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A) NATIONAL/LOCAL DATA

GREEN SKILLS AT NATIONAL LEVEL: SPAIN

The Green Economy (GE) is "one that results in improved human well-being and social equity while reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcity» (PNUMA, 2011). The National Strategy for Green Infrastructure and Ecological Connectivity and Restoration (*Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico, 2020*) is the strategic planning document that regulates the implementation and development of the green Infrastructure in Spain by establishing a unified administrative and technical framework. The Autonomous Communities develop their own Green Infrastructure Plans following the guidelines of the national one.

Another policy document, La Estrategia Española de Economía Circular (*Estrategia Española De Economía Circular," 2020*), which was introduced by the Declaration of Climate and Environmental Emergency in 2020, sets a target of reaching climate neutrality by 2050. Among the most important targets for the current decade are reduction of national consumption of materials by 30% and cutting waste generation by 15% compared to 2010.

Therefore, Spain pays particular attention to preserving and encouraging the spread of green jobs. Currently, green jobs account for 2.4% of the Spanish GDP, with a total of around 500,000 green jobs in the country (*Empleo Verde en España, n.d.*). Gross



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value added of the environmental economy increased by 5% in 2018 and accounted for 2.20% of GDP that year (ibid.).

Among the green sectors with the greatest potential in Spain are renewable energies, rehabilitation of buildings (construction sector), development of waste management (in particular, the automotive industry/battery alliance) and investment in sustainable mobility. Although industrial areas with the potential to create green jobs are concentrated in developed urban areas, the future of Spanish employment growth also involves expansion into more rural areas, especially in the agricultural sector. For example, viticulture is an industry with plenty of room for sustainable growth, as well as tourism, another major source of income for Spain.

Spanish citizens are overwhelmingly in favour of the green economy transition and increase in green employment sector. According to 2019 Eurobarometer on EU energy policies, staggering 98% strongly agree that the EU should ensure more investment in renewable energies, while 97% of the respondents believe energy poverty should be addressed and «no citizen or region should be left behind» (*Europeans Attitudes on EU Energy Policy,* 2019).

Another important aspect of the Spanish sustainable agenda is community development. Transition to democracy boosted community development, thus making it one of the most rapidly developing fields offering potential employment and promoting innovation.

The profession of a community officer as such does not exist in Spain. Instead, there are leaders of local developmental agencies, predominantly those parts of the «LEADER» program of the European Union (*LEADER/CLLD*, n.d.), who execute similar



functions of a typical community development officer. In the context of Spain, their responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Technical training of workers: on the use of new technologies and on cooperativism;
- Literacy-awareness-education programmes for adults;
- Support of women in taking a pro-active role in their communities;
- Basic health, maternal, child and general hygiene programmes;
- Creation and improvement of the facilities for leisure and recreation and for senior citizens, as well as the promotion of cultural and sports activities.

Digital skills at national level: Spain

According to the Spanish Ministry of Educations and Vocational Training, digital skills are defined as «the creative, critical and confident use of information and communication technologies to achieve the goals related to work, employability, learning, use of leisure time, inclusion and participation in society» (*Competencia Digital*, n.d.). In Spain the digitalization of the society is managed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Digital Transformation by means of the strategic National Plan of Digital Competencias, part of the Digital Agenda 2026 (*Plan Nacional De Competencias Digitales*, n.d.).

The main goal of the National Digital Skills Plan is to cover 80% of the Spanish population in providing training in digital skills. However, currently indicators do not perform



brilliantly. According to the research conducted by BBVA, the percentage of the population with at least basic digital skills is lower in Spain than in the Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union and declined between 2015 and 2019 (*España | Competencias Digitales: ¿Qué Son Y Quién Las Tiene?*, 2021). Although it later started raising again and hit 60% in 2020, it is still far from the 80% target.

Currently, the fields with the biggest number of digitalized jobs in Spain follow similar trends as those dominating in the European Union. For instance, cybersecurity operator, web-developer, cloud computing operator, digital marketing specialist, Data Scientist/Big Data specialist, UX developer, SEO specialist, e-commerce specialist and blockchain specialist were ranked as the most demanded digitalized jobs in Spain in 2021 (*Las 25 Profesiones Digitales Más Demandadas En España*, n.d.).

However, automation concerns other sectors as well. With this regard, such sectors as sales and administrative work are prone to become fully automatized, while management, engineering, teaching and healthcare are less flexible (R. Doménech et al., 2018). Automation might potentially raise unemployment levels; however, this can be avoided if the issue is addressed accordingly and in a timely manner. To lessen the negative repercussions of technological progress on employment, it is vital for all the agents of the economic processes (both employers and employees) to manage the challenges of the digital revolution. To achieve this, action must be taken on three fronts: education, the labour market and redistributive policies.

B) EU DATA

Green skills at EU level

- What does the community development officer* mean at EU level?



In order to better understand the specificity of a job of a community development officer, it is crucial to create a clear vision of what *community development* is.

According to the findings of the «New trends in community development» report, community development is «a range of practices dedicated to increasing the strength and effectiveness of community life, improving conditions, especially for people in disadvantaged situations, and enabling people to participate in public decision-making and to achieve greater long-term control over their circumstances» (*New trends in Community development*, 2006). Moreover, community development is based on certain principles outlined in the European Cohesion Policy (*Cohesion Policy 2021-2027*, n.d.). First and foremost, community development in the European Union must be based on decentralized power allocation as a way to manifest the «bottom-up» approach. Only people belonging to the same community can decide what is best for their present and future, thus having a final say in decision-making process. Another principle, the principle of solidarity, highlights the importance of social inclusion and representation of the needs of marginalized or excluded groups of society. Last but not least, community development must follow results-based approach in project planning and management with the final goal of an effective performance.

Therefore, a community development officer (CDO) is an official who contributes to the development of a territory by providing a wide range of tasks and services to local communities aimed at improving their quality of life and creating empowerment opportunities in various sectors (economy, social sphere or political participation). A CDO is usually appointed by the head of a sending organization, for instance, an NGO; a governmental body, for example, European Commission; or a nation state.

The goal of a CDO's actions is to either implement a particular project in a country or to conduct a set of actions as part of a bigger policy or program. A CDO can be both



a national of the country in which the program takes place and a foreign citizen permanently executing their duties in the host country.

Depending on the sending organization, the scope of the responsibilities of a CDO can vary significantly. It largely depends on the size of an area under supervision and particular needs of a territory. However, some of the general functions of an CDO include:

- Identifying local needs and strengths which can potentially convert into competitive advantages of a territory;
- Identifying potential beneficiaries of a project taking place and making sure their needs are taken into account by the means of regular consultations and feedback collection;
- Identifying and involving local stakeholders with a purpose of an effective management of a project, fostering and sustaining partnerships;
- Recruiting local staff for project implementation purposes;
- Coordinating work of departments and volunteers;
- Ensuring that protocols and local legislation are obeyed;
- Reporting and working with boards and advisory committees.

It is of paramount importance to underline the fact that a vision of a particular community regarding the development of their home cannot be substituted by the European Commission's or even national authorities' reservations. However, it is important to remember that CDO's activities must be in line with the policy of a respective national state, as well as the European Cohesion Policy.

C) GOOD PRACTICES



1) TOTANA SOLAR PLANT

Totana Solar Plant is a vast solar array operated by the Enel Green Power and is situated in Totana, Southern Spain. It started its operation in 2019 when it was finally connected to the grid after 2 years of massive constructions with the aim to contribute to clean energy generation and combatting climate change.

Totana Solar Plant proved to be an effective way of energy generation, as it contributes 85 megawatts of electricity, which is nearly 2,800 hours a year around Totana (Spain: *Taking Sustainable Energy to the Next Level*, 2020). Moreover, it is part of the bigger project managed by ENEL which comprises 9 other solar plants throughout the Spanish territory.

For Spain, climate change is a particularly serious issue. The country already receives twenty five percent less rain than fifty years ago and average temperatures have risen by 8 degrees Celsius (ibid). Unless climate change can be slowed or reversed, predictions are that in the next fifty years, Spain's temperature could rise another 2.5 degrees Celsius bringing a hotter, drier and longer summer season to its vast central plains. Therefore, the commitment of the government to install 3,000 megawatts of wind and solar power capacity every year over ten years is a crucial, if not vital solution.

The Spanish context is favorable to the usage of solar energy as opposed to, for example, Northern European countries where daylight is shorter. However, the case of Totana Solar Plant might act as an example of an alternative means of energy generation based on the country's competitive advantages. With this regard, countries like Norway or Sweden can resort to the use of wind plants on a bigger scale as a way to



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reach climate neutrality highlighted in the European green Deal (*A European Green Deal*). Moreover, involving and supporting the local community was a central pillar of ENEL's plan for Totana. Preference was given to local workers and contractors, training schemes in renewable energy were provided for the area's unemployed population and environmental awareness programs were brought into schools.

2) COVAP

COVAP (The Cooperativa Ganadera del Valle de los Pedroches) is a Spanish cooperative specializing in dairy, meat and animal feed industry. It was established in 1959 in Pozoblanco (Córdoba) thanks to a group of farmers who decided to buy raw material to feed and raise their livestock. Today it comprises 4,500 farming partners who vowed to contribute to and care for the environment.

In 2021, COVAP "in its commitment to sustainability and as part of its strategic model" has announced the launch of a new, more sustainable one-litre carton that replaces layers of plastics in the cap and the brik with a revolutionary vegetable polymer based on sugar cane (*Covap Apuesta Por La Sostenibilidad Con Un Nuevo Envase De Origen Vegetal,* 2021). "This innovation represents a new packaging concept made out of 89% renewable plant-based materials, thus reducing the carbon footprint by up to 33% compared to the previous format," the Cordovan company stated.

This initiative by COVAP was embraced by consumers as, according to the studies conducted by the international consultancy firm Kantar, consumers prefer more sustainable packaging, since when the quality, price and safety of the product seem similar, the purchase decision is inclined towards the environmental values of the brand



and the ecological attributes of the packaging (ibid). This is proved by the survey conducted by the «Dataestudios» in Andalusia, home to COVAP, which revealed that 73% of Andalusians would pay more for environmentally responsible brands (ibid). Moreover, the initiative goes in line with the European regulations on sustainable development, such as Europe's transition towards a carbon neutral and circular economy (*Circular Economy Action Plan*," 2020).

This step carried out by COVAP contributes to the overall strategy of the company whose goal is to improve the environmental impact of the food chain. Moreover, the company comprises more than 10.000 employees and, thus, promotes sustainable rural development. Moreover, the cooperative's members are at the same time owners, livestock suppliers and input customers, which, in its turn, guarantees reasonable prices and a responsible use of natural resources.

This experience of COVAP can serve as an example of an easily reproduced good practice, as its most important component is an entrepreneurial will rather than cost-benefit ratio or political matters. According to the research of Spence et al., the rationale behind entrepreneurs committed to sustainability compared to less engaged firms shows that entrepreneurs' individual values are determinative (Spence et. al, 2011). Since climate conditions keep deteriorating, an integration of cleaner technologies into the company's production cycle should not be viewed as an extra expenditure article to the company's budget but as a step towards new, inevitable production model.

D) INTERVIEW' ANALYSIS



- 1) **Demographics.** Overall, we interviewed 22 respondents. The mean of the age of the respondents is 37,9, while the median age is 39. The vast majority of the respondents come from Spain, while one person comes from Romania and four from Italy. Half of the respondents work for a local action group (LAG by LEADER project financed by the European Union) in the capacity of a technician of cooperation or a head of the LAG; just over 18 % of the respondents work as project managers and the equal percentage of the respondents is occupied in the education field. The remaining approximate 14 % execute administrative tasks for agricultural organizations. The mean of the work experience of those who work for LAG is 12 years, while the median is 5. Project managers on average work for 1 year, whereas administrators and educators did not indicate the duration of their work experience.

As indicated by the respondents, the tasks of a technician for cooperation include coordination of cooperation agreements, while project managers plan and develop European Union projects. Administrators tend to execute financial and legal functions of their respective companies, whereas educators are mainly concerned with environmental issues.

- 2) **Subject knowledge.** All the respondents were familiar with the term «digital skills» as opposed to the terms concerning the green sector which raised doubts among some of the participants. However, the term «green employees» was the most known one, followed by «green economy» and «green skills». The majority of the respondents gave correct definitions of all the three terms, indicating that the focus should be made on being able to preserve the environment and combat the consequences of the climate change.

80 % of the respondents consider that green/digital skills influence jobs or the work environment in a significant way, while the most common answer concerning the



practical green actions that employees need to participate in during their employment was energy saving followed by recycling activities.

As for the «soft skills», only a little less than 30 % of the respondents were familiar with term.

- 3) **Job specific.** More than half of the respondents tend to know what the employee's responsibilities are in relation to digital communication and green actions, while almost three thirds of the participants believe that employees decisions can influence green and digital practices in the work place, and almost 87 % know at least one tool that help employees perform digital communication and green activities. However, what concerns practical methods that employees must apply to increase the engagement from local communities towards the green skills, more than half of the respondents did not name anything.

Time-management was ranked first among the work-based methods most effective in obtaining maximum productivity in short time, followed by being human and increasing work staff.

- 4) **Country specific approach.** Overall, respondents believe that Spain does do enough for supporting people or entities that foster green skills but many respondents struggled to determine precisely Spanish approach towards the green economy. However, more than 85% of the participants are aware that the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge is responsible for dealing with green economy/jobs/skills.

Around 75% of the respondents know that there are varios NGO's and private organizations whose aim is to foster green skills but only approximately 40% could name some. As for the cross-organisation cooperation and/or intra-cooperation mechanisms to foster green skills, again, the majority of the respondents were



aware of the existence of such a type; however, only 20 % managed to name a couple of them.

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