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DRAFT REPORT

on a resource-efficient Europe
(2011/2068(INI))

Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on a resource-efficient Europe

(2011/2068(INI))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to the communication of the Commission on the 'Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe' (COM(2011)0571),

– having regard to the communication of the Commission on 'A resource-efficient Europe – Flagship initiative under the Europe 2020 Strategy' (COM(2011)0021),

– having regard to the communication of the Commission on 'Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth' (COM(2010)2020),

– having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2011 on an effective raw materials strategy for Europe[1],

– having regard to the Council conclusions on the Commission's Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe adopted on 19 December 2011 (18786/11) and the Council conclusions of 20 December 2010 on sustainable materials management and sustainable production and consumption: key contribution to a resource-efficient Europe,

– having regard to the EEA report on 'The European environment – state and outlook 2010' (SOER2010),

– having regard to the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil, 20-22 June 2012,

– having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the opinions of the Committee on International Trade, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Fisheries (A7-0000/2012),

A. whereas the current economic and financial crisis shows that Europe urgently needs new sources of sustainable economic growth;

B. whereas the over-use of natural resources leads to environmental degradation and destruction of the earth's natural capital;

C. whereas intense resource use and dramatically increased global consumption are pushing up prices of raw materials, with real commodity prices having increased by 147% since the turn of the century; whereas the EU is likely to face severe challenges in securing

[1] P7_TA-PROV(2011)0364.

access to, and the uninterrupted supply of, key resources;

D. whereas switching the economy onto a resource-efficient path which respects planetary boundaries will bring increased competitiveness and new sources of growth and jobs through cost savings from improved efficiency, the commercialisation of innovations and better management of resources over their whole life cycle;

E. whereas the Eurobarometer of March 2011 shows that resource efficiency and sustainable production and consumption are key concerns of EU citizens;

Priority actions

1. Calls for the creation of Joint Task Forces for the three key areas of food, housing and mobility: these should consist of experts from the Commission, Member States, industry and civil society and develop European Resource Efficiency Action Plans with clear benchmarks within one year;

2. Calls on the Commission and Member States to stimulate the secondary materials market and to foster the demand for recycled materials by developing end-of-waste criteria and economic incentives, such as reduced VAT rates for secondary materials, by 2013; calls also therefore for the creation of a ´Schengen area´ for waste in order to move waste for recycling more freely between the Member States;

3. Urges the Commission to boost research and technological innovation to speed up the transition to a green economy; underlines that the 'Innovation Union' is one of the engines for a resource-efficient Europe;

4. Urges the Commission and Member States to develop and use clear and measurable indicators for economic activity that take account of climate change, biodiversity and resource efficiency by the end of 2012;

5. Calls on the Commission to extend the scope of the eco-design directive to non-energy related products and to come forward with additional eco-design requirements on the performance of products, including recycled content, durability and reusability, in order to improve their environmental impact and promote recycling markets;

Agenda for future growth

6. Endorses the Flagship Initiative on a Resource Efficient Europe and the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe and its 2050 vision, including its milestones; calls on the Commission to bring forward swiftly all legislative and other initiatives necessary to achieve the milestones and to ensure that all EU policies are aligned to them;

7. Calls on the Commission, Member States and businesses to base their economic strategies on radically improved resource efficiency leading to a decoupling of economic growth from resource consumption; believes also that there is a need to focus on both the efficiency and effectiveness of resource use;

8. Underlines the urgency of taking action now to support innovation and investment in new

techniques and business models and to create the incentives that will bring long-term benefits for the economy; emphasises the key role of the private sector in delivering green economic growth;

9. Calls on the Commission and Member States to fully integrate the resource efficiency objectives in the European Semester on economic policy coordination;

Transforming the economy

10. Calls on the Commission and Member States to develop incentives that encourage companies to measure, benchmark and continuously improve their resource efficiency, as well as measures to extend the producer responsibility principle and to remove barriers that hold back resource efficiency;

11. Calls for stronger requirements on Green Public Procurement (GPP) for products with significant environmental impacts and urges the Commission to assess where GPP could be linked to EU-funded projects; calls for efforts to promote joint procurement and networks of public procurement officers in support of GPP by the end of this year;

12. Urges Member States to ensure full implementation of the EU waste *acquis,* including minimum targets, through their national waste prevention and management strategies;

13. Calls on the Commission to streamline the waste *acquis* and to introduce a progressive landfill ban, accompanied by appropriate transition measures;

14. Highlights the importance of research, development and innovation for speeding up the transformation to a resource-efficient Europe; notes that greater innovation is particularly needed in environmentally friendly material extraction, chemistry, recycling, re-use potential, and the substitution of environmental impacting material, technologies and design for less material and energy use;

15. Urges Member States to shift towards environmental taxation in public revenues accounting for an EU average of more than 10% by 2020, in line with the best performing Member States; emphasises that this will allow for cuts in other taxes such as on labour, increase competitiveness and create a level playing field;

16. Urges the Commission and Member States to present concrete plans for phasing out all environmentally harmful subsidies before 2020;

Natural capital and ecosystem services

17. Calls on the Commission and Member States to assess the economic value of ecosystems and integrate these values into reporting and accounting systems by 2015;

18. Emphasises that biodiversity is essential to the existence of human life and the well-being of societies, both directly and indirectly, through the ecosystem services it provides; welcomes and supports the EU biodiversity strategy up to 2020, including all its targets and actions; highlights the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity protection, also within a resource-efficient Europe;

19. Calls on the Commission to start pilot projects for several resources, e.g. phosphorous, to reach 100% reuse in 2020; emphasises that these pilot projects should receive direct funding from structural funds;

20. Highlights the importance of sustainable agriculture, dietary changes to reduce animal protein intake and diminishing imported land use;

Governance and Monitoring

21. Reiterates the importance of a set of coherent, measurable and clear sectoral targets, including an overall target, in order to implement the vision and the milestones of the Roadmap; calls on the Commission to bring forward a concrete proposal for such targets for the EU by 2013 at the latest and to ensure that all EU policies are consistent with the targets set; considers that the milestones included in the Roadmap should be considered as targets until more detailed targets are set; calls on Member States to include corresponding targets in their own resource efficiency strategies;

22. Urges the Commission to adopt robust and easily understandable indicators, based on integrated accounting tools, in order to monitor progress towards the targets;

23. Supports the proposal by the Commission to establish a lead indicator complemented by a set of indicators on land, water, materials and carbon; underlines that these must be based on a footprint approach that takes the full life cycle impacts into account;

24. Underlines that specific resource efficiency indicators are crucial in all areas of policy and calls on the Commission to integrate resource efficiency indicators into all its impact assessments;

25. Considers that the 7th EAP should be aimed at achieving the vision and milestones of the Roadmap towards a resource-efficient Europe;

26. Stresses that EU eco-innovation stimulates greater resource efficiency outside our borders, thereby reducing the depletion of global resources; therefore urges Member States to strengthen their national resource efficiency strategies and to share their knowledge at a global forum such as the Rio+20 summit;

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27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

"The world economy is slowly, and unevenly, coming out of the worst crisis most of us have ever known. While dealing with immediate problems such as high unemployment, inflationary pressures or fiscal deficits, we have to look to the future and devise new ways of ensuring that the growth and progress we have come to take for granted are assured in the years to come."
OECD, Green Growth 2011

The challenges are clear: our planet is growing towards 9 billion people in 2050, the amount of middle-class consumers will almost double to more than 3 billion people the coming ten years, according to the FAO food production must increase with 70% by 2050, and already now 60% of the world's ecosystems are degraded or used unsustainably.

What Europe needs is a new agenda for future growth. This new agenda will demand a paradigm shift. A new way of thinking towards our production and consumption patterns. It will require not only technical, but also institutional changes and social innovation. The new agenda for future growth will guarantee Europe a high level of prosperity and quality of life.

The Roadmap for a Resource Efficient Europe gives the analysis and sets the first steps towards this new agenda. But it does not reflect the necessary sense of urgency. We simply cannot afford to take ten, twenty years for the transformation towards a circular economy. The highly competitive world we live in and the spectacular rise of emerging economies do not give us this much time. The European Commission sets the right direction, but is not sufficiently concrete in the steps that should be taken.

It is Parliament's task to set priorities and to push the Commission, Member States and industry towards a more ambitious agenda. For that reason this house should not simply follow the structure of the Roadmap, but first define its priorities and set the criteria for a new agenda for future growth, in order to strengthen its position and send a clear political signal.

The main challenges are: 1) To create a strong common agenda with the public and private sector. The transition towards a circular economy is a societal challenge and should be embraced by all. 2) To radically improve the European use of secondary materials and create the right incentives for avoiding and reusing waste. 3) To make resource efficiency and sustainability a top priority in innovation programs both at European and at national level. 4) To change the way we measure our wealth and economic growth by taking into account environmental sustainability, natural capital and resource efficiency. 5) To set new product criteria for all products entering the European market by extending the scope of the Ecodesign directive with recycled content, durability and reusability.

The new agenda for future growth means that 'business as usual' is no option. This will be a difficult political exercise. It requires courage and vision. And the strength to stand for a longer term agenda. We need to seriously rethink existing subsidies. Many of these are not only harmful for the environment, but also hamper innovation. Especially now, in times of austerity government subsidies and stimulation packages need to focus on strengthening our economies in a structural way. This requires phasing out of harmful subsidies, which creates new opportunities.

The political debate often focuses on the matter of targets and indicators. And the scientific world has worked and continues working on the further development of these. Indeed, we need to get the data right. But we already know enough about the direction to take. We cannot afford waiting for the perfect indicators and targets, which always seem to be reachable within a few years. We do have sufficient knowledge to politically move forward now. The fine tuning can be done later.

This is not just a European agenda. Also at national, regional and local level the new agenda for future growth should be embraced. The Eurobarometer shows the willingness of European citizens to play an active role in this agenda. By consuming more sustainably, by minimising waste, through better collection and selection of waste. This attitude proves that becoming more resource efficient is not a top down exercise, but can be promoted from two sides. Top-down and bottom up. Local politicians play a crucial role with regards to citizen participation. Resource efficiency is a concept our citizens embrace, let us do the same.

Internationally, this is also the only way forward. The EU should play a leading role by pushing this new agenda for future growth at the Rio+20 summit. The transition towards a green economy is inevitable. A more efficient use of resources is an integral part of the green economy. The EU should use its political and economic strength to pull other parts of the world into the same direction.

In order to ensure our own well-being and give future generations the possibility to enjoy the same benefits as we do, we need to start operating within our planet's boundaries, and decouple our economic growth from our resource use.