

Resource-efficient Europe

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Ministers had an **exchange of views** concerning the Commission communication "Roadmap to a Resource-Efficient Europe", presented in September 2011.

The Council also adopted conclusions stressing that the roadmap is a key element for the implementation of the flagship initiative "[A resource-efficient Europe](#)", in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, which will lead the EU into economic transformation towards a more sustainable and competitive economy and contribute to the world-wide efforts to ensure a transition towards a greener economy.

The conclusions highlighted that **all resources** should be **sustainably managed** within environmental limits, from raw materials to energy, water, air, land, soil, biodiversity and marine resources, and waste should be turned into a resource. The EU objective in the context of necessary reductions according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) by developed countries as a group, to reduce emissions by **80-95% by 2050** compared to 1990 levels should be reached, while biodiversity and the ecosystem services it underpins should be protected, valued and appropriately restored.

Ministers reaffirmed that the transformation will need an integrated and coherent policy framework that creates a level playing field, where eco-innovation and resource efficiency are rewarded, creating economic opportunities and improved security of supply through a life-cycle approach, product redesign and high quality standards, sustainable management of natural resources, greater waste prevention and reuse, recycling and recovery, substitution of environmentally damaging and critical raw materials and resource savings.

Ministers are aware that the shift towards a sustainable and responsible resource-efficient European economy and society will require, in addition to technological innovation, innovation at the level of our socio-economic system, i.e. **new governance models, new business and education models, new consumption patterns, and lifestyles** geared towards the sustainable management of resources.

In the context of a difficult economic situation, some member states called for innovative financial solutions, also in the framework of the European Semester, arguing for closer cooperation with business. Proper conditions need to be established, both in the form of regulatory and market-based instruments, as well as through voluntary schemes, in order to stimulate resource efficiency.

Ministers underlined the need to address together with all stakeholders, the **short-term transitional side-effects** and emerging implications of the shift to a resource-efficient economy, such as:

- possible employment loss in some sectors and a need for anticipation and mitigation measures in the process of restructuring;
- the rebound effect, that may result when increases in resource efficiency are offset by increases in consumption which eliminates expected environmental benefits;
- relocation of environmental pressures, especially carbon leakage, which may result from high adaptation costs within the EU compared to regions with lower environmental requirements and no equivalent commitments;
- possible trade-offs among and between environmental and other policy objectives.

Several ministers also drew attention to the direct link between the Resource Efficiency Roadmap and the future 7th EAP, which should be complementary and reinforce each other in providing for, respectively, the integration of environmental aspects in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy and the definition of the environmental policy priorities and actions.

The Commission made a statement indicating that it would have preferred more ambitious conclusions.