



The Just Transition:

Voices & Perspectives from
Ireland's Future Leaders

**KPMG Ireland
Leaders 2050**

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Foreword

With sustainability gaining momentum as a priority topic across the public and private sectors in Ireland, the concept of a 'Just Transition' to a net zero future is becoming increasingly more relevant. The Leaders 2050 Network, a global community of young professionals facilitated by KPMG, is not just observing the unfolding narrative of climate change and its associated social impacts, but actively participating in conversations and seeking to shape a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

The network's mission is to equip the next generation of leaders with the insights and skills needed to drive a better tomorrow. It is a platform that fosters knowledge sharing, nurtures skills development, and builds professional networks.

For this short report, we have conducted research and facilitated engaging discussions with the Irish Leaders 2050 network members to understand better the youth perspectives of a just transition. The insights offer a unique perspective on the journey to net zero, highlighting the varying influences of geographic location, changing economy, and political situation.

This report is a call to action for current leaders to consider the voices of their successors during important decision-making processes related to climate change. It underscores the importance of the Just Transition and the role of youth voices in shaping our future.

As you delve into this report, we hope it inspires you, challenges you, and above all, emphasises the importance of a shared journey to a sustainable future. The Leaders 2050 Network is ready to lead the way. Are you ready to join us?



The Leaders 2050 Network is a movement of young professionals shaping a more sustainable future. Our mission is to equip the next generation for a better tomorrow."



Caoibhe Gralton

Leaders 2050
Committee Co-Chair
KPMG Ireland



The journey to a sustainable future is a shared one. Every action we make to reduce the negative impacts of our emissions will bring us closer to our goal of net zero by 2050. The Leaders 2050 Network is ready to lead the way for intergenerational equity."



Tim Keenan

Leaders 2050
Committee Co-Chair
KPMG Ireland



Ensuring a Just Transition

To enable a sustainable energy transition, activities and investments should be geared toward helping to support a **Just Transition**. This is defined as a low-carbon transition that is fair, inclusive, creates decent work opportunities — and leaves no one behind.

To be able to limit temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees, the world needs to completely transform how we produce, transport and consume energy, at a scale and pace that is unprecedented. However, such transformation pathways have unintended consequences and tend to disproportionately impact vulnerable communities, regions and industries more than others.

Youth involvement in the **Just Transition** is crucial in shaping a sustainable and equitable future. Innovative ideas and fresh perspectives are essential for creating resilient and adaptable pathways for the world they will inherit and lead.

The **Just Transition** as an umbrella term encompasses the social risks, impacts, and opportunities associated with the global shift towards a sustainable, net zero future. It represents a principle, a process, and a practice dedicated to ensuring that the benefits and burdens of environmental and economic changes are distributed equitably, focusing on topics such as:





The Leaders 2050 network's view:

KPMG Leaders 2050 hosted a network event focused on the Just Transition in the spring of 2024. Leveraging expertise within our network, the event focused on four key areas within the Just Transition: Clean water, energy access, mental health and gender. As it was impossible to cover the myriad facets of the Just Transition in one event, these areas were chosen as they effectively showcase a wide range of challenges – from infrastructure and economic considerations to personal well-being and community roles – as well as how these are interlinked. Furthermore, they are also ubiquitous across the world though with varying levels of urgency and risk.

The four areas were heavily discussed and debated at the Leaders 2050 in-person event through an interactive panel round with network experts and fruitful breakout discussions. Despite consensus on the importance of the Just Transition, network members held contrasting views of which areas of society are at highest risk or most urgently in need of action. As such, the event was followed by a quantitative survey to reveal broader trends. Network members were asked to state how important they thought each area was with respect to impact on the Just Transition and on which scale each area will have the greatest impact in their life. The results of the survey follows below

Question	Energy Access	Clean Water	Mental Health	Gender Equality
Ranked by overall average importance	No.1 (Joint)	No.1 (Joint)	No. 2	No. 3
Where will this area have the greatest impact:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broader global landscape 2. My local community 3. My career 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broader global landscape 2. My personal life 3. My local community 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broader global landscape 2. My personal life 3. My local community 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Broader global landscape 2. My personal life 3. My local community

The vast majority of Leaders 2050 network members assigned high or very high importance to all of the four areas, with Energy Access and Clean Water ranked most important on average though only by a small margin. This ties well in with the often cited ethos that no area, group, or person can be left behind for the Just Transition to succeed.

The Leaders 2050 network were in agreement that the impact in the four categories will be highest in the broader global landscape compared to their local community, personal life, or career. This consensus was reflected in many discussions during the in-person event: Participants highlighted that people in the Global South are both currently in the worst positions in these areas and have the highest risk of their situation deteriorating due to climate change events. Still, these areas are also of high importance in Irish communities but often of a more subtle nature.



Energy

The transition from a society running on fossil fuels to one powered by renewables brings about a wide range of opportunities and challenges for achieving a Just Transition. While the fossil fuel economy brought carbon emissions, adverse health effects from pollution, and profits funnelled away from local communities, the energy transition can be a powerful catalyst for improved equity and quality of life with consolidated and well-considered efforts. However, the rapid change required also carries a risk of leaving marginalised groups behind and repeating mistakes from the past. To ensure that energy is a positive force for the Just Transition, the Leaders 2050 Network has identified the following as priority areas:



Equity: Marginalised and rural communities are often most impacted by climate change and the last to benefit from the energy transition. Targeted policy programmes, mandated corporate responsibility, and early and lasting community engagements are key mitigating actions. In Ireland, ensuring that local communities benefit from renewable generation and individual sustainable investments are key.



Behavioural change and education: Social acceptance and a willingness to change habits are critical for a successful energy transition that benefits everyone. Community awareness campaigns, widespread education, and targeted economic support play vital roles in enabling this transition.



Policy and practical implementation: Effective policies and legislation are pivotal for a just energy transition. It is essential that these frameworks prioritize equity and address the needs of marginalized groups. Strong and clear leadership from political figures is crucial to ensure that everyone is included in this transformative process.



If done correctly, the energy transition will be a powerful driving force for the Just Transition”



Tarjei Skaar
Committee Member
KPMG Ireland



Widespread social acceptance and inclusion is key to enabling the energy transition”



Aaron Lowe
Committee Member
KPMG Ireland



Supporting at-risk communities against environmental threats and political conflicts over water is crucial for the Just Transition. Climate change exacerbates the water crisis, with a projected rise in those facing water scarcity to rise from 1.9 billion in 2010 to 3.2 billion by 2050¹. The majority of these are in the Global South and are already in a disadvantaged positions. The majority of these affected individuals reside in the Global South and are already in disadvantaged positions. Consequently, the responsibility lies with the Global North to both reduce their emissions and assist the Global South in addressing water scarcity.

In Ireland, An Fóram Uisce found that over 50% of Irish water consumers admit to not knowing how much water they use in a day, even though 74% agree there should be more water conservation². Within Ireland, mitigating irresponsible water use and promoting a water-conservative way of life is a crucial element in reducing inequalities as we transition away from a high-carbon economy. To achieve this, baseline knowledge on water management is essential. Additional measures to address the problem, as identified by the Leaders 2050 Network, include:



Strengthening community engagement:

Empower communities through education and knowledge sharing about water management. Foster strong partnerships among communities, governments, and organisations to enhance water management efforts.



Improving policy and governance: Implement policies that prioritise equitable access to clean water. Advocate for better regulations and funding for water accessibility. Explore the role of the private sector in improving water service delivery.



Developing technological and financial solutions:

Utilise innovations in water purification and conservation to enhance access. Redirect financial resources to initiatives improving clean water access. Invest in sustainable infrastructure and community-based solutions to reliable water access.



Innovation, collaboration and partnerships, and the use of technology are all crucial provide viable clean water.”

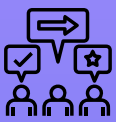


Niamh McLernon
Committee Member
KPMG Ireland

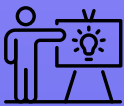


Gender

Gender in the Just Transition refers not only to driving gender equality, but also to the disproportionate impact of climate change that will be felt by women. Studies show, women and girls are nearly twice as likely to experience food insecurity compared to boys and men. Despite this, less than 55 national climate action plans specifically reference gender equality or recognise women as agents of change.¹ In addition, many of the countries most impacted by climate change are also poor performers in terms of gender equality. A just transition needs to ensure all voices and perspectives are represented and empowered into action. Priority focus areas identified by the Leaders 2050 Network include:



Challenging cultural norms and gender roles: Challenge societal views on the value women contribute to society and the economy, recognising the value of caring services, reducing gender-based violence and addressing systemic and structural barriers to women's full social and economic contributions. Educate men on the importance of gender equality and their role.



Challenge societal norms through education: Encourage women to pursue careers in STEM and technical careers. Provide supports to women re-integrating into the workforce through post-maternity training.



Institutionalise gender equality through policy and incentives: Provide clear policies both in government and in organisations to incentivise gender equality and ensure bodily autonomy. Ensure structural supports, such as shared parental leave are in place and fit for purpose. Mainstream gender in climate adaptation and transitions plans, and include women in key decision-making processes.



Committing to gender equality requires structural and systemic changes to ensure the transition is just for all!



Stephen Bigger
Committee Member
KPMG Ireland

¹ Source: United Nations



Mental Health

Mental health is an invisible aspect of the Just Transition, yet can have enormous impacts on physical well-being, societal stability, and the economy to name a few. With global warming, society faces not only physical risks but also the mental strain of more unpredictable and catastrophic weather events and an uncertain future. Climate anxiety, (also known as eco-anxiety) characterised by fear and worry about the planet's future, is especially prevalent among young people. It is crucial that the Just Transition works to improve mental health, both to reduce harm from climate change as well as motivate action and behavioural change. Priority focus area for mental health highlighted by the Leaders 2050 Network are:



Promoting Awareness and Education:

Addressing climate anxiety requires awareness and education on climate change, and what individuals can do to play their part in the Just Transition. Providing clear, accessible information and actions can help individuals feel more in control and less overwhelmed, motivating impactful changes.



Fostering Inclusivity: Polarisation in climate discourse can lead to isolation and helplessness. Inclusivity is essential to unite against environmental issues, promote shared responsibility, and reduce negative emotions. Inclusive practices ensure all voices are valued, reducing stress and anxiety linked to marginalisation and supporting mental well-being.



Empowerment to Take Action in the Workplace:

Empowerment in the workplace allows young professionals to drive sustainable changes and contribute meaningfully. Fostering environments for challenging discussions, leadership roles, and support systems for action encourages conversations about mental health and climate anxiety. Dedicated initiatives for financial and mental health support further promote well-being as we move towards a sustainable future.



The transition to net zero won't be easy, and it can be overwhelming. Supporting people's mental health throughout this journey is essential for success."



Siofra Timmins

Committee Member
KPMG Ireland



Concluding remarks

Climate change disproportionately affects those that already have the least in terms of resources and opportunities. Yet, these marginalised groups are also the ones whose contribution to climate change is the smallest.

Ensuring that the transition to a net zero society brings about increased well-being and prosperity to marginalised groups, in particular, is not just ethical – it is crucial to enable lasting, sustainable change.

The Just Transition encompasses all facets of humanity and society. The topics touched on in this report – Energy, Gender, Water, and Mental Health – are some of those where differences are most heavily exacerbated by climate change and where action is most urgently needed. Still, numerous other considerations feed into the Just Transition.

These topics are all interlinked. Action in one sector will have direct and indirect impacts on many others. Therefore, it is crucial that the overarching idea of the Just Transition is considered in all actions we take on the path to a net zero society. Only through the sum of countless small and large actions in the same direction will we eventually be able to bring about a society that is sustainable, equitable, and fair.

The members of our Leaders 2050 Network are all committed to contributing to the Just Transition in their various efforts at work, in their communities, and on the national and international stage. Join us today to increase the power of your effort and help bring the Just Transition another step further along its path.

What is Leaders 2050?

Leaders 2050 is a professional network for future leaders across sectors, around the globe who have an interest in creating a more sustainable future through clean growth strategies, decarbonisation, renewable energy, and inclusion, diversity and equity (IDE). We are active in 50+ countries across all regions, sectors and organizations.

We are always open to collaborate and welcome new members. If you would like to find out more about the Leaders 2050 programme, or are interested in working with us on a joint initiative, contact us here or reach out to a member of the team below.

Meet Your Local Leaders 2050 Representatives



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