



Assessment for Austria

Status: Final Plan

Date of plan: 03.08.2022



Overall Plan Rating

There are also some indicators rated as not consistent with the just transition. These are marked as red on the traffic light system and should be the foremost priorities to address and improve on. The indicators are organised under their corresponding principles in the Annex to this report.

Performance of TJTP by principle



Principle 1: The TJTP should be sustainable and deliver on long-term, international and EU climate commitments such as the Paris Agreement and EU 2030 and 2050 climate objectives.



Principle 2: The TJTP should not lead to prolonged fossil fuel use or promote false solutions to the transition to climate neutrality. As a guide, coal should be phased out by 2030.



Principle 3: The TJTP should lead to sustainable economic diversification at the local, regional and national level.



Principle 4: The TJTP should address social inequalities, improve interregional solidarity, decrease inequalities and tackle injustices.



Principle 5: The TJTP should not harm EU environmental and climate objectives and values.



Principle 6: The TJTP should respect the polluter pays principle.



Principle 7: The TJTP should be supported by adequate, coordinated and long-term public and private funding sources.



Principle 8: The TJTP should be designed, monitored and evaluated through meaningful partnerships which engage all stakeholders in an open, inclusive and ongoing process, especially at local level. Social dialogue and collective bargaining should be central pillars of the transition when it comes to the labour market and enterprises.



Principle 9: The TJTP should take a place-based, local approach to strategy design and implementation.



Principle 10: The TJTP should be developed based on high quality, independent and objective analysis of the challenges and opportunities of the transition for regions.

Breakdown by indicator



Principle 1

The TJTP should be sustainable and deliver on long-term, international and EU climate commitments such as the Paris Agreement and EU 2030 and 2050 climate objectives.



Indicates a commitment to at least a 55% GHG emissions reduction versus 1990 level by 2030 at regional or national level

Comments: Notes that, "The documents on the national climate policy reference framework are currently being revised and the sub-targets adjusted. The information provided here relates to the strategies and plans currently in place. It can be assumed that the sub-goals will be tightened."



Does not identify the opportunities to increase renewable energy use in the region or nationally

Comments: Focuses on energy efficiency under the ERDF-JTF programme. It notes that "the expansion of renewable energy sources, on the other hand, will be implemented within the framework of the CAP strategic plan with EAFRD co-financing or with national funding"



Identifies the opportunities to increase energy efficiency or reduce energy use in the region or nationally, but no specific actions, projects or targets are proposed

Comments: Energy efficiency indicators are only included in the overarching ERDF-JTF programme.



Principle 2

The TJTP should not lead to prolonged fossil fuel use or promote false solutions to the transition to climate neutrality. As a guide, coal should be phased out by 2030.



A phase-out of coal is planned or implied (the fossil fuel is recognised as in terminal decline), but the end date is after 2030 or undefined

Comments: The areas of hard coal and lignite mining, peat extraction or oil shale production that are to be reduced and closed from the EU perspective are no longer of importance in the JTP region – as well as for Austria as a whole. The exit from coal production took place a long time ago and was cushioned by EU programs (e.g. RECHAR). The phase-out of coal-fired power has already been completed. However, coal is still used in industrial production processes.

The greatest challenge is to replace gas and coal with renewable energy sources, with a particular focus on the electrification of high-temperature processes.



A phase out of fossil gas infrastructure phase-out is planned or implied, but the date is after 2035 or is undefined

Comments: 100% coverage of electricity consumption (power) by 2030 should be from renewable sources and climate neutrality should be reached by 2040 in Austria.



Does not propose to phase out fossil fuel subsidies, or even proposes to introduce new or increase existing ones



Principle 3

The TJTP should lead to sustainable economic diversification at the local, regional and national level.



Promotes economic diversification, and explicitly recognises (e.g. in the assessment of the transition challenges) that all sectors of the economy must become sustainable

Comments: Repeatedly clear throughout, but could explicitly recognise this means fossil-fuel free sectors as references to 'low-carbon' can be - in some cases - used to conceal business as usual operations.



Recognises the value of SMEs and start-ups, setting out a clear plan for their support and incentivisation e.g. through dedicated incubators

Comments: JTF is only for SMEs- not large enterprises (very clear). However, it is not clear whether support for large enterprises is simply concentrated in other cohesion funds - like ERDF - and so effectively reducing the ceiling that would have been available for SMEs under other cohesion funds - or if this means funding for SMEs is truly additional in the regions.

- Indicates a link to and a need for consistency with the NECP's objectives. Provides a clear prioritisation of funding and investment needs into different sectors, labour market adjustments and for relevant reskilling and upskilling in line with - or going further than - the most up to date NECP for sustainable economic diversification and to create decent, sustainable and resilient jobs

● Principle 4

The TJTP should address social inequalities, improve interregional solidarity, decrease inequalities and tackle injustices.

- Justifies why certain regions should receive support with reference to the underlying economic and employment impacts of the transition, and justifies the choice objective criteria or comparative data
Comments: Includes a section, 'data-based identification of the JTP region', to justify why the JTP covers an extended area versus the European Commission 2020 Country Report Annex D proposals. Excludes e.g. Liz-Stadt, in spite of high GHG emissions because they are economically strong.
- Prioritises employment support and job search assistance for workers directly losing their jobs as a result of the transition AND other worker groups, including those who may be indirectly affected
- Identifies some of the existing and future skills, training and education gaps at regional level on the basis of objective and quality skills forecasts, or sets out a process to identify them - but focuses on a limited range of sectors or only on workers directly affected by the transition or who have already lost their jobs
Comments: Information on how skills needs will be identified is vague, although a lot of emphasis is placed on skills development. The money available under the ESF+ JTF programme should pursue, "a place-based approach to cushioning the negative social impact of the transition to climate neutrality in the JTP region through targeted, needs-based skills development and qualification measures..."
- Foresees targeted investments sufficient to remedy these gaps and create decent, sustainable and resilient jobs for all current (and future) workers in the region
 - ✓ Includes programme specific indicators (section 2.5) to measure the uptake of skills courses or training
- Does not consider the quality of new jobs or include measures to address the issue
- Does not consider social protection and inclusion measures, even if inequalities are recognised
- Does not consider the impact of the transition on quality of life or makes only passive mention to some issues, such as air quality improvements
- includes provisions to actively support gender equality, including equality of opportunity for women and the inclusion of women in the labour market
Comments: But only for employment measures and its measures may be more 'inclusive' than targeted.

● Principle 5

The TJTP should not harm EU environmental and climate objectives and values.

- Does not include activities which would negatively impact environmental and biodiversity indicators relating to:
 - Biodiversity
 - Air pollution
 - Accessible greenspace (land take)
 - Water quality

AND neither does it include significantly harmful activities as defined by the EU Taxonomy or which would lead to unsustainable use of natural resources or which would lead to ecosystem harm
- Foresees no investments in infrastructure which could directly or indirectly lead to greater greenhouse gas emissions
Comments: However, potential investments in biomass - particularly for green hydrogen development - should be carefully monitored.

- Identifies actions or possible activities to improve some biodiversity and environmental indicators. These activities and actions cover at least one of the following categories:
 - Biodiversity
 - Air pollution
 - Accessible greenspace (land take)
 - Water quality
- Foresees no new investment in waste incineration or landfill capacity
However, neither does it include or prioritise measures for increasing economy circularity or to reduce waste

● Principle 6

The TJTP should respect the polluter pays principle.

- The TJTP does not identify the entities responsible for existing environmental damage.

AND/OR the TJTP recommends to use JTF resources to pay for land restoration without an analysis - or commitment to an analysis - of the possibility and applicability of the Polluter Pays Principle

Comments: It is not clear from the TJTP what environmental degradation may be present from the past GHG intensive and polluting activities.

● Principle 7

The TJTP should be supported by adequate, coordinated and long-term public and private funding sources.

- EU funds and national public funds are identified to support the just transition: other sources of public funding than the Just Transition Fund and the Pillar III of the Just Transition Mechanism are identified, including national sources. Funding sources are targeted to the most appropriate activities or to address funding gaps

Comments: Good level of detail and reference to different funding sources: RRP (especially for 'transformative investments' in large enterprises and ETS installations), JTM pillars, national environmental funds, ERDF, Innovation Funds etc.

- Private funding sources are identified alongside public funding sources, with an indication of how private funds may be leveraged, mainly or exclusively relying on Pillar II of the Just Transition Mechanism

Comments: Pillar II of the JTM is mentioned and the TJTP makes passing reference to the fact that large companies pursue their own decarbonisation strategies e.g. B Voestalpine and Zellstoff Pöls AG, and that these are not funded with JTF.

● Principle 8

The TJTP should be designed, monitored and evaluated through meaningful partnerships which engage all stakeholders in an open, inclusive and ongoing process, especially at local level. Social dialogue and collective bargaining should be central pillars of the transition when it comes to the labour market and enterprises.

- A coordination body is established but membership of the coordination body requirements and composition may be unclear.


AND / OR

Details on procedures are vague without transparency on timing and schedules for such meetings, or on how, when or where information on process and relevant documents will be published in an accessible place. Alternatively the majority of information must be directly requested from the institution responsible rather than openly available.


- Includes no identification of stakeholders, their roles and status in the process

OR

Includes an incomplete identification of stakeholders, missing key groups and which is inconsistent with the comprehensive list identified in Article 3 of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership, even if roles and status of the stakeholders identified in the process are indicated

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Limited detail on how stakeholder views and consultation inputs were integrated into the final plan, or how they will be (beyond a commitment to a consultation, for example). Detail on stakeholder engagement plans for the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the TJTP is also limited.

Comments: It appears the working group who developed the plan mainly consisted of government departments and agencies.
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Public consultation and engagement of all stakeholders while all options are open is provided for, but the period of consultation and engagement is launched with less than 4 weeks prior notice

AND/OR

The period for consultation and engagement lasts for less than 12 weeks


AND/OR

There is less than 4 weeks to comment on the final draft

AND/OR

Not all relevant stakeholders have been given the opportunity to participate in a public consultation.

Comments: Unclear about how long consultation was open for; it also appears it was mainly for the ESF+ Employment & JTF programme, not the IBW/ERDF & JTF programme.

Low levels of feedback on JTF noted in winter 2021/2022 online public consultation, "due to widespread concern, the JTF region should be expanded to include all of Austria; the importance of the mix of different measures and the target groups addressed are emphasised." For the ERDF&JTF programme partnership meetings in December 2021 and Summer 2022, "no statement on the JTF of JTF measures [was made]".
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Social dialogue is not a part of the planning process, or is mentioned only passively. Labour unions and social partners have not been engaged in social dialogue during the development of the TJTP.

Comments: Social dialogue is not mentioned in the document, but it is implied that trade unions/social partners have been involved in developing the JTF measures and the overall plan "within the framework of the Austrian Spatial Planning Conference 'OROK'".



Principle 9

The TJTP should take a place-based, local approach to strategy design and implementation.



Identifies NUTS 3 regions which will require targeted action and prioritises measures for the specific NUTS 3 regions concerned



Does not mention or take into account the need to engage and inform the local community about the TJTPs

Comments: Some mention in the overarching ERDF-JTF programme about communication and visibility to the general public. Excuse that the final TJTP area was not clear used to justify low level of local engagement in developing the plan.



Principle 10

The TJTP should be developed based on high quality, independent and objective analysis of the challenges and opportunities of the transition for regions.



The indicators and/or data included in the TJTP are high quality, focused at the regional level and are appropriate to the goals of the fund to address the socioeconomic challenges arising from the transition to climate neutrality, but do not cover all aspects of the just transition, focusing for example on the energy transition only



The TJTP does not foresee a revision process even to remedy poor performances or ensure consistency with a revised NECP

Comments

Detail on alignment with other strategies is (much like most TJTPs) generally a list of strategies, without detail on how they actually line up. Some detail on priorities in those strategies can perhaps serve to help project selection, but it's not clear they are directly reflected in this. E.g. Statements like, "the JTF is in line with the European Pillar of social rights" may provide some legal protection, but they do not systematically link to the JTF activities and so it might require very active and resourced civil society to be sure

negative impacts are avoided.

Because Austria only receive 136 million euros from the JTF, the activities are necessarily limited - however the TJTP should act as a guide for more than just JTF money and so it appears a missed opportunity to address wider social-climate issues/inequalities.

For further information on the TJTP assessment tool

Imke Luebbeke

Head of Climate and Energy, WWF European Policy Office

Contact

Katie Treadwell

Energy Policy Officer, Climate and Energy team, WWF European Policy Office

ktreadwell@wwf.eu

Romain Laugier

Climate Officer, Climate and Energy team, WWF European Policy Office

rlaugier@wwf.eu

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WWF European Policy Office, 123 rue du Commerce, 1000 Brussels, Belgium.