



# The Race for “Green” Mobility: Challenges and Opportunities for Industrial Relations Systems

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‘**Key green transitions**’ – i.e. transitions in key sectors such as **energy, transport, cities, food systems** – are the focus of public and institutional debate on **ecological transition**, to which Europe seeks to respond with the "Green Deal", an ambitious program aiming to make Europe "climate neutral" by 2050.

The race for **clean transport of goods and people**, in particular, is proving to be strategic (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy - putting European transport on track for the future*, of 9 December 2020) and investing in **electrical transport seems to be insufficient**. In the automotive industry, for example, energy-powered vehicles can cover short distances, and further investment is needed supporting technology and infrastructure. Among them, **new hydrogen fueling technology** holds a key position.

**Green hydrogen**, in particular, produced by water electrolysis, due to its **versatility and flexibility** (it can be used as a raw material with a low environmental impact, as an energy carrier and, again, as an energy accumulator), has the advantage of being able to **support a wide range of sectors** (IRENA, International Renewable Energy Agency, *How to scale-up green hydrogen - Policies and cost reduction strategies to reach net-zero emissions*) and it can be considered strategic particularly in the **heavy goods transport sector** (in specific long-haul trucks) **and people** (railway networks, public transport lines) (cf. UILTEC studies, *National Hydrogen Strategy - Preliminary guidelines: considerations for consultation*; MISE, PNIEC, 2019, in particular the in-depth study *Green hydrogen a "new" ally for decarbonisation*).

**The development of hydrogen-related technologies is widely supported by EU institutions** (see Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, *A hydrogen strategy for a climate-neutral Europe*, of 8 July 2020) but the heavy mobility sector’s transition towards greater environmental sustainability must be supported by "**radical practices**", not only in the field of research and development (R&S), but also in the field of infrastructure and complementary support network (economic and legislative) and the **industrial relations systems**.

In general, **the energy transition and process of decarbonisation require the modification of industrial processes**, starting with the modernization of the research, development and production processes, up to the **correction of the practices and, in the involved sectors, the bureaucratic procedures' authorization and coordination.**

Furthermore, from the earliest stages of development, energy reconversion is strongly interconnected with **professional retraining** in relation to the new skills required by the change in the market and therefore to an increase in sector skills, from the area of research and development to real manufacturing, up to the marketing stage of the new merchandise. It is necessary to create clear **information campaigns** involving the entire system of industrial relations, providing all the stakeholders involved with an objective picture of the new technologies used and of their implications in the workplace and the environment, with the objective to deny the change's erroneous perception of danger or negativity, as well as favoring the **involvement of all stakeholders in order to set priorities.**

From this point of view, **social dialogue becomes strategic**: it is understandable how companies must cope with **objectives of efficiency and competitiveness**, pursuing at the same time the objectives of **environmental sustainability**. It is concurrently necessary that these objectives comply with workers' protection regulations re, who must also be led in the transition underway.

It is therefore essential to provide, in the first place, an adaptation of the training offer for workers in the sector, so as to be able to guarantee their employability as well as the development of transversal skills and highly qualified and professionals as much as possible. Undoubtedly, a central role in this sense must be played by the government body, through disciplinary and incentive systems, but the development of training and information courses on new hydrogen technologies must become an area of **primary interest and action to the social partners.**

Only a **holistic approach that sees the participation of all stakeholders** involved in the sector and, therefore, bearers of the different needs of efficiency, competitiveness, environmental and social protection, in dialogue with each other, will prevent the risks associated with the rise of inequalities, with the concentration of investments limited to a few sectors or a few geographical areas: **the energy transition and economic and employment recovery, precisely by the Commission's objectives definition, must be as homogeneous as possible and inclusive of the environmental and social needs of the several parties and territories.**

In this regard, information measures aimed at **bringing forward policies, technology, new mechanisms and production systems**, and in general all the strategies suitable for **encouraging a greater dialogue** between the various stakeholders involved, at all decision-making levels, are of the utmost importance.

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