



Recommendations for adaptive policy approaches at national and EU level

The LOCAW project set out to identify the barriers to, and drivers of, low-carbon transitions in workplaces across Europe, by systematically analysing everyday practices at work and home. The project investigated six large-scale organizations across Europe, operating under different national and international contexts. The six case studies fall into three types: two state organizations (one university and one municipality), two service providers in the field of natural resources (water and energy), and two transnational heavy industry companies (truck manufacturing and oil and gas extraction).

The main findings emerging from the case studies are concentrated around four integrative themes, which are explored in detail in the LOCAW work-package report D6.2:

- Structural conditions set outside the organisation
- Organisational priorities and vertical relationships within the organisation
- Horizontal relationships among workers
- Home - Work - Third Places – relationships

This document presents **five key recommendations** for policymakers that emerged from the LOCAW case studies.



LOCAW WP6 – D6.3

Recommendations for adaptive policy approaches at national and EU level.

Project Co-ordinator:

Ricardo Garcia-Mira, University of A Coruña.

Recommendations were constructed by:
the LOCAW consortium.

Report produced by:

Tony Craig and Kathryn Gilchrist,

The James Hutton Institute, Aberdeen

HEAVY INDUSTRY



STATE ORGANISATIONS



PRIVATE SERVICE PROVIDERS



1. Provide a supportive policy landscape

Regulations to protect the environment are often regarded as limits to be reached and not exceeded, rather than drivers to raise standards. In this case regulations can become boundaries of permissiveness rather than drivers for change. We therefore recommend that government regulations and advice should be formulated so that they encourage improvement rather than reinforce stasis.

It is also important to avoid conflicts between policies at different levels. For example, public bodies have a key role to play in increasing market demand in particular areas, such as renewable technologies. However, in some cases public

bodies risk incurring financial barriers to realising their strategic environmental objectives (for example becoming reclassified and taxed as an energy producer). Policy design should therefore be mindful of the pivotal role the public sector plays in leading the transition to low carbon economies.

In addition, it is important to provide a stable policy landscape in which organisations have the certainty required in order to facilitate long-term strategic thinking and investment. Past examples of policy shifts (e.g. unstable incentives for renewable energy generation) have sometimes been unhelpful in this respect.

Issues relating to wider societal infrastructure as a barrier to low carbon transitions emerged across all the LOCAW cases studies. For example, improvements to transport infrastructure were viewed by organisations as a key enabler of sustainable transport practices, both for business travel and commuting. Furthermore, communications network infrastructure is a crucial foundation underpinning the adoption and wider uptake of flexible and home-working practices.

We therefore recommend that policies aiming to reduce carbon emissions of large organisations must focus their remit beyond the boundaries of individual organisations. Specifically, policies should concentrate efforts in addressing the infrastructural limitations constraining both physical and virtual connectivity.



2. Encourage the development of environmental cultures through adaptive organisational policy loops

Both national and EU legislation have sought to strengthen regulations in respect to health and safety. The largely successful implementation of safety legislation has been, in part, due to companies appreciating that the most effective way of bringing about change is not to address single behaviours and risks, but to create a safety culture in which the prioritisation of safety becomes a taken for granted practice. Government at a national and EU level should encourage the development of environmental cultures in organisations, through the formulation of policy and promotion of good practice.

Evaluation is a critical element of adaptive policy making. However, there was little evidence of successful coordinated evaluation of outcomes in the case study organisations in the LOCAW project. Linked to this was a lack of monitoring and feedback to employees at different levels within the organisational hierarchy. This is particularly important in establishing and maintaining pro-environmental norms within the workplace.

Evaluation should therefore form the foundation upon which organisational policies are built. To this end, organisations should be provided with support in the development of indicators for long term monitoring. Once these are in place, it is important to encourage the development of communication strategies to foster a widespread awareness of environmental performance amongst the workforce.

Establishing an environmental culture will require training of staff in pro-environmental practices, as well as training and development programmes for management and team leaders. The importance of leadership in nurturing positive social and environmental norms emerged as a key driver of establishing low carbon workplaces. This understanding of the role of managers as positive role models and critical decision makers suggests that policymakers should work in partnership with delivery organisations to develop transformational staff development programmes.



3. Encourage participatory practices within organisations



Organisations should be supported to put in place structures which facilitate bottom up engagement with environmental practices and employee-led initiatives. Harnessing the creative potential of workers offers considerable scope for eco-innovation and creative problem solving on environmental issues at work. It is important that this bottom-up engagement is not merely a tick-box exercise, but is understood to be an integral component of the social and environmental culture within the organisation. This form of participation may usefully constitute part of wider initiatives to promote health and wellbeing in the workplace.

National governments have a role in encouraging a more participatory approach to climate solutions. Trade unions may play an important role in this respect. One example of a bottom-up approach where trade unions have engaged with industry and governments is through the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) – a market-based

instrument arising from the Climate Change Act and involving 20,000 of the largest public and private sector organisations in the UK. The Trades Union Congress supported the CRC because it encouraged the creation of active employee working groups on energy management, reporting to senior management¹.

Celebrating innovation and successful bottom-up initiatives is an important component of maintaining active worker engagement. To do this, it is important that the potential to upscale successful initiatives is seen as a real possibility by workers, coupled with the support of management. Policies should be designed to facilitate an on-going ethos of continual improvement whereby engagement with environmental matters is built into the role each individual plays within the organisation.

¹www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/extras/crc-ees.pdf

4. Actively promote the business case for low carbon practices

While laws and regulations are important drivers for company environmental performance, it became clear in our case studies that reputation can be a significant driver for improving environmental performance. Direct economic benefits of building an environmental reputation include the enhanced ability to secure ethical investment funds, and the potential to increase market share.

In the LOCAW case studies, we found examples where the implementation of environmental actions resulted in direct cost savings to the organisations. However, we also found evidence of a subjacent belief that environmental measures and criteria are not compatible with economic criteria and are thus assumed to be largely value driven. The consequence of this perspective may be that when funds are limited, environmentally-relevant decisions are postponed or are deprioritised, especially when requiring higher initial investments. We recommend that policy-makers create platforms for the promotion and celebration of good practice examples where eco-innovation has resulted in dual benefits of significant cost savings alongside environmental

improvements. We also recommend that policy should encourage the sharing of good practice between organisations through business-to-business collaborations within the same domain of activity. This would complement existing knowledge sharing through existing organisational networks.

Business planning involves balancing both short term economic gains with long term returns on investment. The long payback period for investments in technology was sometimes felt to be a significant barrier to uptake in the LOCAW case studies, for example in relation to building improvements, internal IT infrastructure, and renewable energy investments. This barrier is particularly salient in times of economic recession. During such periods, policy instruments which reduce disincentives to strategic investments in environmental infrastructure should be prioritised.

We also recommend that further research and engagement by governments is needed to devise creative approaches to the use of reputation as a driver for environmental improvement.



5. Evaluate impacts of flexible working as a low carbon strategy

Findings from the LOCAW project suggest that flexible and home working arrangements are viewed as a desirable option by large organisations in transitioning to a low-carbon future. Several of the case study organisations saw this as being a central component of the future vision, and this was a transition that could be easily imagined as a natural progression of existing trends.

Home working can often lead to environmentally friendly practices (e.g. reducing commuting). However, the net environmental outcome will not necessarily always be positive. Providing employees with the technology to work from home is a form of outsourcing with a consequence that environmental regulations and standards within the work setting become invisible and avoidable. Additionally, in terms of energy use per employee, direct consumption of energy at home attributable to working (e.g. heating and lighting) may actually be higher across the workforce. Moreover, it may result in underreporting in audits of environmental compliance.

We recommend that strategic research funding prioritises the study of flexible and home working in relation to both total carbon emissions and everyday environmental practices. There is considerable opportunity to investigate these issues through natural experiments due to the growing number of workplaces implementing such initiatives.



PROJECT COORDINATOR

Ricardo García Mira, University of A Coruña, Spain

PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

Ricardo García Mira (*Coordinator*)

Nora Rätzhel

Corina Ilin

David Uzzell

Tony Craig

Linda Steg

Mirilia Bonnes

SPONSORS

European Commission

DG Research and Innovation

Silvia Donato

PROJECT MANAGER

Marta Alvarez

CONSORTIUM

University of A Coruña (Spain)

Ricardo García Mira (*Coordinator*), Pedro Vega Marcote, Jesús Miguel Muñoz Cantero, Adina Dumitru, Amparo Alonso Betanzos, Oscar Fontenla Romero, Noelia Sánchez Maroño, Eva María Espiñeira, Verónica Bolón Canedo, Miguel Rodríguez García, and Carlota Brinquis Núñez

Umeå University (Sweden)

Nora Rätzhel (*Country/Region Leader*), Misse Wester, Tommy Jensen, Aina Tollefsen

West University of Timisoara (Romania)

Corina Ilin (*Country Leader*), Alin Gavreliuc, Adina Dumitru, Alin Florin Sava, Zoltan Bogathy, Alexandra Docea, Ildikó Erdei, Andreea Ionescu, Daniela Moza, Lăcrămioara Radu, Emil Rusu

University of Surrey (United Kingdom)

David Uzzell (*Country/Region Leader*), Markieta Domecka

The Macaulay Land Use Research Institute (United Kingdom)

Tony Craig (*Country/Region Leader*), Gary Polhill, Nick Gotts, Simon Heslop, Kathryn Gilchrist

University of Groningen (The Netherlands)

Linda Steg (*Country Leader*), Jan Willem Bolderdijk, Kees Keizer, Anne-Kathrin Helbig, Angela Ruepert

Sapienza University of Rome, Center for Inter-University Research on Environmental Psychology (Italy)

Mirilia Bonnes (*Country Leader*), Marino Bonaiuto, Giuseppe Carrus, Ferdinando Fornara, Fridanna Maricchiolo, Eugenio De Gregorio, Stefano de Dominicis, Salvatore Mura, Lavinia Cicero

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY GROUP

Maria Vittoria Giuliani, Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies, National Research Council, Italy.

Ellen Matthies, Institute of Psychology, Otto-von-Guericke-University Magdeburg, Germany

Jose María Peiró, Work and Organizational Psychology, University of Valencia, Spain.

Silviu Rogobete, Political Science, Romanian General Consul in South Africa, Romania.

Ton Schoot Uiterkamp, Environmental Sciences, University of Groningen, The Netherlands.

Peter Söderbaum, Economic History, School of Sustainable Development of Society and Technology, Mälardalen Högskola, Sweden.

Richard Taylor, Agent-based modelling, Stockholm Environmental Institute, Sweden

J. Francisco Morales, Social Psychology, UNED, Spain



This research project has received funding from the European Union under the 7th Framework Programme (ENV.2010.4.3.4-1 – Grant Agreement no 265155)
Project Coordinator: University of A Coruña, Spain

