

GREEN JOBS INITIATIVE: CHALLENGES FOR UKRAINE

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Introduction. In the past two decades, the topic of “green jobs” as a condition of “decent work” has drawn particular attention all over the world. However, in Ukraine, scientific interest in this area has so far been weak, resulting in a lack of diversity and a relatively small number of articles by Ukrainian authors on environmental aspects in labour organization (according to Google Scholar, less than 0.4% of all publications).

The relevance of the topic in the context of post-war recovery of the Ukrainian economy on the principles of sustainable development is a determining factor for the expansion of knowledge in this area. The present research focuses on analyzing key official documents and reports on the topic of “green jobs” with the aim to identify definitions and meanings associated with the broader concept of “decent work”. The article specifies connected terms, areas of research interest and the main theoretical and practical results, important for the realities of Ukraine.

Presentation of the main research. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the international community endorsed the concept of sustainable development. The main idea of the concept of sustainable development is that human societies must live and meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the blueprint for a global partnership for peace, development, and human rights for the period 2016 to 2030. SDGs recognize that economic growth must go hand-in-hand with strategies that address a range of social needs including social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection.

Goal 8 provides “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” (UNGA, 2015, 19). It is determined here that decent work means opportunities for everyone to get work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration. In this respect, the target on decent work at least aimed to achieve this human right rather. Specific targets and indicators for decent work also have some features, including links to the International Labor Organization (ILO) monitoring mechanisms. The ILO defines decent work as “productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity” (ILO, 2017).

The Green Jobs Initiative emerged as a result of a partnership between the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Labor Organization (ILO). The main goal of this partnership is the promotion of opportunities, equity, and a fair transition to green sustainable development. It should be emphasized that ILO clearly distinguishes between the concepts of “decent work” and “green jobs”, which are closely related, but do not coincide. The idea of green jobs concept is that reducing the negative impact on the environment and sustainable development should start from the workplace.

Green jobs are characterized by the inclusion of sustainable development principles in the processes of labor organization as part of the policy of green economy and social integration. Green jobs are defined as “decent work that contributes to preserve or restore the environment and human health”. Moreover, ILO argues that green jobs are an integral part of the concept of decent work, because this practice is a valuable source of growth and productive employment creation, overcoming poverty and inequality (ILO, 2017).

Figure 1 illustrates the differences between the spheres of “decent work”, “green jobs” and “green economy”.

It can be argued that a continued lack of decent work opportunities, insufficient investments in green jobs lead to an erosion of the global social contract underlying Sustainable Development Goals: that all must share in progress of sustainable development and green economy (UNEP, 2008).

Figure 1

Green Jobs as an element of the Green Economy (ILO, 2017)



The Green Jobs Initiative can help advance progress in reducing the environmental impact of economic activity and improving living standards. First of all, green jobs are associated with the development of new innovative areas, such as renewable energy and circular use of resources, increasing the number of green generation facilities and creating new jobs (UNdocs, 2015).

A critical analysis of scientific articles (Janser, 2018; Liu et al., 2022; Bowen et al., 2018) showed that to assess the impact of green jobs development, achievements in different areas have been proposed, in particular:

- increasing the energy efficiency and raw material efficiency;
- limiting greenhouse gas emissions;
- minimising waste and pollution;
- protecting and restoring the ecosystem;
- supporting adaptation to climate change impacts.

Conceptual link of Green Jobs with other elements of sustainable development is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Conceptual link of Green Jobs with other elements of sustainable development (Paliekhova, 2020)



At the same time, the implementation of the concept of green jobs requires a just transition that will allow timely use new opportunities and overcome possible problems associated with the process of integration of greening elements, social development and achievement of decent work (Paliekhova, 2020).

Indeed, UN reports confirm that globally, labour productivity has increased and unemployment rates have fallen significantly. However, more progress is needed to massively increase green jobs, which involves the development of green industries with the creation of decent work conditions. It is clear that the green transition will require wholesale reforms to overcome economic uncertainty and interaction of key green economy programmes, including development of circularity, environmental management, certification

and standardisation, etc. In this format, the European Environmental Policy 2020 and the vision of where to be by 2050 regarding the green transition, as well as the adoption of the Green Deal in 2019, were recognised as global drivers for change.

It can be argued, however, that from practical implementation perspective the goal is a challenge for Ukraine, whether in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors such as renewable energy and energy efficiency.

The issue of green jobs is acute for traditional industries that have the greatest negative impact on the environment, global warming, and public health. In particular, these are mining activity, ferrous and nonferrous metal industry, power industry, cement industry, transport services, construction industry, waste management, and agriculture. These industries are mainly concentrated workers with inadequate wages, who have difficult and dangerous working conditions. In addition, low-competitive companies do not have the funds to reorganize production and jobs. That is, there will be a need for measures that promote a fair and painless transition to an environmentally sustainable economy, where more jobs will be created than lost (ILO, 2017a).

Before the start of the war in 2022, environmental issues were not a priority of the Ukrainian government, so the implementation of green models was extremely slow. Ukraine remained one of the most energy-intensive countries in Europe (Enerdata, 2021). Alternative energy has just begun to develop, the market for ecological products was extremely uncompetitive, and accordingly, the number of Green Jobs was small in the country.

Another area that has a significant potential for «green growth» is agriculture, in particular organic farming, the cultivation of energy crops (rapeseed, willow, corn), and the use of straw for energy purposes. Ukraine is one of the world's top agricultural producers and exporters and plays a critical role in supplying oilseeds and grains to the global market. The USDA sees the rapeseed production in Ukraine in 2023/24 MY at a record 4 mln tonnes, which is 14% higher than last year's crop².

²See: Ukraine on the way to record rapeseed exports, but at what cost? –<https://www.apk-inform.com/en/exclusive/opinion/1535791>

These are the existing and potential increase in rural unemployment, stable demand for various types of biofuels in the EU, constant increase in prices for traditional energy sources, existing experience in organic farming and demand for its products (Martynyuk, Okharenko, 2021).

Conclusions. The effective post-war reconstruction of Ukraine based on a green sustainable growth strategy requires, among other things, a focus on the Green Jobs Initiative which aims to create decent jobs decoupled from the extensive use of resources, and leading to an increase in the quality of life of the individual while reducing the negative impact on the environment. It was found that in the literature, there is currently no universally accepted definition of “green job”. It seems that most authors choose to address the issue of green jobs, используя the definition given by the Program United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Labor Organization (ILO).

However, the review of the literature reveals that clarification of the concept of “green jobs” is also linked to the desire to highlight the importance of green jobs in achieving the minimization of the use of natural resources and the introduction of new production technologies that will provide decent working conditions for workers.

Although in EU policy progress has been made in the broader practical use of the green jobs concept, in Ukraine the lack of such an initiative may raise problems with restoring the national economy on the principles of sustainable green growth. The study found that today it is difficult to assess the potential of green jobs in Ukraine due to the lack of special studies and relevant statistical reporting. It can be noted that this process is not happening as fast as it seems at first sight. A large-scale transition to responsible models of production and consumption, a change in approaches to organizing jobs, etc. is required. However, there is already successful experience of European countries that needs to be studied, adapted, and implemented in order to speed up the green transition.

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