A long road to just transitions
Limited green job opportunities for disadvantaged groups

In recent years, conversations around the transformation to a greener economy, and the potential impact of this transition on jobs, have been increasing. These conversations often include trying to understand which sectors or jobs should be classed as part of the green economy, which skills are needed to do these jobs and what kind of training pathways exist to facilitate access to these green jobs. At the same time, conversations around reducing inequalities in the labour market and how to better integrate disadvantaged groups, including people with low qualifications, are ongoing. However, these two aspects are rarely looked at together. This gap highlights a risk of excluding disadvantaged groups from the green transition. To address this gap, research is needed to understand which opportunities are available to disadvantaged groups in the green economy and what kind of support is available to them to access these opportunities.
Compared to the overall job market, green jobs currently only make up a modest proportion of available jobs. Out of those, even fewer opportunities are available for people with low qualifications and many of those limited opportunities are in male-dominated sectors and occupations (e.g. energy, transport, construction, skilled trades).

Most opportunities for people with low levels of qualification can be found in craft and related trades work, elementary occupations, and plant or machine operators and assemblers. Across all five countries we looked at, the overall number of these types of jobs were declining.

The decline in potential jobs for people with low qualifications suggests that more access to further education, training and work experience related to green jobs is needed for this group. This would broaden the green opportunities for people with low qualifications.

**The research**

RAND Europe, with support from JPMorgan Chase, explored the current situation of green opportunities for disadvantaged groups, in particular for people with low qualifications, and to highlight ongoing initiatives to support these groups.

To achieve this, RAND Europe reviewed existing Cedefop and Eurostat data and conducted a rapid evidence assessment. Looking particularly at ten cities and regions in five countries, RAND Europe also conducted a targeted desk research, analysed green job adverts and conducted 78 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in each area.

**Green jobs available for people with low qualifications**

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**Estimated green job market across the ten examined cities and regions**

22,000–33,000 total number of green jobs available at local levels

9,292–13,404 number of green jobs available to people with low- to medium-level qualifications

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Skills needs and available training paths

Specific skills related to green jobs, so-called green skills, are not yet featured systematically in job advertisements. If specific green skills were mentioned in job advertisements, these seemed to relate to knowledge on environmental topics or issues, climate change and protection, aspects of sustainable buildings, renewable energy and resources, and water management.

The skills that seemed more important to find a job within the green economy are more general skills and attitudes. Examples of these include communication, teamworking and management skills, the ability to adapt to change and working independently. Digital skills were also named as important for the green economy.

Current main pathways into the green economy include vocational and education training (VET), apprenticeships, internships, and green skills academies and centres. However, people with low qualifications seem to face barriers to access these pathways due to entry requirements and often need more support. This is particularly important as green skills are likely to gain in importance in the future. Supporting people with low qualifications to gain these skills might provide them with an advantage in a competitive labour market.

For people with low qualifications, skills that were named as essential to enter the green economy are:

- Good attitudes
- Language skills
- Basic numeracy
- Literacy

Stakeholders relevant to green jobs and skills

Throughout this study, more than 500 local and regional stakeholders were identified. These stakeholders belonged to the following categories: education or training providers, civil society organisations, local authorities, employment services or social partners. Direct and targeted support for people from disadvantaged groups in relation to green skills or employment is rarely offered by these stakeholders.

More coordination and initiatives are needed from these stakeholders to better support people from disadvantaged groups, in particular people with low qualifications. This is important to ensure that these groups are included in the green transition.
Existing initiatives and programmes supporting disadvantaged groups into green jobs

The most common interventions and programmes supporting disadvantaged groups into green jobs are education and training interventions. These interventions can be theory or practice based and may focus on specific green skills or more general, transferable skills.

There is currently limited evidence on which interventions work and for which groups. With more available evidence it will be possible to adapt and tailor programmes better to a specific group or to a particular green job. More evidence would also provide a good starting point to scale up effective interventions.

Breakdown of intervention types

Conclusions

Conversations around the green transition and the increase in green employment have become more prominent over the past years. Because of this, there is a growing momentum for investing in supporting people from disadvantaged groups into green jobs to allow fair and equal opportunities for all. The support for and inclusion of disadvantaged groups in the green economy is likely to also have benefits for the wider society and the environment. It could lead to financial empowerment of individuals, and green jobs could provide sustainable and long-term employment for people from disadvantaged groups. This could result in reducing inequalities and contributing to addressing climate change.

Further research is needed to get a better understanding of the developments in the green economy, generate more evidence on effective interventions to support disadvantaged groups, and pay more attention to gender disparities that become apparent.

Endnotes

2: While our study focuses in particular on people with low qualifications, we extend the scope to jobs requiring medium-level qualifications as these could be accessible for people with low qualifications with additional education, training or work experience.
3: Attitudes include but are not limited to the ability to adapt to change, ability to deal with frustration, willingness to learn, etc.

This summary describes work done by RAND Europe documented in *Green jobs and skills development for disadvantaged groups* by Joanna Hofman, Dr Michaela Bruckmayer, Katrin Feyerabend, Dr Simon Larmour, Mark Reed, Dr Lydia Lymperis, RR-A1603-1, 2022 (available at www.rand.org/t/RRA1603-1). To view this summary online, visit www.rand.org/t/RRA1603-1. RAND Europe is a not-for-profit research organisation that helps to improve policy and decision making through research and analysis. RAND Europe’s publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.

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