

Driving a just Twin Transition

Over the past years, the green and digital transitions have been on top of political agendas across the globe. On the one hand, the green transition aims at achieving sustainability and combating climate change. On the other, the digital transition seeks to harness emerging technologies while empowering citizens as well as the private and the public sector. Both transitions have the power to radically transform societies and economies. They are thus intertwined, generating impacts on each other – both of positive and negative nature. The use of digital technologies (e.g. smart grids) can, for instance, allow for better management of environmental resources. But the increased use and scope of digital technologies can also come with high environmental costs as they consume resources and energy and generate waste.

The Twin Transition has been gaining relevance in European policy agendas, as it aims at managing both green and digital transitions as part of the European Green Deal to ensure they mutually reinforce each other to make Europe the first climate neutral continent in the world. In 2021, 26 Member States signed the Declaration on [A Green and Digital Transformation of the EU](#). The same year, upon request of the Council of the EU, and supported by the European Commission and the European Parliament, several companies launched the [European Green Digital Coalition](#) (EGDC). A multitude of programmes and funding schemes support member states and cities to invest in the twin transition. Examples are the NextGenerationEU, [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), the Just Transition Fund, which is part of the European Green Deal Investment Plan. In 2021, Poland received a record amount of more than 6 billion euros from the European Investment Bank, especially dedicated to support the green and digital twin transition (more information available [here](#)).

If steered properly, the Twin Transition can unlock the creation of cities that are not only green and digital, but also just and productive. In this sense, securing the inhabitants' inclusion along the transition process is key. This requires policies that are both targeting skill development and accompanying awareness raising within cities. It is not a coincidence that, in 2023, the European Commission has launched the European Year of Skills to support the green and digital transitions. The German city of Heidelberg is also a good example, as it developed an ad-hoc strategy targeting young people. By educating and raising awareness on sustainability, the strategy aims at shaping the behaviour of younger generations to include more sustainable practices, such as the use of soft mobility in the commute to school. Heidelberg is part of the [Intelligent Cities Challenge](#), launched in 2020 by the European Commission to support small and medium sized cities in their digital and green transition. Addressing the digital gap is also crucial to ensure a fair digital transition. To solve this issue, the French city of Nantes has been cooperating with different organisation to foster the accessibility of places providing digital skills for all. These includes local libraries with dedicated ateliers to upskill elderly as well as young people (see more [here](#)).

For the Twin Transition to create just cities, an attentive development of green and digital infrastructures is also required. These infrastructures are essential to make the Twin Transition a reality and they can generate great value in urban spaces, increasing the quality of living for all inhabitants. By harnessing the power of nature, green infrastructures offer solutions for climate challenges in cities (e.g. soil, water, and air quality, excessive heat, etc.) while increasing green areas. The development of digital infrastructures, on the other hand, can help creating inclusive cities by bridging gaps between social groups. By providing basic elements such as a good internet connection, digital infrastructures can democratise access to technology, increasing the accessibility of public services and the inhabitants' connection with wider economic opportunities. However, if not planned in a fair and inclusive way, green and digital infrastructures can incentivise the creation of non-just cities, remaining inaccessible for deprived groups and/or fostering 'green gentrification'. This phenomenon relates to the increase of property values due to green interventions, which could lead to the exclusion of the most vulnerable residents.



This Policy Lab aims at unravelling what the Twin Transition is about, both in terms of challenges and opportunities. It will specifically explore how to steer a Twin Transition in an integrated way, considering not only the green and the digital, but also the just and the productive dimensions of cities.