



Social Dialogue facing Just Transition in Spain

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Alicia Martínez Poza

Jesús Cruces Aguilera



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Table of contents

1. General overview of the current state of industrial relations and social dialogue in Spain	3
1.1. Social dialogue in Spain: framework and dynamics	3
1.2. Collective bargaining system: main characteristics	4
1.3. Social dialogue and just transition	5
2. Analysis of the case study research: Five cases of social dialogue in action	15
2.1. Region of Andorra	15
2.1.1. Context	15
2.1.2. Agreement on the closure of the power station	16
2.1.3. Just Transition Agreement of Aragon	16
2.1.4. Two projects	18
2.1.5. The role of social dialogue	21
2.2. Region of Meirama	22
2.2.1. Context	22
2.2.2. Agreement on the closure of the power station	23
2.2.3. The Just Transition agreement for Meirama	24
2.2.4. Three new projects	27
2.1.5. The role of social dialogue	29
3. Analysis of the focus group research	30
4. Synthesis	35
5. References	37

1. General overview of the current state of industrial relations and social dialogue in Spain

Social dialogue in Spain is a core element of democracy. The constitutional recognition of trade unions and employers' associations has given rise to an industrial relations culture in Spain that is structured by social dialogue involving trade unions, employers' associations and the government, and by a collective bargaining system led by the most representative industries. . Trade unions and employers' associations. Below we present the dynamics of industrial relations in Spain, with a particular focus on social dialogue and collective bargaining and their role in the digital transformation process.

1.1. Social dialogue in Spain: framework and dynamics

The culture of consensus in social dialogue in Spain is reflected in the agreements signed by the country's most important trade unions and employers' organisations: Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) – the most representative trade unions - with the Spanish Confederation of Business Organisations (CEOE) and the Spanish Confederation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (CEPYME), the most representative employers' organisations.

These agreements shaped the industrial relations model in Spain, setting standards and recommendations for collective negotiators. These arrangements were developed in the past and continue today, through successive periods of growth, recession and recovery. Although the standards set out in these agreements are voluntary, by and large they are effectively used in collective bargaining across most industries and companies.

Social dialogue has had varying dynamics over the last few decades. When the 2008 crisis broke out, resulting in major job destruction, social dialogue suffered greatly. Although the social partners' collective bargaining agreements were maintained, working conditions were devalued as a result of the 2012 labour reform, which allowed - among other things - the unilateral changing of wage conditions by the employer. In this context, there was no tripartite agreement on major reforms of the labour market, pensions or education.

From 2014 onwards, collective bargaining agreements reached in the early days of the economic recovery faced many difficulties, largely due to the negative effects of the 2012 collective bargaining reform. Other factors come into play, such as the discrediting of negotiators or the poor leadership skills of the organisations themselves at the various dialogue and negotiation tables (Cruz Villalón, 2015). The latest Collective Negotiation and Bargaining Agreement (V AENC) signed in 2023 includes as a main measure, the increase of salaries due to the inflation context¹.

¹ https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2023-12870

During the COVID-19 pandemic, social dialogue (bilateral and trilateral) has experienced an undeniable renaissance and vitality. Given the increasing political polarisation in recent years, social consensus has played a central role since the onset of the pandemic in 2020. Government-initiated policies and measures to address the economic impact and loss of jobs, based on the tripartite agreement, have not only succeeded in mitigating the impact of the crisis but also minimising labour disputes.

Thus, the impulse of social dialogue agreements has allowed the government to build a 'social shield': agreements on furloughs between employers and unions; agreement on telecommuting; agreement on special COVID-19 benefits, II, III and IV (AENC) Social Agreement in Defence of Employment; Agreement on Economic Reactivation and Employment; Agreement on Labour Aspects of Delivery Work via Social Platforms; Plan to Promote Vocational Training for Self-Employment and the Social Economy; Royal Decree-Law 6/2019 of 1 March on urgent measures to guarantee equal treatment and job opportunities for women and men; Royal Decree 713/2010 of 28 May on the registration and filing of collective bargaining agreements; and Royal Decree 902/2020 of 13 October on equal pay for women and men. There have also been numerous agreements reached by sectoral roundtables, such as the social dialogue roundtable on vocational training for employment linked to the National Qualifications System; the social dialogue roundtable on vocational training for employment; the social dialogue roundtable on talent; the social dialogue roundtable on pensions; and the social dialogue roundtable on the dependent care system, among others.

Furthermore, social dialogue has played a leading role in tackling the digital transformation of production and work processes, linked to working methods and the regulation of digital rights, as evidenced by the social partners' agreement on remote working (RD 28/2020) and the regulation of work sharing (RDL 9/2021). Finally, the social dialogue work has continued in the recent labour reform, which addresses central issues of employment and collective bargaining policies, such as temporary work, ultra-activity or wage regulation at the sectoral level (RDL 32/2021).

This period has been one of the most decisive and important times by far for social dialogue in Spain in recent decades, embodied in the agreement reached by the social partners on labour reform. For the first time, this reform (Royal Decree-Law 32/2021) attempts to correct some of the factors impacting precarious employment, temporary employment and sectoral collective bargaining on wages.

1.2. Collective bargaining system: main characteristics

In Spain, the collective bargaining system is the result of the productive structure, with a predominance of small and micro-enterprises. There is a long tradition of collective bargaining and collective agreements, and the agreements reached generally apply to all workers whether they are members or not, in accordance with the *erga omnes* principle.

Because of this, bargaining at the sectoral level (national, regional or provincial) takes on special importance. At this level, worker representation is in the hands of each sector's predominant unions. The number of workers covered by collective bargaining agreements at sectoral level is quite high: in 2020 (last published consolidated data), 92.6% of workers were covered by a collective bargaining agreement at higher than company level (table 1). According to the collective bargaining statistics, there are 3,849 collective agreements at company level, covering 787,000 workers, i.e. 7.4% of workers covered by collective agreements.

Table 1. Collective agreements and workers covered in Spain, by level of bargaining, 2022

	Collective agreements		Affected workers	
	N	%	N (Thousands)	%
Company-level	3157	74,9	740,4	6,0
Higher-level	1059	25,1	11629,4	94,0
Total	4216	100	12369,8	100

Source: Ministerio de Trabajo de España. Spanish Collective Bargaining Agreements Statistics, 2023.

At company level, employee representation takes various forms: a) Works committees or work representatives, depending on the size of the company; elected prevention representatives perform specific tasks in the area of occupational risk prevention. Companies with 50 or more employees must have a health and safety committee. c) Every company has a union department that represents employees who are members of the union. Unions not only represent their members but also play an active role in negotiations with companies.

Finally, Spanish labour relations have developed labour dispute resolution mechanisms, created by the social partners. In 1996, the most representative trade unions and employers' organisations signed the Agreement on the Out-of-Court Settlement of Labour Disputes (ASEC). Since then, other ASEC agreements have been signed, as well as an Autonomous Labour Dispute Solution (ASAC) in 2001 (ASEC II), 2004 (ASEC III), 2009 (ASEC IV), 2012 (ASAC V) 2020 (ASAC VI), the latter of which is in force until 31 December 2024. These mechanisms are managed by the Inter-Confederal Mediation and Arbitration Service (SIMA).

1.3. Social dialogue and just transition

In 2018, the Government of Spain and the ILO signed a strategic partnership framework to implement the ILO's Just Transition Guidelines. It is intended to serve as a framework and tool to guide practical action, the first element of which is the National Just Transition Strategy.

In February 2019, the Spanish government approved the **Strategic Framework for Energy and Climate** (MTERD, 2020). Based on this framework, the necessary measures would be implemented with the explicit objective of curbing climate change and facilitating the transition to a model that is both sustainable and competitive.

This Strategic Framework is structured around three pillars aimed at decarbonising the Spanish economy. First, the **Climate Change Law** (LCCTE, Law 7/2021 of 20 May), which creates a roadmap for efficiency gains in the coming decades. It proposes that the electricity system should be 100% renewable and neutral in greenhouse gas emissions for the economy as a whole by 2050.

Secondly, the **National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan** (PNIEC, January 2020) which, in line with the goal of emission neutrality by 2050, sets out the steps for decarbonisation during the period 2021-2030. It proposes a 23% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to the 1990 level and to reach a 42% share of renewable energy consumption in final energy consumption by that year. In the specific case of electricity generation, the percentage of renewables would be 74%. According to these objectives, the country's energy efficiency would improve by 39.5% during the decade 2021-2030. This framework aims to mobilise economic resources from public, private and mixed sources, reduce imports of fossil fuels, create jobs, especially in the manufacturing and construction industries, revitalise depopulated rural areas and reduce health risks due to pollution.

And thirdly, the **Just Transition Strategy**, which is "a strategy of solidarity-based accompaniment to ensure that people and territories make the most of the opportunities of this ecological transition without anyone being left behind" (Government of Spain, 2021).

The latest AENC, signed in May 2023 by Spain's main trade union and employers' organisations, reflects the interest in using social dialogue to address the ecological transition. It recognises the interrelationship between the ecological transition, energy decarbonisation, the circular economy and digitalisation, which can alter production processes, leading to changes in jobs and workers' skills. It therefore raises the need to identify new qualification needs and skills upgrading, as well as the redesign of jobs, the organisation of transitions between jobs or improvements in the organisation of work.

From the business perspective, the energy transition is a reality and the aim is to take advantage of the opportunities that exist in Spain to produce electricity economically. They consider electrification to be a strategic path in this sense, and they propose three aspects on which to advance: "first, to ensure supply, and to do so, we need to encourage investment in networks. Secondly, to increase storage to be able to store renewables when there is an abundance and thus use them when consumers need them in times of scarcity. And thirdly, to continue with the renewables roadmap, to reduce our dependence on the outside world" (Aelec, 2023).

On this path, investment in innovation and development is key, as decarbonisation requires progress in technological solutions: "not only to reduce carbon emissions, but also to increase the efficiency of energy systems and improve the quality of people's lives" (Aelec, 2023)

The energy transition has been a major concern for trade unions for decades, given the great impact it has had and is having in some sectors and the impact it is expected to have on the entire production system. The transition is perceived as inevitable and necessary, the effects on the world of work are palpable and its consequences on the lives of the working population are part of trade union concerns. This is why there has been a growing awareness of the relevance of trade union action not only to mitigate the negative impacts of productive changes but especially to anticipate the changes in order to ensure a sustainable and just transition for

working people. In fact, the very term "just transition" comes from the trade union sphere, which implies the development of policies and measures that guarantee a more sustainable production model, with greater cohesion and social justice.

Social dialogue and collective bargaining at national level has so far focused on the transition processes marked by the policies of closure and transformation of energy production: closure of mines and power stations. In the future, trade union action is expected to be aimed at broadening the spectrum to other sectors, especially those in which change is presumed to be near: transport and tourism; two interrelated sectors that are key to the Spanish economy.

The majority trade unions in Spain include a series of challenges in their trade union guides (CCOO Confederation Secretariat for the Environment and Mobility, 2020; UGT-CEC Secretariat for Occupational Health and Environment, 2020). It understands that it is crucial, on the one hand, to anticipate change in the rest of the sectors, to ensure greater energy efficiency and the incorporation of processes that ensure waste management and the circular economy. On the other hand, trade union action must also be geared towards active participation in the development of new emerging strategic sectors and new sources of green jobs. And, taking this into account, trade union activity should be aimed at monitoring new investments in the reconversion of sectors, participation in the creation of new professional skills and the generation of spaces for social dialogue.

In this regard, the need to include social dialogue at all levels and encourage the participation of all workers involved in order to guarantee, through collective bargaining, the implementation of the principles of a green, low-carbon, circular and digital economy, in an inclusive and sustainable way for employment. Specifically, it is proposed, in companies:

- strengthening the figure of the environmental delegate, with the necessary training and endowing them with regulated rights and powers.
- the creation of environmental risk assessment plans in workplaces.
- to promote the participation of workers in environmental management systems.
- facilitating environmental training and skills for company staff and their trade union representatives.

From a trade union perspective, the social dialogue must take on a global challenge of raising awareness and informing citizens about the need to tackle transformation, the impacts of climate change, the production system, social welfare, the circular economy, the loss of biodiversity and digitalisation.

Added to this is the role that social dialogue must play in promoting sustainability strategies. On the one hand, in terms of urban transport and accessibility at national level, through collective transport plans for companies, workplaces or industrial estates; but also in the management of water and its saving, understanding its supply, quality and sanitation as a human right that must be ensured. On the other hand, trade unions are also considering the need to promote energy saving and efficiency plans, but also the promotion of the circular economy, in waste management, recycling and composting, as well as the need to combat the loss of biodiversity by supporting the creation of green jobs in sectors that protect it.

Los agentes sociales participan en las negociaciones con el objetivo de llegar a acuerdos de transición. El propio Instituto para la Transición Justa (ITJ), creado en 2020, contempla la participación de los agentes sociales como instrumento fundamental para cumplir con sus

objetivos. Los foros participativos se conciben como una parte importante en el desarrollo de las políticas de reestructuración, desarrollo local e industrialización.

In 2022, the **Advisory Council of the Just Transition Institute** was constituted in which CCOO (Confederal Secretariat for Strategic Transitions and Territorial Development) is a member. As indicated in the Statutes of the Just Transition Institute, this Council, together with the Governing Council, is the body in charge of advising and assessing the impact of just transition policies to be implemented by the Institute. It is made up of representatives of ministerial departments, autonomous communities, local entities and representatives of civil society. The Council includes representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; Social Rights and Agenda 2030 and Equality. Representatives of the six autonomous communities where the Institute for Just Transition has developed its activity-Andalucía, Aragón, Principado de Asturias, Castilla-La Mancha, Castilla y León y Galicia- also participate. Local entities channel their presence through the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP). In addition, there is the Spanish Confederation of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (CEPYME) and the Spanish Youth Council (CJE). In relation to the trade unions, there are CCOO and UGT.

According to the Statutes, the Council will function in plenary sessions, meeting at least once a year, and envisages the creation of working groups to elaborate on specific issues. The aim of such processes is to create a long-term policy framework to ensure planning and investment security (MTERD, 2022c).

The ITJ worked on two agreements with trade unions and companies that established tripartite obligations and rights of the parties with regard to the closure of mines and coal-fired power plants, as well as their willingness to contribute to the Just Transition Agreements, with a territorial perspective.

The majority trade unions express the opportunity and interest in participating in all phases and areas, from diagnosis, drafting, approval and implementation. They consider that they should be key actors in these processes in order to guarantee with their contribution that the measures and projects that are developed generate stable and decent employment and are part of the ecological and energy transition that must be promoted in the face of the climate emergency. The trade unions are calling for more active participation instruments in order to be proactively involved in the comprehensive planning of processes. At the same time, they consider it necessary to put forward as concrete ideas and suggestions as possible for the development of entrepreneurial, institutional or mixed measures and projects in the regions.

Despite the government's projected net employment gains in the process, the energy transition is having asymmetric impacts, across sectors - and positions in value chains - and regions (Merino, 2023). This is implying diverse situations, which may involve significant job losses. For these short-term impacts, the Just Transition Strategy envisages specific and immediately applicable measures in the Urgent Action Plan for Coal Regions and the Plan for Power Plants in closure.

On the other hand, the need to extend just transition measures to other sectors, defined as "the country's major economic sectors", which have a high environmental impact, such as tourism, agriculture and livestock farming, fishing and forestry, is also proposed. Adaptation policies to minimise the impact on rural areas already suffering from depopulation will also be key.

In this political context, with the priorities focused on the energy sector, agreements were promoted between the trade unions and the companies concerned for the closing of coal mines and power stations, and the process for the closure of the nuclear power plants is being planned.

a. Framework Agreement for a Just Transition of Coal Mining and Sustainable Development of the Mining Regions for the period 2019-2027 (MTERD, 2022.b).

The Government of Spain, the trade unions Federations of Industry of Comisiones Obreras (CCOO), Unión General de los Trabajadores (UGT) and Unión Sindical Obrera (USO), and the Federación Nacional de Empresarios de Minas de Carbón (Carbunión) signed this pioneering agreement on 24 October 2018.

This Agreement lays the foundations for the necessary measures for a fair transition for coal mining and the mining districts in view of the end of aid to cover losses in mining operations for the period 2019-2027. It also aims to promote actions that contribute to the reactivation of the Mining Regions, as well as to the improvement of the environment, through new actions consistent with the current energy transition process.

With the agreement, the social measures covered by Decision 2010/787/EU were extended and improved beyond 31 December 2018 in order to facilitate access to them for all affected workers, as well as the measures aimed at economically boosting the mining districts and providing incentives for employment in the affected mining municipalities; and new instruments related to restoration, governance (introducing just transition agreements) and energy transition plans were incorporated.

In June 2022, the monitoring committee of the framework agreement met and discussed the status of the commitments (ITJ, 2023c):

The Institute for Just Transition has processed almost all of the aid committed to the mine workers covered by the agreement, including early retirement and voluntary redundancy. Although workers in auxiliary companies could not receive aid through their companies, because they were not part of the closure plan, the agreement designed and articulated instruments with which to accompany and mitigate the impact of the loss of their jobs. For these workers and the few direct workers who had become unemployed, an outplacement and prioritisation service was set up for restoration work.

The implementation of the Restoration Plan with a total funding of 158,176,304 euros for projects to recover soil and water bodies, and to promote economic alternatives in the affected regions, generated some 350 direct jobs, with priority given to redundant coal mining workers who are part of the employment exchange managed by the ITJ.

With the aim of improving the employability of redundant coal mining workers, a professional job guidance service was contracted. The company awarded the contract has already completed the assignment, care and training phases and is now focusing on the Insertion phase.

With the aim of promoting alternative economic activities that diversify the territories and generate new jobs in the context of the closure of coal mines and power stations, the ITJ has

deployed two types of aid to companies, mainly SMEs. On the one hand, the so-called "aid for business projects that generate employment"; and, on the other hand, "aid for small investment projects", focused on smaller business projects that are necessary to maintain the social and economic fabric of the areas. Since 2019, the ITJ has granted aid to 279 business projects and small investment projects for the creation of some 1,400 new jobs and the mobilisation of some 346 million in investment. The aid granted in mining areas has committed to create 1,200 jobs and also to maintain some 6,100 jobs in the supported companies in mining areas. However, some of these jobs will not materialise or may be lost in the short term. In fact, the employment maintenance ratio in previous ITJ grants is at around 55%, so new calls will be necessary to meet targets (ITJ, 2023c).

b. Agreement on a just energy transition for closing power stations (MTERD, 2022.a)

The Spanish Government, the trade unions' federations of Industry of Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) and the companies that own the power stations in closure - Endesa, Iberdrola and Naturgy - signed this agreement on 17 April 2020 and EDP signed it on 24 March 2021, with all the power stations in closure in the country being covered by this agreement. It is an agreement that follows the path opened by the mining agreement, with the aim of anticipating and mitigating the negative effects of the closure of coal-fired power stations.

A number of commitments are made in this agreement:

- The General State Administration is committed to creating a framework for monitoring the workers involved, which has materialised in the implementation of a Job Bank for Thermal Power Plant workers, as well as specific training plans and measures aimed at relocation, among other issues. It is also committed to the development of the Just Transition Agreements as instruments to support projects that generate employment and economic activity in the areas.
- The companies that own the closing plants undertake to develop relocation plans for their own personnel and to give priority to hiring workers from auxiliary companies for work related to the new activities and the decommissioning and restoration of the plants. In addition, they must present accompanying plans with new investments in renewable energies or other viable lines of business in the areas.
- The trade unions undertake to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of commitments in the areas of training, occupational risk prevention, reindustrialisation and dissemination, among other activities.

The following table shows the corresponding employment in each plant upon request for plant closure.

	Central Térmica	Ubicación	Potencia (MW)	Personal Propio	Personal Contratado	Total
ENDESA	AS PONTES	A Coruña	1.403	197	169	366
	CARBONERAS	Almería	1.119	137	132	269
	COMPOSTILLA	Ponferrada	1.030	159	149	308
	TERUEL	Andorra	1.050	147	153	300
	ALCUDIA	Mallorca	510	134	94	228
NATURGY	ANLLARES	El Bierzo	350	15	12	27
	LA ROBLA	León	655	78	42	120
	NARCEA	Asturias	530	81	48	129
	MEIRAMA	A Coruña	580	77	35	112
IBERDROLA	LADA	Asturias	347	95	55	150
	VELILLA	Palencia	485	83	60	143
EDP	ABOÑO	Asturias	916	117	82	199
	SOTO DE RIBERA	Asturias	360	79	28	107
	PUENTE NUEVO	Córdoba	300	69	60	129
	LOS BARRIOS	Cádiz	570	89	64	153
			10.205	1.557	1.183	2.740

*Datos facilitados por las propias empresas sobre situación de empleo a la fecha de la solicitud de cierre. En el caso de Aboño, al no haber solicitado el cierre, se trata de los datos de empleo en 2020.

Specifically, a commitment has been made to offer readily available financial support from the different institutions and bodies of the General State Administration. Once the closure has taken place, procedures can be developed so that new generation facilities, based on renewable energies, can at least partially fill the gaps generated by the closures, always in accordance with technical and economic requirements that assess the environmental and social impacts.

A commitment is also made to work on the proactive search for investors with investment projects that can be located in the affected areas, taking into account the particularities of each territory, assessing business initiatives of an energy nature in the affected areas. The Just Transition Institute undertook to provide specialised and continuous technical support to the projects from the preparation phase, supplying technical and social engineering tools.

The commitment is also extended to ensure the monitoring of employment in the area, with the collaboration of the National Employment System (SNE): comprehensive support will be offered to workers in the affected areas to provide them with vocational training and employment services. The anticipation of employment policies is considered crucial to identify solutions for both direct and indirect workers and the general population.

Of the fifteen coal-fired power plants that are part of this Agreement, ten are in the process of decommissioning (one has recently received authorisation for closure) and the last ones will remain active until they can be shut down according to grid safety criteria. According to the Agreement, 2,740 workers are affected, both directly and in auxiliary companies.

The commitments are focused on guaranteeing adequate outlets for workers in power stations in the process of direct closure and belonging to subcontractors, as well as identifying and promoting investments and projects that generate new economic activities. As stated in the report prepared by the monitoring committee (which met in October 2022), more than 80% of

the workers registered in the employment exchange of the Institute for Just Transition (ITJ) are currently employed.

Companies have conducted training courses focusing on decommissioning and renewable energy plant installations (photovoltaic, wind and renewable gas) and on the energy rehabilitation of buildings. Training has been provided to 48% of the workers of decommissioning plants. On the other hand, company training activities have also been developed for larger groups of unemployed people located in the affected areas. In total, 829 people have been trained with a total of 13,760 hours of training.

The Monitoring Committee of the agreement has committed to intensify its efforts in employment and training of workers registered in the employment exchange, to optimise existing resources - public and private - to improve their requalification in order to facilitate their access to new jobs in renewable energies in the affected areas, as well as to identify new investments for all the sites that replace the activity of the power stations.

The report on the monitoring of the agreement with the power plants shows that (ITJ, 2023b):

- Alternative investments are being made in the territories by the companies that own the plants that are closing, with estimates for the creation of permanent jobs that are greater than the number of people affected by the closures in most of the plants.
- The Just Transition Institute and the Institute for Energy Diversification and Saving are financially supporting projects and infrastructures for Energy Transition.
- There are currently 606 people registered in the ITJ's employment exchange, which represents 22% of the total number of people affected by the closures. Most of the people registered, 97% of the total number of people on the exchange, belong to auxiliary companies subcontracted by the owners.
- All the people affected by the closures who are part of the ITJ's employment exchange have been offered training related to clean energy transition and decommissioning. In addition, most of the plants have training courses scheduled for the coming months. It should be added that the ITJ has started an insertion training service aimed at older people and with a minimum of women.

c. Monitoring of agreements

From the closure agreements comes the commitment by the signatories to participate in the design of the **Just Transition Agreements** for the reactivation of those regions where the energy and ecological transition could put companies and economic activity in difficulties. Its objective is to "promote economic activity and its modernisation, as well as the employability of vulnerable workers and groups at risk of exclusion in the transition to a low-carbon economy, particularly in cases of closure or reconversion of facilities". The priority is the maintenance and creation of activity and employment in the region through the support of sectors and groups at risk, the fixation of population in rural areas or in areas with facilities in closure and the promotion of diversification and specialisation consistent with the socio-economic context. It is thus proposed to take advantage of the endogenous resources of the territory, whether economic, social or environmental, and to attract exogenous investment, giving priority to those sectors that also present better results in terms of environmental, economic and social sustainability. The aim is to promote industrial alternatives with new energy transition sectors and other projects aimed at improving the quality and expansion of infrastructures for industry in the areas.

To develop these agreements, the agreements undertook to include a participatory process of mobilisation and consultation; a characterisation, diagnosis and socio-economic and infrastructure analysis of the areas affected by closures; an evaluation of previous or existing plans and initiatives, guaranteeing the centralisation of communication and information between all those involved in the projects; and an identification of possible investments, actions and projects for the reactivation of the affected areas and a decision on their viability and possible action plan.

For the implementation of the transition agreements, the trade unions undertake, on the one hand, to facilitate the fulfilment and monitoring of all the commitments of the agreements; and on the other hand, to participate in all the processes and commissions that are determined at all levels: state, regional and local. Participation would be oriented towards training, occupational risk prevention, reindustrialisation and dissemination, as well as all those that can be added to the achievement of the objectives of the agreement.

In spite of this commitment signed in the closure agreements, the trade unions have been incorporated into the participatory process. They did not participate as agents of special relevance in the design of the agreements as representatives of workers' interests, but as another agent together with local associations in a process of open participation (through the sending of questionnaires to be completed).

For the follow-up of the agreements, it is agreed to set up **Monitoring Commissions** to monitor compliance with both the closure agreement and similar agreements signed with other companies. The commissions will be maintained as long as the problems of reindustrialisation and employment defined by the Transition agreements continue to exist.

The Commission would be made up of an equal number of representatives of the General State Administration, companies and representative trade union organisations. The Presidency and secretariat would be held by the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge. A representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy and a representative of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism will also be included. These Monitoring Commissions should meet ordinarily every 6 months to learn about the details related to the progress of the agreement, and extraordinarily whenever one of the parties so requests.

The function of the commissions is to monitor the implementation of the Transition Agreements for areas affected by the closure of coal-fired power plants that are signed during the term of the agreement (investments and industrial projects in the affected areas, level of job relocation, training programmes for workers affected by the closure of the power stations).

There are currently fifteen Just Transition Agreements in place, one in each area affected by the recent or planned closures of coal mines, coal-fired power plants and nuclear power plants. These agreements involve the preparation of public reports on the impact of the closures and the socio-economic characterisation of the affected territories; the establishment of collaboration commitments between local, regional and national administrations; the implementation of public participation processes; and the launch of support instruments to reactivate the areas and maintain employment.

The diagnoses for the 15 Just Transition Conventions have been prepared, have been submitted to public participation and external evaluation, processes have been developed in

which more than 800 agents have participated and more than 2000 ideas and proposals have been received. All types of actors have participated, including companies, business sector organisations and trade union organisations to the same degree of involvement as other bodies such as universities, educational centres, environmental associations and organisations and other non-governmental organisations, development agencies, Local Action Groups and other interested or affected entities. In addition, specific participation frameworks have been established for youth and women (ITJ ,2023a).

The ITJ designed public participation processes that aimed to create stable communication channels over time for the monitoring of the agreements. The Just Transition Institute holds evaluation meetings of the Just Transition Agreements to share the results of the participatory processes, to inform about the support instruments and to communicate the business, infrastructure and restoration projects that have already received financial support.

2. Analysis of the case study research: Five cases of social dialogue in action

In Spain, for the analysis of the case studies, two territories have been chosen in which there are Just Transition Agreements underway as a result of the decision to close two power stations. The projects that represent interesting case studies are the result not only of the private initiative of the companies that own the power stations that closed, but also of agreements between social agents that committed both to the relocation of their own staff and aid for the reconversion of the energy industry towards the production of renewable energies or support for the reorientation of productive activities in the affected territory.

In this context, 5 projects arising from the closures of the Andorra (in Teruel) and Meirama (A Coruña) power stations will be presented within the framework of the Just Transition Agreements.

2.1. Region of Andorra

2.1.1. Context

Teruel is an eminently rural Spanish province, with low business density and low population density. Coal was an important source of activity and wealth, providing a higher per capita income to the coal-producing districts than to the rest of the province. The impact of mine closures and coal-fired power stations has had a significant socio-economic impact.

In 2018, 3 coal mining facilities in three localities (Ariño, Estercuel and Foz-Calanda) will be closed in Teruel, together with the closure of the Andorra coal-fired power plant. In total, it is estimated that 524 workers employed directly by the companies of the mines and the thermal power station will be affected, in addition to the 306 people subcontracted by the thermal power station, an undetermined number of workers in auxiliary work in the mines and the employment generated by their activities in the affected areas, which is estimated at more than 2,000 jobs.

To this employment impact must be added the job losses linked to the reduction of activity in the coal mines in the province, which since 2000 have amounted to more than 900 workers and more than 100 with the closure in 2008 and 2012 of two thermal power stations (Escatrón and Escucha).

These closures have led to a trend towards depopulation, an ageing population and negative migratory balances. The two main counties affected have reduced their populations by between 13% and 15% between 2011 and 2021.

These challenges are compounded by the need to transform the industrial sector, especially in greenhouse gas-intensive sectors, which employs some 4,400 people.

One of the most emblematic closures took place in Andorra. The Andorra thermal power plant was owned by Endesa, the privatised energy company in Spain. Its closure affected a total number of workers of 532, with 204 on staff and 328 employed by contractors. This led to the

need to find solutions for the hundreds of workers who worked there, through early retirement and relocation to other facilities elsewhere in Spain.

2.1.2. Agreement on the closure of the thermal power plant

Endesa, with the signing of the agreement to close its plants, provides an Accompaniment Plan (MTERD, 2022a) which includes, among other elements the proposal of new investments in the same territories related to business opportunities in renewable energy generation or other business lines when viable; plans for the relocation of its own personnel, preferably, if possible, in work related to the new activities and the dismantling and restoration of the plant; support in the proactive search for other investors and participation in the drawing up of transition agreements to take advantage of their knowledge of the business reality of the region in order to build new initiatives with a smooth transition between the closure of the facilities and the possible opening of new ones. It will also coordinate with these companies the tasks of attending to employment requalification needs that may be required. Collaboration through specific actions in the support plan for vocational training and labour insertion to guarantee the improvement of the employability of workers in the new activities.

2.1.3. Just Transition Agreement of Aragon

The agreement includes a characterisation and diagnosis report and a report on the public participation process, which serve as a basis for the preparation of this section.(ITJ, 2020a).

The transition of this area is represented in the Aragon Just Transition Agreement, signed in 2020, which was the first to be implemented. It also covers other areas of the autonomous community affected by the energy transition processes. The Andorra-Sierra de Arcos area affects 68% of the workers affected by the agreement, in 8 municipalities in the province of Teruel, followed by Bajo Aragón, with 20% of the workers affected, in another 8 municipalities in Teruel.

Its priority objectives were: to promote the economic diversification of these regions, to prioritise job creation, to favour business and technological innovation, to promote the efficiency of available resources and to prioritise sustainability in the new economic proposals for the area.

In this agreement, a SWOT analysis was carried out. Among the weaknesses identified were: depopulation, ageing of the population, lack of education, employment, health and leisure facilities, high unemployment, difficulties for women in finding employment, low per capita income areas, low business diversification, low ICT development and lack of environmental awareness. The main perceived threats are mainly related to the over-dependence of regions and their employment on the closing industry and the increasing depopulation that the transition could entail.

On the other hand, a series of strengths were identified, including the existence of endogenous resources on which to base local development: mineral wealth, industrial parks, cultural and

natural heritage, industrial heritage (mining), with suitable climatic conditions for the generation of renewable energies (wind and solar), or the high number of trained people with experience in the industrial sector. And as opportunities, those linked to energy transition opportunities and the increase in the consumption of renewable energies, repopulation opportunities in the face of increasing teleworking trends or the dynamisation of rural tourism are mentioned.

Within the framework of the Just Transition Agreements, various support instruments have already been deployed to grant aid to business and municipal projects with the aim of generating stable employment and combating depopulation. Since 2019, the Just Transition Institute has granted aid to municipal, business and environmental restoration projects that formally committed to the creation of 249 long-term jobs.

Among them, there are infrastructure projects, co-financed between the ITJ and the Government of Aragon. Some of them are related to the promotion of tourism and culture, linked to the promotion of rural tourism (extension of a spa hotel or an interpretation centre); others are linked to industrial reconversion (such as the implementation of a centre for the treatment and recycling of plastic waste); others are related to the provision of social services (such as the extension of a residence or the creation of a day centre). In addition, financial support to municipalities for energy saving, to improve the water cycle, for improvements to industrial estates and facilities. Co-financed between the ITJ and the local entities there are some projects related to the implementation, improvement and readaptation of public services.

Financed by the ITJ, there are also business projects linked to industry or the hotel and catering industry, small investment projects of various kinds and companies for the environmental restoration of mines.

Nudo Mudéjar in the region of Andorra

The process in the region has recently gained prominence with the first tender of the Ministry of Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge to grant access to the electricity transmission grid that is released after the closure of the generation plant. This is the "Nudo Mudéjar", an award to evacuate renewable energy, applying environmental and socio-economic criteria.

This first tender affects the Mudéjar 400 kV node, to which the Teruel Thermal Power Station, owned by Endesa and located in the municipality of Andorra, was connected. The ultimate objective is that the dismantling of the Andorra thermal power plant will provide new economic, social and environmental development opportunities for the area.

Although the Nudo Mudéjar has a capacity of 1,302 MW, only 1,202 MW were put out to tender to evacuate renewable energy, applying environmental and socio-economic criteria that benefit the 34 municipalities affected by the closure of the thermal plant. The remainder is reserved for other small renewable projects to be connected.

The resolution was approved at the end of 2022 in favour of ENEL Green Power (ENDESA), the former public company that was privatised, for the installation of wind farms, solar farms and green hydrogen generation with the commitment to generate stable employment until at least 2028.

The Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO), the Institute for Just Transition (ITJ) and the Government of Aragon, as managers of the funds of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan, and the Government of Aragon and the Just Transition Fund, contribute with more than 220 million euros.

For its part, ENEL Green Power is investing €1.5 billion, committing to the creation of short and long-term employment that will help to fix the population in the area, with agreements with local entities and municipalities to diversify the economy of the area.

2.1.4. Two projects

For this report, three cases of interesting projects in the process of just transition in the region have been selected, based on their relevance in terms of business volume (ENEL Endesa), their interest in innovation (FORGASA) and their relevance in terms of their role in social cohesion (public service).

However, it is important to mention that their impact on the transition process is variable. Social conflict remains open around debates such as the real capacity to compensate for the consequences of energy production change in the region, in terms of long-term employment generation with the capacity to compensate for the lost labour income and its effects on local economies. Moreover, previous projects that received funding from different administrations were not as successful as advertised and did not fulfil their commitments, with the result that some of these projects are viewed with mistrust.

a. ENEL- ENDESA. Closure of the thermal power plant and new renewable energy projects.

This is the energy company, which used to be public and has been privatised until it is majority owned by ENEL (Italian public company).

In 2020, the Andorra thermal power plant was closed after four decades of operation. It was built between 1974 and 1979. It was built in order to make extensive use of black lignite from mines in the Teruel mining basin, mixed with imported coal. During its lifetime it produced 224,000 GWh, equivalent to one year's electricity consumption on the Spanish mainland.

The employment generated at the plant and the entire network of subcontractors not only constituted the fundamental axis of population settlement in the area, but also contributed to the creation of a collective identity linked to the plant. On 19 December 2018, the formal request for closure was submitted and negotiations began between the unions and the company on the options for its workers and their families. An agreement was reached between the owner of the plant and the workers' representation within the company itself. On the one

hand, the relocation of the workers was ensured, with the necessary training and compensation and aid for the transfer of these workers: some 280 workers had to move to other parts of the state, with the strong social and economic impact for the area. It was a conflictive process given that it involved the mobility throughout Spanish territory of people and their families, whose lives were based in the region. "Seventy-three cases of disagreement were opened". In addition, voluntary departures were promoted for older workers.

Endesa created a project "for the future" for Andorra, with which it won the Nudo Mudéjar tender through its subsidiary ENEL Green Power. The project consists of an industrial and technological project with 14 renewable energy projects, 7 hybrid solar projects with 7 wind projects, a battery storage plant, green hydrogen production, a synchronous compensator and an electrolyser manufacturing centre, located in 9 different municipalities.

With the aim of boosting economic development, supporting rural tourism, local commerce and promoting labour inclusion, this industrial and technological project is complemented by a socio-economic plan that aims to support projects in the area and promote them by taking advantage of the region's endogenous resources and covering different productive sectors.

Endesa states that the selection process has been carried out with the aim of ensuring economic diversification and claims to have opened a participatory process that they call "shared value approach", knowing prior to the project the reality of the area where it plans to settle through contact with local agents: farmers, livestock farmers, local associations, tourism agents, local commerce.

The project is expected to generate 6,300 direct and indirect jobs, including the technology project and its socio-economic development plan. More than 370 permanent and permanent jobs have been committed once construction is completed. Among these jobs, the possible return of former workers of the thermal power plant is foreseen.

In this respect, projects such as "Sponsor an olive tree" in the primary sector can be highlighted. This consists of the development of an oil production and sales activity through the recovery of 50,000 abandoned olive trees in the mining basins and the production of canned products from the orchards with oil made in the traditional style.

In the industrial sector, an agreement has been reached with a company for the construction of a solar tracker factory in the vicinity of the thermal power plant. This factory will generate 40 permanent jobs once it is operational. Another agreement has been reached with another company for the expansion of the precast concrete industry, which will generate another 80 jobs in the area, at least 30% of which will be female.

In the tertiary sector, linked to tourism, support is envisaged for reference tourist facilities in the area, such as spas and museums.

The project includes the Rural School of Sustainable Energy, which constitutes the training axis of the socio-economic plan for the Nudo Mudéjar with the aim of providing retraining and

training opportunities for new jobs in the area. The Rural School starts in June 2023 with some workshops.

The project envisages more than 300,000 hours of training for more than 5000 people, to be implemented between 2023 and 2026. It proposes 4 axes: (1) renewable energy, in operation and maintenance of renewable energy, assembly of solar panels, training in self-consumption for distributed solar, (2) biodiversity and monitoring of birds and fauna, (3) training in the primary sector, with institutions in the area specialising in this type of training that promote the training of young people and women in the rural environment, (4) training for inclusion aimed at people with functional diversity aimed at future employability in special employment centres in the area.

In addition, support for community energy and self-consumption initiatives is also envisaged.

Following the approval of the Nudo Mudéjar tender, with wind, solar and green hydrogen projects, new jobs are expected to be created. A new field of negotiation is opening up with the works council for the return of the workers who had to leave, although this could clash with the minimum relocation deadlines associated with the receipt of agreed aid and the possible commitments to stable employment in the area. From the trade union perspective, the creation of the infrastructure of the fields will generate a lot of employment that they do not foresee to be stable over time once the installation is finished. "The construction of the facilities and camps will provide ephemeral work for 5 or 6 years, but how will it be maintained? These types of fields require very few ENEL jobs during their operation".

b. FORGASA, SAMCA group. New company to manufacture fertiliser from local coal.

In 2016, the SAMCA group decided to close the mines that supplied coal to the Andorra power plant, and it was decided to set up a new solid fertiliser manufacturing plant based on leonardite. This is a natural derivative of coal, characterised by its high content of humic substances. The business group markets products based on leonardite from Teruel in more than 40 countries.

Research was carried out which led to the registration of several patents in this new category of fertilisers, Leofertilisers, capable of regenerating the soil and satisfying the needs of the plant with a single product. In 2019, the construction of the plant in Ariño began and between 2020 and 2021 the first industrial tests began. The first range of products was launched on the market in 2022.

The plant has a research and development laboratory, which has been endowed with significant financial resources and continues to make progress in the development of future products. A commercial department, which mediates between the farmers and the laboratory. A total of 37 people are employed.

There are plans to expand the centre with a plant for the extraction of liquid humic acids for the industrial process of the SAMCA group.

The products are intended to be an efficient and sustainable solution, as they do not cause any chemical reactions. The plant generates hardly any emissions, as it only has a chimney that emits water vapour, and is in fact ISO14000 environmental certified.

In line with corporate social responsibility, the company generates employment with the aim of attracting young trained personnel and is installed in unpopulated areas that generate possibilities of population fixation in the territories.

For this installation, the company has received financial support of 2.6 million in ITJ funds.

2.1.5. The role of social dialogue

So far, much of the trade union involvement has concentrated on managing the labour consequences of the mining and thermal power plant closures. The company Endesa and the majority unions signed their own agreement for the closing plants. From the beginning, the works council itself entered into negotiations on the possibilities for the workers in the power plant. Agreements were reached with the aim of mitigating the effects on employment, by means of incentivised redundancies, outplacements, retraining plans, commitments to maintain employment in the decommissioning processes and priority in reemployment for the plant's own workers, but also alternative employment and training for the workers of the subcontractors in the surrounding area.

However, the process was not without conflict, as the defence of the plant workers, their jobs and their future in the area led to mobilisations and protests. These protests were widely supported, both by the public and by environmental organisations and social groups concerned about climate change.

In the agreement reached between the trade union representatives at the head office and the company for outplacements and voluntary redundancies, it was agreed to create a monitoring committee with regular meetings every 4 months; a commitment that, according to the trade union representatives, is not being fulfilled in terms of frequency and that is limited to providing information in the content, time and form determined by the company.

The union's impression is that, although the impact on employment in the companies themselves has been reduced, and the company has been able to compensate for the redundancies and relocations, the results in terms of the indirect impact on employment in the subcontractors remain to be seen. The dismantling process employed a considerable number of people and the new projects are being implemented. Overall, it is considered very positive to have reached a tripartite agreement, although it is not yet possible to assess the extent of the commitments made by the companies in the retraining and employment of subcontracted workers.

Some political groups and regional environmental groups, who denounce the lack of rigour in the granting of permits for the installation of renewable energy parks, something that stimulates an economic bubble around renewable energies, and whose implementation has high costs for local residents. In this critique, they see the promotion of rural energy

communities as a measure to combat what they see as "territorial plunder". However, other political parties are very optimistic about the employment opportunities that the approval of the Nudo Mudéjar competition, with its associated high level of funding, could bring.

The Aragon Just Transition agreement, like the rest of them, was proposed by the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge in collaboration with the Department of Industry, Competitiveness and Business Development of the Government of Aragon, and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces. Although the agreement on power stations commits to a participatory process for the elaboration of just transition agreements, the degree to which trade unions have been involved has been very poor. In fact, they have only been invited to the public participation process in which they had to send a preliminary characterisation and territorial diagnosis document and fill in a questionnaire under very similar conditions to other NGOs, women's groups and local social associations. The aim of the questionnaire was to collect project proposals and ideas aimed at the socio-economic dynamisation of the Convention's area of application, as well as observations, comments and complementary information related to the preliminary characterisation and diagnosis of the territory. The capacity to induce in the process of drawing up the agreement is considered insufficient, which does not respect what was previously agreed and is more formal than real.

The conflicts in this process have been diverse and often with arguments that sometimes conflict, making clear the tensions existing between the wide range of actors involved. In the region there have been mobilisations demanding resources to combat depopulation, ensuring quality public services, and promoting business projects and reindustrialisation to ensure alternative employment with good conditions for stable employment.

2.2. Region of Meirama

2.2.1. Context

The beginning of coal mining and the exploitation of the Meirama basin in Cerceda (A Coruña) is more recent than in most coal mining basins in the country. It was mainly a rural environment with agricultural and livestock farms, until 1974, when the possible existence of a brown lignite deposit in the valley became evident. A comprehensive plan was then drawn up to exploit lignite and supply it for the production of electricity in a thermal power station (Meirama Thermal Power Station). In 1981, the mining-electric complex and the Meirama Thermal Power Station were completed, with a single generator set and an installed capacity of 563 MW (ITJ, 2020b).

However, from the end of the 1970s, the coal sector would enter a progressive crisis that would lead to a continuous process of reconversion and restructuring of the sector. In the first decade of the 2000s, a programme was prepared to organise the cessation of activity at Meirama, in view of the depletion of lignite reserves, a process that ended in 2007 with the closure of the mine. The mine employed around 480 workers on a stable basis from its opening until closure.

Following the closure of the mine, the Meirama thermal power plant switched to imported coal to generate electricity. Following the Paris agreement (2015) ratified by the EU and Spain (2017), the growing incorporation of renewable energies, the need to reduce the emission of atmospheric pollutants, the new European energy directives, the increase in the price of CO2 emissions, investment decisions and other market factors, Naturgy decided to close the plant. In December 2018 Naturgy Energy Group, S.A. submitted the application for administrative authorisation for the definitive closure of the Meirama Thermal Power Plant, which was authorised in 2020.

2.2.2. Agreement on the closure of the thermal power plant²

Within the framework of the Urgent Action Plan, the following facility has been identified as being in the process of closure in the Ordes area (province of A Coruña). The Meirama thermal power plant, located in the municipality of Cerceda. Naturgy Energy Group, S.A. applied on 19 December 2018 to the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge for the closure of the Meirama Thermal Power Plant, with a nominal capacity of 580.46 MW; this closure was finally authorised by Resolution of 31 July 2020, by the Directorate General for Energy Policy and Mines. At the time of the closure request, 77 employees and 35 subcontractors were working at the plant.

The impact of the closures is not limited to the municipalities in which they occur. The residence of the workers at the facilities, whether staff of the company that manages them or of the companies subcontracted by it, means that the impact extends to other municipalities in the surrounding area.

Through the Agreement, the Parties undertake to work on the elaboration of Just Transition Agreements to anticipate and mitigate the negative effects of the closure of coal-fired power plants. The Agreements include a participatory process of mobilisation and consultation for their elaboration; the characterisation, diagnosis and socio-economic and infrastructure analysis of the areas affected by the closures; and, when they have occurred, the evaluation of plans and initiatives, guaranteeing the centralisation of communication and information between all those involved in the projects as well as the identification of possible investments, actions and projects for the reactivation of the areas, the analysis of their viability and a proposal for an action plan.

By signing the agreement to close its plants, Naturgy committed itself to an Accompanying Plan (MTERD, 2022.a) that would incorporate, among other elements, a series of proposals:

- The proposal of new investments in the same territories related to business opportunities in renewable energy generation or other lines of business when viable.
- Plans for the relocation of own personnel, preferably, if possible, in work related to the new activities and the decommissioning and restoration of the plant.
- Also a prioritisation of workers from auxiliary companies in the work related to the new activities and the decommissioning and restoration of the plant. To this end, Naturgy

² <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1j2rJBldEgHFEX7OrA4W8FpHsFffJVdi1>

undertakes to encourage the companies awarded the new tenders to employ these workers.

- To facilitate the smooth transition between the closure of the facilities and the launch of other initiatives and taking advantage of its knowledge of the business reality of the territory, Naturgy undertook to support the proactive search for other investors and participate in the development of transition agreements. In this sense, coordination with the new companies would be promoted in order to meet the necessary employment requalification needs.
- Collaboration through specific actions in the support plan for vocational training and labour insertion to guarantee the improvement of the employability of workers in the new activities.

The Agreement includes the creation of a Monitoring Commission to ensure compliance with the Agreement, which will be made up of an equal number of representatives of the National Government, the companies and the trade union organisations. It will meet every 6 months on a regular basis in order to know the details related to the progress of the Agreement, and on an extraordinary basis whenever requested by one of the parties.

2.2.3. The Just Transition Agreement for Meirama

The Just Transition Agreement for the territory affected by the closure of the Meirama power plant has three documents: A characterisation and diagnosis with the contributions made by different economic, social and environmental agents in the area following the public participation process that began on 16 June 2020; a report on the public participation process, dated October 2020; and an action protocol for the participatory process, dated November 2021.

The characterisation and diagnosis report carries out an analysis to determine the delimitation of the territory affected by the agreement. To this end, it analyses the municipalities in which the facilities in closure are located, the surrounding municipalities on which the transition has an economic impact, taking into account the impact on employment and local wage income, as well as territorial coherence and the cumulative impact on the region. All this leads to delimit the geographical scope of application of the Meirama Just Transition Agreement, comprising the municipalities of Cerceda, Ordes, Carral, Todoia and A Laracha.

The closure of the Meirama Thermal Power Plant was expected to have an impact on employment in the area for 112 workers who, at the date of the closure request (19 December 2018), were working at the plant, both on the staff and in auxiliary and contract work.

Most of these workers lived in the municipality of A Coruña, with the municipalities of Ordes and Cerceda being other of the main municipalities affected. The impact on employment would not only affect the direct jobs lost, but would also affect the extensive economic network that had prospered under the protection of the thermal power station and whose activity depends on the operation of the installation: hauliers, ironmongers, suppliers, workshops and companies in the service sector (bars and restaurants).

The economic impact of the closure of the Meirama Thermal Power Station can be seen directly in its contribution to the municipal coffers of the municipal council in various taxes, which in total amount to almost 12% of the municipal budget.

Among the derived economic impacts, the loss of the main activity has a decisive impact on the activity and employment of other productive sectors (hotels, small businesses, services, education, etc.). Likewise, impacts associated with the decrease in port traffic and movement of goods from the Port of A Coruña and with the negative effects on the industrial gross added value in the region and in Galicia as a whole are also detected.

Secondly, the agreement provides a characterisation of the municipalities included in the agreement, reviewing the mining background and the start-up of the thermal power plant and the impact of the closures in the area. It adds a demographic analysis of the area, looking at the size of the population, its evolution in recent years and the structure of the population, the dispersion of the population and the level of education in each of the municipalities, economic activity and employment, through disposable income per inhabitant, employment and unemployment figures, the business fabric and activity and a sectoral analysis. Access to telematic networks in the municipalities and the natural and cultural heritage are also assessed. This identifies a series of assets with the possibility of development in the territory.

From the analysis of the productive structure, it should be noted that while the primary sector and the construction sector suffer a significant loss, representing in 2019 barely 84% and 90% -respectively- of the employment they had in 2011. Industry has had a practically linear behaviour, increasing by one point in the period. The services sector is the one that has always had an upward trajectory and in 2019 its index is 117 points, being also the sector that employs more people.

With regard to the companies in the territory, the Services sector is the one with the highest number of companies, accounting for 49% of the total number of companies in the Convention area. The Services sector is followed by the Agriculture sector with around 27% of the total.

With regard to the level of digital implementation in the area, the available information allows us to state that there is more restricted access to telecommunications networks in the municipalities included in the Meirama Just Transition Agreement than in other geographical areas.

In this context, the Local Development Strategy identifies a series of areas in which initiatives could be developed to provide a basis for the economic dynamism of the territory, in line with the territorial strengths. The following areas stand out: Agriculture and livestock, agri-food industry, forestry, trade and services to the population.

Finally, a SWOT analysis of the municipalities included in the agreement is included, which incorporates the perceptions of the public participation process. Weaknesses include the ageing of the population and with it the increase in the dependency rate, the high dispersion of the population, the low level of education - in comparison with the surrounding area - with difficult access to varied and quality training and requalification programmes, the lack of a dynamisation programme, a high unemployment rate, which is very much higher than in the

rest of the region, The lack of a programme of dynamisation, guidance and advice on sustainable activities and projects for the territory, a high unemployment rate, well above the average for the surrounding area, serious problems of labour market insertion, masculinisation of economic activity and a traditional economy with a high dependence on the extractive industry and a lack of diversification and development of the business fabric.

Threats include depopulation due to a lack of job opportunities, the loss of jobs in the energy industry due to the dismantling of strategic industries and companies in the area, the lack of new alternative business projects, the progressive abandonment of agricultural, livestock and tertiary sector activities, the loss of identity, insufficient aid and subsidies for reindustrialisation and the rejection of the establishment of new industries by neighbourhood and environmental groups.

On the other hand, a series of strengths are identified, including a slight increase in the population of the area, the importance of the service sector with an increase in the number of companies, the presence of an important primary sector in the area, the importance of endogenous resources for renewable energy projects, the good transport infrastructure in the vicinity, a cultural and natural heritage with great tourist potential, the existence of qualified personnel in the industrial activity of energy generation, metal mechanics and electromechanics and the availability of industrial land.

Finally, opportunities include the maintenance of access to the electricity grid to be used for renewable energy projects, the maintenance of access to water resources, the attraction of new industrial activities, the development of new business niches, the possibility of strengthening the primary sector, the existence of public programmes and subsidies to support investment, entrepreneurship and job creation, the potential for the development of the tourism sector and the possible dynamisation by rural development groups.

The public participation process is reflected in a report published in October 2020. A total of 28 agents participated in it, including business associations (27), companies (5) and town councils (6), which submitted proposals. The trade unions with the largest representation in the area (8), technological and research organisations/centres, educational and research organisations (12) or Local Action Groups (LAGs) or Rural Development Groups (2) also actively participated. Participation was organised through questionnaires sent out and returned completed questionnaires and project proposals.

Among the projects that were proposed through the participation process, those related to renewable energies stand out; wind energy, biogas and biomethane from organic waste, use of biomass or the production of green hydrogen. Proposals were also put forward for the development of rural tourism projects, taking advantage of the territory's endogenous resources.

Finally, the protocol establishes a general framework for collaboration and information exchange between the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, the Autonomous Community of Galicia and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces, to launch the participatory process for the design of the Meirama Just Transition Agreement.

2.2.4. Three new projects

The first project developed by Naturgy in the area followed the depletion of the lignite reserves in the mine. With the closure of the mine, the company transformed the site into an artificial lake and reforested the land and tailings deposits of the mine. It has created a large protected area of biodiversity that will boost the economic, tourism and environmental development of the area, due to the natural value of the space created.

In the process of dismantling the thermal power plant, a total of 90 local people were hired for the work: 9 of them from the list of the Instituto de Transición Justa's own list - 9 of them inhabitants of the municipalities in the area. 17 local residents, 45 from other municipalities in the province and with the occasional participation of local companies.

With the closure of the thermal power plant, the Meirama Thermal Power Plant Reconversion accompanying plan proposes to generate a node that integrates new solutions towards energy transition: renewables, biomethane and hydrogen.

a) Two new wind power generation projects: Meirama and As Encrobas

The Meirama project received the green light in 2022. With a total of 10 wind turbines and an investment of more than 44 million euros, the Meirama wind farm will have a capacity of 44.5 MW. It aims to produce 120 GWh annually, thereby avoiding a large amount of CO2 emissions. Most of the wind turbines will be installed on land where mining activity was previously carried out and the transformation substation will be located on the site of the former electricity generating station. The company also undertook to re-vegetate the land and carry out regular environmental monitoring during the life of the wind farm.

The company proposed, with the construction, operation and maintenance of the wind farm, to generate more than 330 direct and indirect jobs and the support of companies based and staffed in Galicia.

The As Encrobas wind project received the go-ahead in January 2023. It projects the location of 4 wind turbines, and an investment of more than 20 million euros, with a capacity of 20 MW. It intends to produce 68 GWh annually, and thus avoid the annual emission of more than 50,000 tonnes of CO2. It is intended to generate more than 250 direct and indirect jobs.

The construction, operation and maintenance of the wind farm will generate more than 250 jobs and will involve Naturgy's technical teams in companies based and staffed in Galicia. This project also includes the revegetation of land and regular environmental monitoring of the same during the life of the park.

b) Hydrogen production hub

The project involves the installation of an electrolysis plant powered by 100 % renewable energy on the site of the former Meirama thermal power station. Three companies are involved in the project: Reganosa, Naturgy and Repsol.

It involves generating hydrogen with an electrolyser of up to 200 MW in a three-phase project. The renewable hydrogen generated will be destined for industrial use to replace the conventional hydrogen currently used by the Repsol refinery in A Coruña. It will also be used in other industries, in injection into the gas network to be mixed with natural gas and in mobility. All these uses will reduce the carbon footprint of the area and demonstrate the viability of mass production of renewable hydrogen and its distribution to the end consumer. It is expected to produce more than 4,000 tonnes of renewable hydrogen per year in the first phase and will reach a total production of 30,000 tonnes per year.

In the first phase of construction, 224 direct jobs and 372 indirect jobs are expected to be generated. The expected employment of this project in phase 1 is 224 direct jobs and 372 indirect jobs. During the operation and maintenance phase, 14 direct jobs and 24 indirect jobs.

At the end of 2022, the project received a grant of 15 million euros in the framework of the Renewable Energy, Renewable Hydrogen and Storage Plan linked to the European funds of the Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan.

c) Biomethane project

In this project, Reganosa, Naturgy and Repsol are also collaborating with Impulsa Galicia to develop a project that transforms large surpluses of livestock manure and other biomethane waste, organic fertilisers and neutral CO₂ of biological origin. This process generates two products: on the one hand, biogas that will be taken to an upgrading plant to obtain biomethane and its subsequent injection into the grid; and on the other hand, obtaining a fertiliser (liquid and solid) from the digested output. Of the latter, part could be returned to livestock farmers for their use and the other part could be marketed. In total, around 630,000 tonnes of waste could be managed, producing 247 GWh/y of biomethane, thus avoiding more than 150,000 tonnes/y of CO₂ emitted into the atmosphere. This project would generate 164 net permanent jobs and 160 additional temporary jobs for the construction and start-up of the plant.

2.1.5. The role of social dialogue

The channels opened through the negotiation and signing of the agreement for the closure of the power plants have been considered key to try to mitigate the social and industrial impact of the Meirama thermal power plant.

The Spanish Institute for Just Transition promoted both this agreement and the Just Transition Agreement of the Meirama region. For the signatory companies such as Naturgy, the objectives are considered to be the continuity of supply, energy efficiency, transition to renewable energies and the promotion of the circular economy. From the trade union position, the need to ensure that the use of resources and public and private investments are made as efficiently as possible in the area and the need to contribute to the search for innovative

projects, ensuring investment in R+D+I, industrial implementation and with the capacity to drive other industrial sectors. In addition, the relevance of technological development being scalable and exportable to other places in the long term was raised.

The negotiation process between local authorities, the regional government and the Just Transition Institute was complicated by partisan discrepancies, as parties of different political colours governed at different territorial levels.

From the trade union perspective, as is the case in other territories affected by closures, it is perceived as an achievement to have reached an agreement that involved not only the company's own staff but also subcontractors' workers. In general, the perception is that the agreement was positive for the company's own staff, but to see the effects on the territory it will be necessary to wait for the process to progress. However, they consider their possibility of influencing the Just Transition Agreement to be limited.

With regard to new projects for the future, the CCOO union considers projects such as the biomass project to be insufficient, which they even see as potentially damaging, given the scarce capacity to generate electricity in a massive and centralised manner, and which could lead to competition for resources for other decentralised uses more in line with rural realities.

In this sense, CCOO proposes as an alternative the design of a pilot project for the municipality of Cerceda which, through the establishment of a micro-grid powered by distributed generation systems using integrated renewable technologies, would allow savings in the cost and distribution of energy and would favour the technological development of local companies. They consider it important to promote strategies to develop a comprehensive and cross-cutting project that can be extended to other sectors. ([Daphnia](#)).

3. Analysis of the focus group research

This chapter covers the results from the focus group, which involved trade unionists from different levels of representation (from company level to sectoral level in the industrial and energy sector) as well as trade union experts on the green transition in Spain.

The transition to the closure of power stations is entailing various impacts, although, given that it is still in a development phase, the extent of these impacts cannot yet be assessed.

The decommissioning of coal-fired power stations in Spain produces, at territorial level, at least three types of negative effects from a socio-economic point of view: loss of employment, reduction of municipal income, and reduction of economic activities linked to the activity of the generation plants. In some cases, these impacts have been reinforced because plant closures have been immediately preceded by the closure of mining operations located in the same area.

In terms of **employment**, the closure of power stations entails the loss of industrial jobs, a type of employment generally associated with good working conditions, requiring specific qualifications, often of medium or high level. The jobs affected are those of workers who are part of the workforce of the companies that own the plant, and of workers in contract companies who carry out support and auxiliary work. Finally, we must recognise the indirect impact linked to the territory: these are often rural areas in the process of population reduction, with economic activity that is affected by the closure of the plants and which will see a transformation in the use of natural resources towards new activities.

In order to assess the extent of job losses, it is necessary to take into account the characteristics and context of the areas where closures occur. The most affected municipalities are not always those where the plants are located, but those where the workers live - chosen for their location or the availability of services. However, the impact of job losses extends to nearby towns, which are often very sensitive to the loss of productive activities: rural areas with small populations, higher unemployment rates and greater ageing.

The new activities, from the process of dismantling the plants, the assembly of the new facilities to the development of the new activities have a direct impact on both the working conditions of the workers and their training requirements. On the one hand, the working conditions of the workers associated with the plants were considerably good, given the specific qualified training they had and the achievements of collective bargaining. The maintenance of working conditions is a challenge that still needs to be assessed as the projects progress. On the other hand, the new activities require retraining of personnel, but also of the inhabitants of the districts, the financing of which by the companies is committed in the agreements.

The agreements on the closure of the plants were aimed not only at managing the relocation and departure of workers from the plants themselves, but also of staff employed by the subcontracted companies and other people from the counties. The aim was to commit to the training of workers for future activities.

The localities where the power stations are located collect from the companies that own the plants a series of different types of **fees and taxes** derived from their operation. This is a

significantly important source of income for municipalities with scarce resources and generally small in terms of population size. On some occasions, as in the case of Andorra, the company that owns the thermal power plant subsidises the maintenance of part of the municipal sports facilities. The disappearance of the activity of the thermal power stations can lead to a drop in the income of the local councils, making it difficult for them to function properly and reducing the quantity and quality of the services they provide to citizens, thus reducing their quality of life, a particularly serious situation in towns marked by a loss of inhabitants.

The decrease in economic activities linked to the activity of the generation plants generate an economic impact associated with the closure of the thermal power plant affects many other productive sectors (hotels, small businesses, services, education, etc.), whose activity is related to the operation of the installation or to the expenditure/consumption of the plant's workers.

In this context, the analyses being carried out highlight the fact that the energy transition processes are not being developed in a homogeneous and equitable manner, but rather that there are **gaps between geographical areas, productive sectors and types of companies**. Furthermore, the unequal impact on different population groups -gender, age, skill levels- is evident. It is therefore essential that policies and strategies consider regional heterogeneities and address distributional risks, while including an assessment of the real impact on employment (Merino, 2023).

Trade union assessments of the process agree that the closure process has been accelerated, so that just transition is still in the process of being managed. Moreover, it has been complicated by successive crises in recent years. On the one hand, the crisis derived from the COVID-19 pandemic, which generated problems of economic viability in the companies. On the other hand, the energy crisis due to the war in Ukraine, which placed the energy companies involved in the closures at the centre of management.

The power plant closure agreements are viewed positively, given that, despite the accelerated nature of the process and the limitations that are becoming apparent, they have reflected the crucial role of social dialogue in the process. Trade union representatives affirm that this type of agreement is key for a number of reasons: to manage change in advance, to commit companies to their responsibility for productive changes not only in the company, but also in the territories, and also to raise awareness among plant workers themselves of the need for a just transition in the territories. On the other hand, the capacity to influence the territorial agreements on just transition is considered to be very limited, even failing to comply with the commitments made in the closure agreements.

The energy transition is one of the public, business and trade union objectives, but it raises the classic clash of who should bear the economic cost? With the entry of financing from European funds, part of this clash is being alleviated.

Numerous projects are expected to be launched in the coming years, and the trade union perspectives reflect the tension in the diversity of interests of actors in different situations. These interests are also strained by the time lag between closures and termination of activity and the start-up of new projects, a time that has been prolonged in the absence of greater anticipation and planning.

A series of key elements are identified when addressing these impacts: social protection measures so that the transition does not imply workers abandoning the territories; structural policies that allow for the deployment of appropriate tools and funding; investment in R&D&I and retraining of personnel; planning to provide both public and necessarily private resources in a necessary collaboration with companies; and finally, monitoring and control to ensure that funding is oriented towards the objectives.

Firstly, it considers it essential to focus on "**tractor projects**", fundamentally of an energy nature, capable of stimulating local reactivation, generating quality employment and generating income. However, the fact that it is the large energy companies that are the protagonists of both the closure of the nuclear power plant and the most powerful renewable energy projects in the area generates conflict. It is they, the few companies that produce and market energy in Spain, who are investing heavily in decarbonisation and who have the capacity to design and implement the projects. A macro-project such as Endesa's for the Andorra area has the capacity to create a large number of jobs and act as a tractor for other companies in the area.

However, given that they are still at an early stage of the transition process, there is a significant degree of **mistrust**. On the one hand, due to the fact that the energy companies are private and that there is no public control and monitoring, which is considered key to ensuring that they fulfil their commitments to generate quality employment in the long term. This scepticism is based both on the lack of rigorous monitoring of the compliance of subsidised companies and on the fact that renewable production is less labour-intensive. The lack of active state involvement in the control and monitoring of investments and projects through shareholdings in projects or by promoting its own industrial projects also fuels mistrust.

On the other hand, another of the needs raised for the area is **economic diversification** to end dependence on coal. Moving to such a strong dependence on renewable energy generates some concern. This is why emphasis is placed on promoting other projects, such as shared self-consumption or local energy communities or biomass or biogas projects linked to forestry management or agricultural and livestock farms. Also those projects that are based on the natural resources or infrastructures of the territory.

New activities are often less labour-intensive and generate less **labour income**. This is exacerbated when a large amount of aid is earmarked for small-scale entrepreneurship in sectors that are unable to generate sufficient employment and income to replace the income previously generated by the mining and/or energy industry.

In addition, public investment in **welfare services** is considered important, with educational, health and elderly care facilities and services that help to settle the population while generating quality jobs and promoting territorial cohesion. However, up to now, public investment has been aimed at infrastructures or replacement with energy efficiency improvements which, as they are not associated with service or maintenance, are very temporary jobs and lead to a degradation of the facilities.

Another element to be considered is the cost of implementing renewable energy fields in the territory. The generation of renewable energies is very invasive on the territory with the installation of solar panels and windmills that require large amounts of land. These installations have an impact on the landscape, biodiversity and the use of the land for other activities, such as livestock or agriculture. This is perceived as an element that deepens the **territorial gap**, whereby energy is produced extensively in rural areas and consumed in cities. For example, the territory of Aragon produces about twice as much energy as it consumes.

In short, the just transition agreements are currently at this complicated point after the closure of the plant and the completion of the decommissioning process and the start-up of the new projects financed with a large financial endowment.

For the time being, there are several social actors whose expectations are still not being met. Although collective bargaining within the energy company that owns the thermal power plant that closed has borne some fruit in terms of compensating the redundancies and relocations of its staff, the projects offering new opportunities have not yet been developed at the regional level. So far, the workers of the former subcontracted companies have not seen their situation resolved and the expectations placed in the new projects generate a lot of uncertainty and mistrust.

Trade unions identify a variety of weaknesses that are complicating the reconversion: depopulation and relative isolation of the municipalities and a productive fabric and labour market highly conditioned to the mining and energy industrial tradition. This implies the predominance of salaried work, a significant masculinisation of employment, training and professional qualifications closely linked to the mining sector and a lack of success of entrepreneurship programmes, related both to the conception of work as a salaried activity and to the lack of a business fabric to support entrepreneurs.

On the other hand, it should not be overlooked that there is a huge investment forecast for the region, so there is room for appropriate, planned and negotiated investments to be made in the coming years, with the necessary follow-up to ensure good governance and a transition that is perceived as fair. To this end, it is essential to establish evaluation and monitoring mechanisms for the projects underway to ensure that they meet the requirements and objectives set in the areas. It is considered important to focus not only on a unique reindustrialisation in the field of renewable energies, but also to ensure a certain diversification within the industrial sector and in other sectors. In this sense, the role of public services is considered to be very relevant, which through public investment can help to compensate for the disadvantages of the transition in the territory by offering elements of cohesion and social welfare, but also helps to fix the territory while at the same time having the capacity to create quality and stable jobs.

These new employment opportunities, according to the social partners, must take into account the gender perspective. Employment linked to the energy sector is highly male-dominated, which causes young women to migrate to other locations with better employment opportunities for them. If this is not taken into account, the transition could lead to further depopulation of these areas. Therefore, the challenge is to encourage projects that promote women's employment and facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities for women, with the aim of closing the significant gaps in employment, working conditions and salaries that exist.

The social partners are aware that the just transition has to move forward to include other sectors that are considered key to the energy transition, the reduction of emissions and the promotion of the circular economy. Mobility, the tourism sector and the agri-food sector, all of which are more cross-cutting than energy, must be included on the agenda in order to establish a timetable that allows for anticipation.

In addition to the sectoral perspective, there is a need to develop environmental action plans in all companies to address issues related to efficiency, mobility, waste and water use. To this end, the figure of the environmental delegate is key. Just transition is a commitment to economic change, which must be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, without losing sight of social justice. Institutional impetus is considered necessary to provide resources and tools in a planned manner to enable anticipation.

All this is unlikely to succeed without giving the necessary prominence to social dialogue, which is defined by the trade union representatives as a key tool for addressing the territorial and social articulation of the regions affected by the process: "a triple dialogue is needed: institutional, social and with the territories: without the participation of the people affected, the transition will no longer be just".

4. Synthesis

Social dialogue in Spain has a leading role in the process of just transition. The term comes from the trade union sphere, when decades ago the need to provide fair and cohesive solutions for the territories undergoing industrial transformation processes was raised.

The path in Spain is determined by the strategic lines set by the Spanish government, which established energy transition as a priority strategy. The Strategic Framework for Energy and Climate defines and promotes policies for a just transition towards an energy model that considers the diversification of production, the growth of renewable production, energy savings and efficiency and the goal of achieving net zero emissions by 2050. These goals are in line with the objectives of the European Union and unprecedented financial resources have been allocated to this end, as part of the strategy to recover from the major crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Just energy transition policies have a dual dimension: employment and territory. To this end, two instruments have been developed: the tripartite agreements between trade unions and employers in the activities affected by the transition and the Administration (first the agreement on the closure of coal mines, then that of coal-fired power stations); and the Just Transition Agreements, in which the different levels of the Administration are involved and which incorporate a process of public participation. The aim of the combination of both instruments is to achieve territorial rebalancing and to mitigate and compensate for the effects of closures. These instruments have been put in place in response to the companies' desire to close coal mining and coal-fired power stations. This process has been accelerated by companies in the face of the loss of competitiveness of coal, the expansion of renewables and environmental constraints. The transition has been conditioned by the fact that the ownership of the companies is exclusively private and has been affected by both the crisis resulting from the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

The tripartite agreements are the result of dialogue between the Administration, the trade unions and the companies that own the power stations in closure, with the aim of establishing a commitment on the part of the latter to present alternative plans before the cessation of their activity in order to offer employment opportunities and strengthen the economy in the affected areas. Given their size, the companies should be able to generate alternatives with a significant pull effect on reactivation. The agreement provides for the outplacement of their own workers, the creation of alternative economic activities in the affected areas and training for the workers of the subcontracted companies, and is subject to regular monitoring by each of the parties through the Agreement Monitoring Committee.

The characteristics of the territories in which most of the closures have taken place make them particularly sensitive: they are sparsely populated areas with little socio-economic dynamism, which have undergone other reconversion processes with little success. For this reason, emphasis has been placed on the need to incorporate territorial actors into the new processes through dialogue mechanisms, in an attempt to mitigate mistrust and scepticism. The public participation processes included in the Just Transition Agreements respond to this objective, although the social partners consider the channels open to social dialogue in this process to be very limited.

The role of the trade union representatives of the power stations and the sector has been key in accompanying the workers in the appropriate relocations and compensation agreed with the companies. Their role has also been very important in raising awareness among the workforce of the importance of incorporating business commitments and willingness to participate in the transformation of activities in the affected areas, from training workers to promoting green and quality jobs.

The process of just energy transition of coal-fired power plants in Spain is still in the development phase. Not all plants are being decommissioned at the same time, new projects are being approved while their implementation is yet to start.

For the time being, most of the workers from the closing plants have been relocated to other facilities of the owner companies or are working on the decommissioning of the closed plants. It is the workers of the subcontracting companies of the first plants to close who are at this complicated moment in which the new projects have not yet started up and are on standby or undergoing training. We will have to wait and see whether in the coming years the agreements and conventions will bear the expected fruit, generating real green economy alternatives for these territories. For the time being, public institutions need to be strengthened to exercise leadership and expand the spaces for social dialogue for the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the processes, in order to generate models that will serve as a guide for future transitions, ensuring the necessary anticipation of changes.

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