



## A TARGETED STRATEGY ON RESOURCE USE:

### FROM A SYMPTOM APPROACH TO A SYSTEM APPROACH

EEB's involvement in discussions on natural resources takes place within an approach that links natural resources - products - waste, a chain that represents a complex thread of consumption and production. We are also, therefore, very active in the growing policy area of Sustainable Consumption and Production.

In addition to providing key details on the EEB's contribution to natural resources policy discussions, this paper also provides a summary of various EU initiatives addressing natural resources issues, to identify the aims which industry should contribute to achieving. To date, these policy areas are:

- EU Sustainable Development Strategy
- 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme
- Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources
- Thematic Strategy on Waste Prevention and Recycling
- Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan

#### EU SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The European Council in 2001 adopted the first EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS). This was complemented by an external dimension in 2002 by the European Council in Barcelona in view of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002). However, unsustainable trends in relation to climate change and energy use, threats to public health, poverty and social exclusion, demographic pressure and ageing, management of natural resources, biodiversity loss, land use and transport still persist and new challenges are arising. Since these negative trends bring about a sense of urgency, short-term action is required, whilst maintaining a longer-term perspective. The main challenge is to gradually change our current unsustainable consumption and production patterns and the non-integrated approach to policy-making.

The overall aim of the renewed EU SDS is to identify and develop actions to enable the EU to achieve continuous improvement of quality of life both for current and for future generations, through the creation of sustainable communities able to manage and use resources efficiently and to tap the ecological and social innovation potential of the economy, ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion.

The operational objectives and targets on natural resources that are of relevance to the platinum group of metals include:

- *Improving resource efficiency to reduce the overall use of non-renewable natural resources and the related environmental impacts of raw materials use, thereby using renewable natural resources at a rate that does not exceed their regeneration capacity.*
- Halting the loss of biodiversity and contributing to a significant reduction in the worldwide rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.
- *Avoiding the generation of waste and enhancing efficient use of natural resources by applying the concept of life-cycle thinking and promoting reuse and recycling.*

The SDS states that " *The Commission and Member States should build on the EU strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources which should be complemented by a number of targets and measures at EU-level.* The European Environment Agency should give support regarding the

measurement of resource efficiency." A 3% annual improvement in resource productivity target is being suggested in the context of the EU's Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan.

## 6<sup>TH</sup> ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PROGRAMME

The Sixth Community Environment Action Programme (6EAP) provides the framework for the European Commission's environmental policy until 2012. It requires the production of seven thematic strategies to implement the objectives set within the Programme, one of which is on the sustainable use and management of natural resources. As the mandate for this Strategy the 6EAP identifies various priority actions (see Box 2). Key among these is Article 8, which demands the "*establishment of goals and targets for resource productivity and the diminished use of resources, decoupling the link between economic growth and negative environmental impacts*".

Priority actions to deliver this, of relevance to the platinum group of metals, are:

- *an estimate of materials and waste streams in the Community, including imports and exports for example by using the instrument of material flow analysis;*
- *establishment of goals and targets for resource productivity and the diminished use of resources, decoupling the link between economic growth and negative environmental impacts;*
- *promotion of extraction and production methods and techniques to encourage eco-efficiency and the sustainable use of raw-materials, energy, water and other resources;*

## THEMATIC STRATEGY ON THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

At the end of 2005, the European Commission published its Communication on this Thematic Strategy. According to the European Commission, the objective of this strategy is to reduce the environmental impacts associated with resource use and to do so in a growing economy. Focusing on the environmental impacts of resource use will be a decisive factor in helping the EU to achieve sustainable development.

The Commission's Communication on the Thematic Strategy outlined actions to achieve this objective, which were:

- improve our understanding and knowledge of European resource use, its negative environmental impact and significance in the EU and globally,
- develop tools to monitor and report progress in the EU, Member States and economic sectors,
- foster the application of strategic approaches and processes both in economic sectors and in the Member States and encourage them to develop related plans and programmes, and
- raise awareness among stakeholders and citizens of the significant negative environmental impact of resource use

It also proposed the broader integration of life-cycle analysis into policies and, by 2008, the development of indicators to be able to measure productivity gains. At the global level, the EU proposed the creation of an International Panel on the Sustainable use of Natural Resources within the United Nations framework. This panel has been created and recently held its first meeting.

There was much disappointment expressed by the content of this Thematic Strategy, particularly as there were no clear objectives set, it took too long-term an approach and identified mostly data-gathering activities. EEB's response at the end of this document provides more details on our contribution to this discussion.

## **THEMATIC STRATEGY ON WASTE PREVENTION AND RECYCLING**

Also in December 2005, the Commission published its proposal on a Thematic Strategy on Waste Prevention and Recycling. According to the Commission, "EU waste policy has the potential to contribute to reducing the overall negative environmental impact of resource use. Preventing waste generation and promoting recycling and recovery of waste will increase the resource efficiency of the European economy and reduce the negative environmental impact of use of natural resources."

As with the Thematic Strategy on Natural Resources, the focus here was on the introduction of life-cycle thinking into waste policy, and improvement of our knowledge base of the environmental impacts of resource use and waste generation and management. The tools developed through the Natural Resources Strategy would be linked to the objectives of this waste prevention and recycling strategy.

This Thematic Strategy was received with similar disappointment by various stakeholders.

## **SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION ACTION PLAN**

As part of the follow-up to the 2002 Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development ('Rio+10'), national governments agreed to produce programmes on sustainable consumption and production (SCP) by 2010. Since the Rio Summit in 1992, SCP was formally introduced into the global environmental policy agenda, but with little actual focus on developing programmes addressing these issues. Local Agenda 21 included a chapter on SCP, particularly recognising that unsustainable patterns of both consumption and production needed to be changed.

Following Johannesburg, the European Commission organised a stakeholder meeting in 2004 to discuss follow-up. It was agreed that a new strategy was not needed since many policies already existed which could be included within an 'action plan'. Since 2006, the Commission has been working on the Action Plan, and this is expected now in April 2008. It will be published as part of a 'package' that includes a Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan.

The SCP Action Plan is meant to address 5 key challenges:

1. Leveraging Innovation: stimulating the development and commercialisation of low carbon, energy and resource efficient technologies, products and services
2. Better Products: creating a dynamic internal market for better performing products
3. Leaner and Cleaner Production: increasing the efficiency of EU production
4. Smarter Consumption: changing behaviours
5. Global markets: exploiting first mover advantages and levelling the playing field for industry worldwide

As stated earlier, a notional resource efficiency target of 3% annual improvement is meant to be included in this Action Plan.

## EEB's POSITION:

### Operational objectives:

- 1) Aim for **absolute reductions in resource use of a factor 4 by 2030 and a factor 10 by 2050**, as a result of respecting carrying capacity, a more equitable global access to resources and world population growth.
- 2) Beyond working to reduce general resource use, the EU should **prioritise the most damaging resources** on the basis of their environmental impacts, taking into account total volumes and impacts per kg, and develop total impact reduction targets and policies for each. (i.e. define the top 20.)
- 3) Improve management and avoid overexploitation, degradation and destruction of renewable natural resources such as fisheries, biodiversity, forestry, water, air, soil and climate. Agree on **sustainable management criteria** and labels for products from agriculture, forestry, fisheries and natural ecosystems, and relate this to the targets under the next points.
- 4) Achieve **100% green government procurement** in EU and member states by 2010.
- 5) 12% of goods and food derived from agriculture, forestry, fisheries and natural ecosystems produced and imported in the EU meet **sustainability criteria** by 2010, and 100% by 2030.
- 6) Improve **eco-efficiency** in all sectors: get more output (service) from each unit of resource used and reduce the total environmental damage (noxious emissions to air, water and soil as well as overexploitation of land and other resources) to negligible levels, by reducing the damage caused by each unit.
- 7) Producers should provide **information to consumers** on the origin and production methods over the production chain of their products and services, including information on environmental impacts over the life cycle.

### 20 Key Actions:

- 1) Within two years establish, with help of independent research institutes, a **list of the top 20 (or more) priority materials** used in the EU which have a relatively large environmental impact due to a combination of their mass flows and impact per kilogram, including biodiversity impacts.
- 2) Within four years agree on **policy options for each priority resource/material**, depending on the problem analysis including LCA data, an optimal combination of:
  - criteria for sustainable extraction and processing, lowering impacts per kilogram;
  - reduction of use/ increase of productivity of use of the (primary) material, taking global availability and equity into account, lowering kilograms used per capita in the EU;
  - increased substitution, reuse or recycling.
- 3) Within five years develop adoption for application of **criteria for the sustainable management and harvesting of all major resources** - combined with introducing mandatory labelling of the products/materials derived from these resources.
- 4) Work on improved and more accessible data. Provide public access to LCA and MFA data bases, and guarantee continuous improvement of databases. Special attention is needed for improving or supplementing LCA for impacts on biodiversity (currently lacking).
- 5) Give guidance to environmental and other sectoral policies affecting resource use, with **clear targets and timetables**, and proposing the **removal or reform of policies or subsidies** that work against resource productivity.

- 6) Aim at both the sustainable use and management of both abiotic and biotic resources, paying ample attention to preventing over-exploitation and depletion of biotic resources such as biodiversity, fertile soil, seas and forests inside and outside the EU.
- 7) Give a strong impulse to our global responsibility to develop sustainable production and consumption patterns, aiming at better fulfilment of needs, if possible through a function-based rather than product-based approach, in an innovative way, with lower and more sustainable use of natural resources.
- 8) Define **'best practices'** for **major product groups** related to the top 20 priority resources, with help of the proposed Data Centre, and require chain certification for these product groups.
- 9) The starting of ambitious programmes for sustainable production and consumption, offering innovative businesses, NGOs and public authorities the opportunity to already work on solutions with impact reduction of a factor 4 to 10 and beyond.
- 10) Develop **economic instruments** such as: tax shift from labour to resources, energy taxes, virgin material tax, tax deductions for secondary materials, public (and company) procurement awarding tenders for lowest total impact of products/services over the lifecycle. **Implement a concrete and coordinated EU product ecodesign policy.**
- 11) Develop proposals for public procurement for alternatives for a range of products and services with a significant impact on (sustainable) resource use.
- 12) Develop proposals for mandatory performance targets for major product groups.
- 13) Developing, setting and applying criteria for the sustainable management of all major resources - combined with introducing mandatory labelling of the products/materials derived from these resources, starting with resources with highest impacts.
- 14) Create the obligation systematically to provide information on the lifecycle impacts of all products, including information on sourcing, to the public.
- 15) Introduce production and processing methods - and life-cycle assessments where appropriate - as guidelines for trade policy.
- 16) Support developing countries to meet EU standards and labelling requirements so they do not become a *de facto* barrier to trade.
- 17) Enforce existing legislation to reduce resource use and its impacts.
- 18) Develop **legislation to drive waste prevention, reuse and recycling** including **product ecodesign requirements**, producer responsibility and product reuse and material recycling targets. Aim for zero residual waste (not reused, recycled or composted).
- 19) Support and spread results of best practices which lead to reduced resource use, cost reduction and other environmental and/or social benefits.
- 20) Developing National plans and Strategies with objectives, indicators, reporting measures and continuous evaluation activities.