



CLIMATE AND SUSTAINABILITY HANDBOOK

Climate and Sustainability Representative Handbook

TUI Statement on the Climate Emergency

The TUI recognises that the climate crisis represents one of the greatest threats to the health, welfare and future life chances of our members and the children, young people and adults they teach. The Union recognises the urgent need for governments, businesses and the international community to collectively address the issues that have led to the current climate crisis and the closely related biodiversity crisis.

The TUI commits to action in the following three key areas:

1. Social and economic transformation towards climate justice

- a. As a Union that stands for equity, global justice and solidarity, the TUI joins with trade unions, youth and communities nationally and globally in calling for climate justice. The TUI places the need for climate justice at the centre of the response to the climate crisis.
- b. In the context of international trade union solidarity, the TUI recognises the key role of trade unions in building alliances for social transformation and a new eco-social contract. The TUI relies on the expertise of scientists, climate policy experts, TUI members active in the climate justice movement and those affected to inform our participation in these efforts.
- c. Climate justice acknowledges that the human cost of the climate crisis is not borne equally. Many communities, in particular in the global south, are already

being, and will be, disproportionately affected. Rising temperatures are currently fuelling environmental damage, creating food and water insecurity, and causing weather extremes that are now having devastating effects on communities. In recognition of these devastating and unjust impacts, the TUI affirms its commitment to global solidarity.

2. Education for social and economic transformation

- a. Climate justice education is an important part of an effective 21st-century curriculum. The TUI believes that adopting an equality and human rights perspective to climate change, and the lens of climate justice, will enable learners to engage critically with the climate crisis. The Union advocates strongly that educators, educational institutions and curricula should locate climate change within a framework of equality and human rights, offer space for debate on the different perspectives of climate justice, and provide space and support for learners to take part in meaningful and transformative action towards a just and sustainable society.
- b. The Union believes that education has a critical contribution to make to securing climate justice and a sustainable planet for future generations. The TUI is committed to promoting research and teaching on the topics of socio-ecological transformation, sustainability and sustainable development, as well as the causes and effects of climate change. These topics must be part of teaching and research in all subject areas. The TUI recognises that the challenge of the climate crisis demands advancement in educational curricula and practices. The education curriculum must be transformed to catalyse the fight against the climate emergency and to support a just transition to a more sustainable world.

Students have a right to gain all the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to sustain our world for present and future generations. Teaching and learning methodologies used to address the climate crisis must reflect the complex, interdisciplinary and global nature of this phenomenon.

- c. The TUI encourages schools and centres to adopt the Code of Good Practice for Development Education 2021 (6), and to exploit the scope already available in existing curriculum frameworks to explore the issues and implications of climate change and climate justice. The TUI will continue to press the government to ensure schools can offer a curriculum that secures breadth and balance, including curriculum provision in schools that allows space for learners to explore perspectives of climate justice.
- d. The TUI supports the Education International Manifesto on Quality Climate Change Education for All. The TUI believes that Education International's Manifesto on Quality Climate Change Education for All is a clear global framework for all governments to deliver on their commitments to climate change education and education for sustainable development as part of the Paris Agreement, Article 12. The Union is committed to working with organisations nationally and internationally to support the work of teachers in promoting education for climate justice and sustainable development. Where appropriate, the TUI will share resources and information with members that may assist in the development of climate justice education.

3. Sustainable workplaces and member education

- a. TUI members and staff have a key role to play in securing our commitment to environmental sustainability and climate justice. The TUI is committed to the provision of information, guidance and training for members and staff to promote and deliver on its own commitments to climate justice and sustainability. Initial and continuing teacher education on environmental issues, climate change and social and economic justice is central to teacher advocacy for climate justice and securing a safe and sustainable future for humanity and the living world.
- b. The TUI is committed to securing environmentally sustainable solutions in respect of its investments, buildings, assets, services, travel and transport systems, communications, distribution, packaging and food sourcing. The TUI is committed to challenging our suppliers, contractors, partners and other third parties to ensure that they are also working for sustainability.
- c. The TUI is committed to working towards sustainable workplaces for all members and learners in all education settings and promotes the formation of sustainable workplace agreements and sustainable workplace committees that allow educators, employers and learners to collaborate.

The TUI's National Executive Committee will report on progress in these areas annually to members.

Introduction

In considering Ireland's education policies on sustainability, across all levels at which the TUI organises, i.e. post-primary, further education and training, and the technological higher education sector, there is a reality that we must address in terms of putting into practice what our members teach throughout the breadth of the education sector. Across our schools, colleges, education centres and universities, there is a wealth of knowledge and intention in relation to addressing the climate crisis. The TUI set out an intention in issuing our statement on a climate emergency and continued in establishing a Climate Change Advisory Council. It is noted, however, that the issue remains that meaningful, coordinated action is still lacking.

That is why the Executive Committee has sought to establish the role of Climate and Sustainability Representative in each of the Union's branches. This handbook is provided to assist those officers in understanding, and undertaking, this important role.

Our environment is under pressure, and all educators have a vital role to play. The TUI's Climate and Sustainability Representatives will be key drivers of change as democratically elected union Representatives with a specific mandate to represent the interests of the members in their branch on sustainability.

It is important to clarify that Climate and Sustainability Representatives are not simply individuals who lead by example. While staff who are passionate about environmental issues are valuable allies, they are not substitutes for union representation. Employers should not use the presence of such individuals as a reason to avoid recognising our

officers formally and including them appropriately in information and consultation related to their elected role.

Union-led sustainability initiatives offer a chance to shape policy and practice from the ground up. They can also help engage members who may not have previously been active in union activity, and foster collaboration with students and the wider communities of our workplaces.

This handbook aims to achieve two key goals:

- Support Climate and Sustainability Representatives in their work.
- Encourage more TUI members to consider taking on the role.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions for future editions. For more information or support, please contact the TUI office or your local branch.

Climate and Sustainability Representatives

The TUI uses the term “Climate and Sustainability Representatives”, but different names have been used to describe the role in different unions and different workplaces. The TUI, on foot of our engagement with other unions, advocates against the adoption of titles including words like “Champion” or “Ambassador”, as they imply too much of an individual approach rather than someone acting on behalf of the union. If there are members of staff with these titles, they should not be used by the employer as a reason for refusing to recognise TUI’s Climate and Sustainability Representatives.

Why should branches appoint a Climate and Sustainability Representative?

Sustainability is an organising issue linked to decent jobs and social justice, both inside and outside the workplace. It is an issue where unions can be proactive on an agenda that can appeal particularly to younger members of staff, including those for whom climate anxiety is particularly acute.

It overlaps with a number of other areas of workplace organisation. For example, health and safety often share the same management team and joint committees. Workplace issues, such as air quality, are closely linked to environmental standards.

It also provides a useful mechanism for linking up with the student body and community activism in the areas served by our workplaces.

These alliances will prove useful when the branch is looking for support on other union concerns.

Election of Climate and Sustainability Representative

There is no legal right to appoint a Climate and Sustainability Representative, in contrast to the election of Health and Safety Representatives. Nonetheless, the role of Climate and Sustainability Representatives will require them to avail of the statutory entitlements afforded to branch officers and Representatives, and so they will need to be properly elected according to the rules and procedures of the TUI. In doing so, the TUI will expect the employer to engage with the Climate and Sustainability

Representative, in relation to their role, in a manner consistent with the statutory entitlements for union Representatives.

The Climate and Sustainability Representatives' representations will focus on the climate change agenda, changes in work organisation and green workplace projects.

They may serve on environmental committees if these are established. They can work to improve the impact of an organisation or workplace on the local environment, helping nearby communities and raising the reputation of the employer.

Appropriate training will be arranged and made available to support these Representatives. In determining what time off, training and facilities should be agreed, consideration needs to be given to the relationship between these specialists and other Representatives working with staff on sustainability issues. The TUI is recognised to represent the views of staff. An employer's policy and strategy documents will have more credibility if there is a commitment to consult with staff unions. The implementation of sustainability policies will be more effective with union support and participation. There are many aspects of sustainability where a joint approach is more productive.

Finding Climate and Sustainability Representatives

The branch needs to have a flexible approach. The main requirement is someone who can raise issues with management, be consulted, and ensure action is taken.

Consideration can be given to a number of ways to engage an appropriate person in this role:

- An existing officer - When we look at the role of the officer in the next section, you will notice considerable overlap with other duties. A current branch officer may benefit from an understanding of existing procedures and the potential crossover between environmental and other employment issues, for example health and safety. Such a person may already have established relationships and access to relevant managers and time off to move issues forward.
- A new officer - There may be branch members who are highly motivated about climate justice and sustainable development. Our experience is that they represent a new source of activists who may not previously have been a union Representative.

Finding people to take on the role will require planning and follow-up:

- Ask if there is anyone working in a department or building who is interested in environmental issues.
- Distribute union material asking for expressions of interest with a contact point for follow-up.
- Plan an event to raise interest among that group of staff.

Check whether:

- Any environmental functions are carried out by any existing branch officers.
- If the post is currently vacant, sound out views on members who may be interested.

It is also important to:

- Ensure that the person appointed is a member of the Branch Committee and that the post is advertised for election at the AGM.
- Notify TUI Head Office of the branch member appointed as the Climate and Sustainability Representative.
- Notify the employer of the branch member appointed to lead on this area.

Where individuals have expressed an interest, there should be a discussion around what they are willing and able to do, and any arrangements for training and facilities.

Functions, time off and training

The important thing to remember is that a Climate and Sustainability Representative will need to be relevant to both the members of the branch they represent and to the employer they engage with.

It is also important to define the role in the context of the available time and access, which will differ across employers. Even if a Climate and Sustainability Representative had full-time release for union duties, they would not be able to do everything that could fit into the job description of a Representative.

The important thing is to select those activities that fit the following three criteria:

1. It is something that interests you.
2. It is something that interests the staff you represent.
3. There is the prospect of making some progress.

Key documents

A starting point is to ascertain if there are existing policies on related issues, for example Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change or Just Transition. There is likely to be more than one document relevant to your role, and these documents may appear under a variety of names. Check that you have the most up-to-date version. These documents should indicate the roles of senior management. The documents are likely to contain some lofty ambitions. You should note these ambitions to gain the support of management for what you want to achieve.

Key staff

Once you get started, you will need to find out who you need to liaise with. A starting point is to ascertain if there are existing managers or committees on related issues, for example Environment, Sustainability, Climate Change or Just Transition. Your employer should have at least one member of staff designated to lead on this, but there will be other staff who are relevant owing to their roles. For example, there may be a transport coordinator in post. In many other institutions, it will be one person often doubling up in another role, like the Health and Safety Manager, Health and Safety Officer, Facilities Manager or Buildings Officer. The important thing is to establish a rapport, as their support will be crucial for implementation. In many cases, they will also be union members.

Key committees

Policies will often indicate the range of committees established to progress the work. In some workplaces, this may be combined with other functions like a Health, Safety and Environment Committee. In others, they will be standalone on areas like Education for Sustainable Development. In all cases, try to ensure there is union representation on each committee. That does not necessitate the Climate and Sustainability Representative sitting on all committees, but the officer should have a union member on each committee with whom they can engage and coordinate.

Persistence

Trying to get support for a union initiative can be very frustrating. In some cases, you will be dealing with staff who are overloaded with work and will see it as an extra burden. In others, it will be based on a lack of understanding of why this is a core issue. Make sure you are recording requests for action. At an appropriate point, you may need to copy in a member of senior management to focus minds.

Delegate

To prevent burnout, try to delegate to other members of staff where possible. You may be pleasantly surprised to find that although they may not be prepared to take on a formal position in the union, they are happy to take on a support role.

Procedures

Make sure you consult with members of other unions. For example, a policy that you negotiate may have implications for support staff. Try to get as much done as possible without going through committees. However, there will be some things that require formal decisions.

Get advice on which procedure to use if you are not sure. Provide feedback on the outcomes to the branch and members. If you are unable to obtain agreement on a course of action with management, you will need to discuss the best way to progress the issue. In some cases, this may involve use of the grievance procedure.

Publicise successes

Strong environmental initiatives can provide excellent examples of the union being proactive rather than carrying out only the vital, but reactive, work on other terms and conditions of employment. It can enhance the reputation of the union and help membership retention and recruitment. Where it is a joint initiative with the employer, it can foster an improvement in industrial relations.

Time off

In Ireland, as distinct from other countries, there are statutorily underpinned expectations for supports to be provided to trade union Representatives, which are set out in the Code of Practice on Employee Representatives (Declaration) Order, 1993, which emanates from the Industrial Relations Act, 1990. This provides for time off and other facilities to be provided. Some employers provide a bank of hours for branch

officers, and in other employments release is on an as-needed basis. Participation in relevant committees and attendance at meetings with relevant members of management should be prioritised in utilising any facility provided by the employer.

Training

The TUI will arrange a training and networking event annually for Climate and Sustainability Representatives. The TUI also encourages branches to utilise the monies remitted to them to support the officers of the branch in engaging in relevant training they may source for themselves.

Checklist

- Obtain all up-to-date policies and documentation.
- Build up a contact list of individuals you need to liaise with on general and specific issues.
- Use the contact list at the back of this handbook to keep a note.
- Ensure new officers are provided with an induction on how the branch works and provided with copies of relevant documents like this handbook.
- Arrange for training and facility time to carry out the role.

Areas for focus

Contact lists

Contact List: Workplace

This should include senior management, environmental management, facilities, colleagues and students.

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Contact Lists – Union

This should include branch secretary, health and safety rep, and Climate and Sustainability contacts in other branches, other unions, trades councils, ICTU etc.

Name	Organisation	Email	Telephone	Other

Contacts List – Community and Campaign Organisations

This should include local authorities, employers, tidy towns, environmental NGOs and low carbon community groups

Name	Organisation	Email	Telephone	Other

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