

# **Framing and Focusing of European Resource Policies: Challenges to be met by European resource policies in the context of sustainable development**

## **Recommendations to the European Commission drawn from the conclusions of the ESDN Conference 2011**

### **Overarching objectives:**

- With Europe 2020, Europe's growth strategy for the coming decade, the European Council has broadened and enriched the agenda of the previous Lisbon Strategy by defining the objectives of sustainable, smart and inclusive growth. It also emphasized its focus on growth and employment, oriented on the key importance of improving productivity and competitiveness and modernizing labour markets to raise employment levels and labor productivity.
- The new and explicit link to sustainability in Europe 2020 underlines the overarching and crucial challenge to explore and address the changes needed of core economic development principles, together with drivers to facilitate the transition to a more sustainable society. The EU SDS of 2006 continues to be the main European policy framework that explicitly addresses issues relating to the quality of life of the European citizens, intra- and inter-generational equity, gender equality and solidarity, and coherence between all policy areas, including external aspects. It also recognizes the role of economic development in facilitating the transition to a more sustainable society. This underlines the need for the continued efforts to implement the EU SDS through its governance mechanisms.
- Resource use is a crucial factor for economic growth and also for the overall transition to a sustainable society. Generally, resource use needs to be reduced to sustainable levels. Measures to meet this goal should be developed in a coherent manner and need to include regulatory and economic/fiscal instruments. For industrialized countries, this will require absolute reduction of resource consumption, i.e. "absolute decoupling"; developing countries and countries in transition are encouraged, for the time being, to aim at "relative decoupling".
- Economic and social policies (particularly employment policies) need to be coherent with resource policies at all levels of government.
- Acknowledging that Rio+20 will be a milestone for sustainable development, the European Commission needs to advocate, both internally and at international levels, that sustainable management of natural

resources is crucial for achieving a Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

- The ESDN takes an active role at the European level as outlined in the renewed EU SDS. It plays a crucial role as a clearing house providing for exchange of information and good practices.
- In the context of the explicit and implicit sustainability dimensions of the Europe 2020 strategy, including the resource-efficient Europe road map, ESDN can assist the monitoring of the accomplishment of sustainable development targets and objectives in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy and its governance framework (European Semester).

### **Recommendations:**

- 1) The European Commission should propose to revisit and strengthen the EU SDS after Rio+20, building on the results of the Rio+20 conference and the relevant EU policies, among others the ones on resource policies.
- 2) The European Commission is urged to provide clarification in the resource efficiency roadmap on the definition of resources and resource efficiency (i.e. what is meant by it and/or not included).
- 3) EU resource policies should be guided by clear measurable targets (e.g. absolute decoupling, measures to tackle the rebound effect, etc.), and include performance indicators and monitoring systems.
- 4) Resource policy aspects, as well as the broader sustainable development issues, should be covered in the European Semester 2012 through the Annual Growth Survey and the national reform programs. In this respect, the definition of targets and performance indicators is also considered necessary.
- 5) Measures to steadily reduce resource intensity should be developed in a coherent manner and the application of supportive regulatory and economic/fiscal instruments should be explored and realized.
- 6) The private sector (incl. SMEs) should be strongly involved in designing natural resource strategies and in achieving sustainable resource management. Through this, the private sector should encourage and support the introduction and use of business models that advocate resource efficiency as a competitive advantage.
- 7) The move towards a more sustainable use of natural resources will require a change in the behavior of all sectors, including households and private consumers. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the awareness of

consumers on sustainable resource use and resource efficiency and to include these topics in education programs in schools and universities. Increased consumer awareness and making sustainable resource consumption part of the education was also prominently mentioned in the December 2010 Council Conclusions (para 14 d)<sup>1</sup>.

- 8) In the long-term, the EU should rely by and large on renewable resources or closed loops, also taking into account social aspects, i.e. distribution of wealth, and equity issues.
- 9) The EU should make use of the EEA and Eurostat to develop harmonized data provision on resource stocks and flows (incl. hidden flows/imported flows) in Europe.
- 10) The EU should encourage the establishment of national resource panels providing for participation of societal stakeholders in order to achieve commitments and widely accepted solutions to promote resource efficiency.
- 11) The EU should encourage Member States to shift tax burden from labour to the use of natural resources, and thereby contributing to job creation.
- 12) Integrate the Raw Materials Initiative (RMI) and the resource efficiency goals and objectives.
- 13) Promote innovation and R&D at all levels to utilize yet undiscovered potentials of natural and other resources, aiming both at technological breakthroughs and changes required at systems levels.
- 14) Integrate resource efficiency aspects into the Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) methodology and procedures at European and national levels to acknowledge the crucial economic importance of resource efficiency.
- 15) Resource efficiency should be integrated into all sectoral policies, including the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to achieve a more integrated approach in European resource policies. In this context, independent bodies (e.g. European Court of Audit) could safeguard coherence and/or synergies between sectoral and cross-sectoral approaches (strategies, action plans, etc.) that address natural resource issues.
- 16) Highlight the important role of sustainable public procurement to increase resource efficiency and select good practices cases for awareness raising.

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<sup>1</sup> Council conclusions on sustainable materials management and sustainable production and consumption: key contribution to a resource-efficient Europe 3061st ENVIRONMENT Council meeting Brussels, 20 December 2010

- 17) Establish and strengthen partnerships with other countries and regions on sustainable resource policies (incl. sustainable extraction of resources) in the context of development and trade cooperation.