lead to economically, economically and socially sustainable economies and businesses by reducing energy and raw material consumption, limiting greenhouse gas emissions, minimizing waste and pollution and protecting and restoring ecosystems (ILO, 2013:9-10).

Also, green jobs are seen by many scholars as a response to the multiple crises facing the world today: climate, food, financial, economic crises (Jones, 2008; Barbier, 2010). According to the definition given by the UN Environmental Program, these are “work activities in agriculture, manufacturing, research and development, services and administration, which contribute substantially to the preservation or restoration of the quality of the environment. Specifically, but not exclusively, they include work activities that help protect ecosystems and biodiversity, reduce energy consumption (Konopnicki, 2009), reduce also materials and water through effective strategies; decarbonizes the economy, minimizes or eliminates pollution and waste.

The figure below helps us to better understand the exact role of green jobs, and what is their dimension. As we may observe from the Figure 1, the total employment the green jobs are part of the total employment and they include mainly employment in production and environmental outputs, employment in environmental processes and decent jobs. In fact, these three types of employments are the most known in scientific literature. Which is very important to mention is that the authors of this figure (Bowen and Kuralbayeva) are introducing a fourth type of jobs: they are not jobs in environmental sector, but they were created as a result to the development of green economy.

The number of green jobs is growing today (Pollin, 2009), so the most visible are those in the field of renewable energy, a field that has experienced a rapid economic development in recent years. Green occupations entail certain "new skills", so workers' skills are compounded by additional knowledge about both new technologies and new management requirements - with changes in production methods and the acquisition of new business models. To be successful, workers need to improve both their skills and specialization and their level of basic training (Bowen, Karlygash, 2015: 12). So, this skills improvement permits them to have a more “clear and systematic vision of the learning outcomes and a lifelong learning perspective (Vlăduțescu, 2014: 88).

Figure 1: Relationships between total employment, employment in the environmental sector and decent work.



Source: Alex Bowen and KarlygashKuralbayeva, *Looking for green jobs: the impact of green growth on employment*, Policy Paper, London: Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, 2015, p. 7

Preparing for the green economy, seen in terms of the businesses that this type of economy develops, instructs students to incorporate sustainability at all levels of any organization. For example, “future accountants can take courses to calculate the company's carbon footprint, marketers take green marketing courses so that a company's claims that it is sustainable can be proven, and future managers learn how to include sustainability, in a company's strategies” (Brown, 2002: 52). In the same time, we know that sometimes, it is very difficult to adopt decisions in organization, it can arrive that „adopting the decision in economic organisational entities is less coherent than the decision theory implies it” (Dima, Vlăduțescu, 2012: 2)

Thus, several major areas of activity with an environmental protection function are identified: protection of ambient air and climate; wastewater and waste management; soil and water protection and sanitation; noise control; biodiversity protection. Two cross-cutting activities are also covered: research and development and training, insofar as they concern the protection of the environment (Eurostat, 2009; Gouin, Roturier, 2015: 83).

As the main categories of promotion, more indirect, of green employment we can mention the fact that they should be done on several stages. A first stage will have to be the development of the education, training and skills needed to support the green economy (CEDEFOP, 2012). This can be done, for example, by supporting partnerships between universities and the private sector to facilitate the transition from education to employment in climate change or related areas. These partnerships are especially useful for higher education institutions, because this contact with employers can help universities better understand green skills and roles (Mc.Grath, 2010)

A second stage would be that of the development of public employment services (Cox, Foley, 2013) in order to provide valuable information on the skills requirements of the labour market; also this will involve „providing its beneficiaries information, counseling, training, mediation and placement services, but also consultancy regarding the legislation facilities in labor and social security” (Niță, 2013: 90). In some Member States, tools have been developed to monitor the demand for green skills in various sectors of the economy, including also the green sectors (European Commission, 2013). In fact, in Romania, one of the measures of the national strategy, for the period 2018-2025 is the promotion and consolidation of entrepreneurial initiatives for the creation of green jobs, by Granting subsidies to employers who create green jobs (Strategy for Green Jobs. Romania, 2018-2025).

A third stage will be that of changes in taxation of polluting industries (Rauscher, 1995: 230; Fan, Li, Yin, 2019). Also, they should be very

important also other activities, such as: ”promoting the development, dissemination and use of environmentally friendly technologies in industry; promoting the adoption / use of ecological technologies among consumers / households; promoting investments in "green" infrastructure and in adapting to climate change; raising awareness and "social pressure" for the transition to a green economy” (EEO, 2013)

According to the OECD, investment in renewable energies could translate into the creation of 20 million jobs in the world by 2030: 2.1 million jobs in wind energy production, 6, 3 million in photovoltaic solar energy and 12 million in agricultural and industrial biofuels (Robins, Clover, Singh, 2009; OECD, 2011; UNEP, 2012).

At European level, the Europe 2020 Strategy for Jobs and Growth, launched at European Union level in 2010, has been developed with the aim of creating the necessary conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (OECD, 2012; Motoi, Bourgatte, 2020: 34-36). According to the Europe 2030 Strategy, the objectives related to the development of the green economy aim at: a 40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990 levels; a share of at least 27% of renewable energy consumption; an energy saving of at least 27% compared to the "business-as-usual" scenario (European Commission, 2020). An OECD report from 2011 shows that recycling 70% of the EU's main / key resources could create more than 560,000 new jobs by 2025 (OECD, 2011).

For example, in Romania, the application of EU waste regulations leads to the development of the waste management and recycling sector; so waste management is “a key element in ensuring an efficient use of resources and sustainable development” (Izvercian, Ivascu, 2015: 720). The process of developing green activities and jobs can be accelerated or slowed down depending on: a) government and household funding constraints that limit their ability to consume and invest in infrastructure and sustainable housing; and b) the speed of labour market adaptation that may represent an obstacle to the inter-

and intrasectoral reallocation of labour during this transformation process (Gouin, Roturier, 2015: 83).

As EU Member States develop classifications of 'green' skills (CeDEFOP, 2012), it has already been established that the transition to a greener economy will have a significant impact on skills needs, which will result in an increase in labor demand. skilled in the green industries, by developing the skills of workers in all sectors and by retraining workers in sectors vulnerable to restructuring (Forem, 2010).

## CONCLUSIONS

The transition to a green and resource-efficient economy is, above all, an opportunity to increase Europe's global competitiveness, to ensure the well-being of future generations, to support sustainable economic growth and job creation. high quality work, while contributing to the recovery of European economies affected by the recent COVID-19 crisis, as in a domino effect. The significant and rapid growth in the demand for “green skills” is a major pressure on education and training systems and raises questions about how we can ensure a fair distribution of the benefits of these skills in society. Many of the main employment growth sectors have traditionally been representative of those with the highest employment rates.

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