

The EU 2020 Strategy, Resource Efficiency Initiative & Relevance to Biodiversity & Land Management March 2011

1. Introduction

This 'special edition' of Euro-Site-Manager provides an overview of the EU's new 2020 Strategy and related initiatives. In particular, the Resource-Efficiency Initiative is being promoted by DG Environment and will impact on other policy areas in future, including biodiversity and agriculture.

At first glance, the new EU 2020 Strategy for economic growth and the related Resource Efficiency initiative may not seem to be of direct relevance or interest to site managers. However, both areas are receiving increasing attention: economic growth and unsustainable consumption and production patterns are underlying drivers of biodiversity loss. There are significant linking impacts across sectors, such as land-use, agriculture, infrastructure development, resource use, technological developments, energy production, and, of course, biodiversity. Political, commercial, environmental and social interests are all in the mix.

At the same time, the financial crisis is calling current unsustainable patterns of consumption and production to be brought into question: many stakeholders are urging for a way forward that includes investments in a 'green economy' or 'clean technologies'. Growing numbers of nature conservation organisations are turning greater attention to influencing EU economic policies and strategies, such as the EU 2020 Strategy: they recognise that biodiversity loss and environmental degradation will continue unabated without changes to the economic system, consumption and production patterns and consumer behaviour, as well as greater, positive public engagement in and concern for nature.

2. The EU 2020 Strategy

The European Commission produced a Communication in March last year, called 'Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth', which is also being referred to as the EU 2020 Strategy. According to the Commission, this strategy sets out "a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century": it aims to improve economic governance, generate growth and jobs and help Europe to exit the current financial crisis and enter a path of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Here, we provide an overview of the development process and core content: more information about the 2020 Strategy can be found at the following website: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm and the Communication on the EU 2020 Strategy can be downloaded at: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

2.1 Priorities

The Strategy contains the following three main priorities:

1. **Smart growth:** improving the EU's performance in education, research and the digital society
2. **Sustainable growth:** building a competitive, low-carbon economy; protecting the environment including preventing biodiversity loss; and develop new green technologies; introducing efficient electricity grids; harnessing EU-scale business networks; and helping consumers make well-informed green choices
3. **Inclusive growth:** raising the employment rate through more and better jobs; investment in skills and training; modernising labour markets and welfare; ensuring the benefits of growth reach all of the EU

In addition to achieving these three priorities, the Strategy also aims to:

4. **Exit the crisis:** getting the banking system working responsibly and getting public finances back into shape.

2.2 Headline Targets

To monitor progress under these areas, the EU2020 Strategy sets out five headline targets against which it will measure progress, including a target on climate change and energy:

1. Employment: 75% of 20 to 64 years to be employed
 2. Research & Development: 3% of GDP to be invested in R&D
 3. **Climate change & energy: reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% by 2020 (or 30% if agreed internationally); 20% of energy from renewables and 20% increase in energy efficiency**
 4. Education: reducing school dropout rates to below 10% and 40% of 30-34 year olds completing 3rd level education
 5. Poverty/social exclusion: at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion
- As well as including a headline target on reducing climate change and decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, the communication mentions the need to prevent biodiversity loss.

2.3 Flagship Initiatives

A major way in which the strategy will be delivered is through seven flagship initiatives which involve EU and national level commitments.

1. Smart growth:
 - a. Digital agenda for Europe
 - b. Innovation Union
 - c. Youth on the Move
2. Sustainable growth:
 - a. **Resource-efficient Europe**
 - b. An industrialisation policy for the globalisation era
3. Inclusive growth:
 - a. An agenda for new skills and jobs
 - b. European platform against poverty.

2.4 Response from the European Parliament

The European Parliament (EP) agreed a Resolution in June 2010, in which it was very critical and “expressed its disappointment” in the main elements of the new EU 2020 Strategy. The EP stated that the Strategy must instead be far-sighted, ambitious and coherent and should put people and environmental protection at the centre. The headline targets on climate and energy was particularly criticised, the EP “deploring” the EU’s lack of ambition, saying it is “not geared towards leadership in a world which is facing climate change and serious natural resource depletion and where global ecosystems are on the verge of collapse”. In the Resolution, the Parliament also asks for the adoption of more ambitious binding targets on climate and energy, as well as the inclusion of a resource-efficiency improvement target and measurable targets relating to halting the loss and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services. The Parliament also considers that the current Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) reform process should be better integrated within the EU 2020 strategy framework. To read the European Parliament resolution, go to: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2010-0223+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

3. The Resource-Efficient Europe Flagship Initiative

Of the seven flagship initiatives proposed under the EU 2020 Strategy, the most obviously relevant in relation to the natural environment and biodiversity is the ‘Resource Efficiency Initiative’. The Commission states that this initiative will, “support the shift towards a resource-efficient, low-carbon economy to achieve sustainable growth”, and, “provides a long-term framework for actions in many policy areas, supporting policy agendas for climate change, energy, transport, industry, raw materials, agriculture, fisheries, biodiversity and regional development”. This initiative is receiving major attention from DG Environment: for example, this year the Brussels Green Week will be on the theme of ‘Resource Efficiency’ (24 to 27 May).

3.1 New Communication on Resource Efficiency

The Commission produced a new Communication in January 2011 titled: ‘A Resource-Efficient Europe - A Flagship Initiative under the Europe 2020 Strategy’ (downloaded at: <http://ec.europa.eu/resource-efficient-europe/>.) The Communication says that the aim is to move towards a resource-efficient and low-carbon economy, whilst also achieving the following:

- Boosting economic performance while reducing resource use
- Identifying and creating new opportunities for economic growth and greater innovation and boosting the EU’s competitiveness
- Ensuring security of supply of essential resources
- Fighting against climate change and limiting the environmental impacts of resource use.

3.2 Main Actions most related to Site Managers

The Communication outlines a number of policy areas where action will be taken to achieve these aims. These will be expressed in the form of 'coordinated roadmaps' on, for example, energy, climate change and achieving the 2020 targets on greenhouse gas emissions. A full list of the proposed actions under the Resource Efficiency Initiative for 2020 is given in section 3.9: a number of them have a direct connection to land management, including:

- A new EU biodiversity strategy for 2020 to halt further loss to and restore biodiversity and ecosystem services in the light of pressures on ecosystems.
- Proposals to reform the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy, Cohesion Policy, energy infrastructure and trans-European networks for transport in the context of the next EU budget to align these areas with the requirements of a resource-efficient, low-carbon economy.
- Early action on adaptation to climate change to minimise threats to ecosystems and human health, support economic development and help adjust our infrastructures to cope with unavoidable climate change.
- A water policy that makes water saving measures and increasing water efficiency a priority, in order to ensure that water is available in sufficient quantities, is of appropriate quality, is used sustainably and with minimum resource input, and is ultimately returned to the environment with acceptable quality.

3.3 New EU Biodiversity Strategy

The new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2020 was due to come out early in 2011 but has been delayed until later in the year. The strategy will propose actions to deliver the following EU vision and headline target for biodiversity, which were agreed in March last year by the EU Environment Council:

*“..a long-term **vision** that by 2050 European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides – its natural capital – are protected, valued and appropriately restored for biodiversity’s intrinsic value and for their essential contribution to human wellbeing and economic prosperity, and so that catastrophic changes caused by the loss of biodiversity are avoided”*

*“... a **headline target** of halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss”*

DG Environment presented the main components of the strategy in a working group meeting in November last year and announced that it was being finalised to align it with the global CBD targets. They also informed us that the strategy will focus on achieving a limited number of sub-targets rather than including a long list of actions as was the case in the 2006 Biodiversity Communication.

The strategy will contain sub-targets relating to the following areas:

- **Nature conservation:** to improve the conservation of species and habitats under the Birds and Habitats Directives and ensure coherence, functionality and resilience of Natura 2000 sites
- **Green infrastructure:** to prevent the deterioration of and restore ecosystems including through a new Green Infrastructure Strategy
- **Agriculture and forests:** to better integrate biodiversity into the Common Agricultural Policy and Rural Development funds
- **Fisheries:** ensure better integration of biodiversity objectives within the Common Fisheries Policy
- **Invasive Alien Species:** identify IAS, prevent their introduction and control their spread through a new policy instrument
- **Global:** contribute to averting global biodiversity loss through: sustainable consumption and production within the resource efficiency initiative; funding; and new legislation to implement the CBD agreement on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)

The European Habitats Forum, of which Eurosite is a member, is following the process carefully and has set up a working group to follow the strategy adoption and implementation. We will therefore keep our members updated on the progress of the strategy in later editions of the Euro-Site-Manager.

3.4 Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

The CAP is due to be reformed by 2013 and information is available on DG Agriculture’s website at: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/cap-post-2013/index_en.htm. For more information, please refer to the last Euro-Site-Manager (issue 5), in which we provided information on the new Commission Communication which outlines options for a future CAP and its contribution to the EU’s 2020 Strategy.

3.5 Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)

The EU's Common Fisheries Policy is also due for reform by 2013. The current policy has been much criticised, including for its very negative impacts on biodiversity. Even DG Fisheries' website states that *"the policy failures far outweigh the successes. Europe's fisheries sector remains fragile. Most fish stocks in EU waters are overfished."* The Commission is therefore undertaking a comprehensive review and substantial reform of the CFP (which began in 2009) with a consultative Green Paper to be presented as a legal proposal during 2011.

According to the Commission, the goal of the new reform policy is to see *"a renewed prosperity for the fisheries sector by returning to the exploitation of healthy and abundant stocks. The European Commission wants the European producers to play a major role in the supply of the European seafood market and, lastly, a balance between fleet capacity and available resources."* The Commission is proposing to reach this goal by: ending fleet overcapacity; refocusing on maintaining healthy stocks; moving towards regionalised governance; improving resource management; developing a culture of compliance with rules; and developing a simpler, less costly policy.

For information on the reform process and to download the Green Paper on CFP Reform, visit the website at: http://ec.europa.eu/fisheries/reform/index_en.htm

3.6 Monitoring Progress

The Communication on Resource-Efficiency recognises the need to build up the knowledge base in a number of areas and develop a number of analytical models to evaluate policy impacts, including for biodiversity and Natura 2000. It also recognises the need to develop indicators, for example, in relation to the availability of natural resources, how efficiently they are used and impacts on the environment and biodiversity. However, the Communication has already been criticised by some for the lack of targets against which resource efficiency savings can be measured.

3.7 Member State Activities

The European Council adopted a recommendation on the guidelines for Member States in July last year to help Member States contribute to the delivery of the 2020 strategy and seven flagship initiatives. To read the European Council recommendation please go to: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32010H0410:EN:NOT>

3.8 Review of the Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

Linked to the Resource-efficiency initiative and the development of related environmental policies is the review of the 2005 EU Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources. The aim of the strategy was to increase the sustainability and efficiency of resource use and reduce negative environmental impacts whilst still allowing for a growing economy. Whilst the initial aim had been for the strategy to set quantitative targets for resource efficiency and reduced resource use, these were not included within the final strategy because of a lack of information or available resource use indicators. The Thematic Strategy is available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52005DC0670:EN:NOT>

As a follow up to this strategy and with a growing political interest in the area of resource efficiency, the Commission recently published the following studies that it commissioned to assess progress made under the strategy since 2005 and which will be used to inform the development of future policies in this area, including under the resource efficiency initiative:

1. A Preparatory Study for the Review of the Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources: this study showed uneven levels of progress made across the EU, with some countries making more progress than others.
2. A study of the potential of the Ecological Footprint for monitoring environmental impacts from natural resource use: the ultimate aim is to develop one or two aggregated indicators with which to monitor the sustainability of resource use. This study shows that the ecological footprint is a useful indicator for measuring the sustainability of resource use but that it needs improving.
3. A study of Significant Natural Resource Trade Flows into the EU and their Environmental Impacts: this study assessed the environmental impacts of different commodities coming into the EU in terms of their impacts relating to climate change, biodiversity, human health and resource use. It showed that the EU often exports its environmental impacts by relying on products coming from outside, and offers a number of policy recommendations.

More information and all of the studies can be downloaded from the following web-page: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/natres/studies.htm>

3.9 Next Steps

As mentioned in section 3.2, the Commission has proposed a number of activities that relate to the delivery of its Resource-Efficiency Initiative. The following table lists the activities that are planned for 2011, with the initiatives of most relevance to European land managers, highlighted in bold.

Activities Planned for 2011 under the Resource-Efficiency Initiative (adapted from Annex 1 of the Commission Communication)		
When	Name	Description
Jan - March	Low carbon economy 2050 roadmap	Outline possible ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 80 – 95% by 2050
Jan - March	European Energy Efficiency Plan	Identify measures to achieve energy savings of 20% across all sectors in advance of a future energy efficiency directive
Jan - March	White Paper on the future of transport	A vision for a future low carbon, efficient and competitive transport system by 2050
Jan - March (delayed)	Communication on a 2020 EU biodiversity policy and strategy	Sets out the EU's future biodiversity policies with a number of sub-targets
Jan - March	Communication tackling the challenges in commodity markets and raw materials	Define measures for the sustainable supply of raw materials to the EU
Jan - March	Revision of the Energy Taxation Directive	Modernise the energy taxation to better support sustainable growth
April - June	Roadmap for a Resource Efficient Europe	Main aim is to increase resource productivity and decouple economic growth from environmental impacts
April - September	Reform of the CAP, Common Fisheries Policy, Cohesion Policy, Energy infrastructure revision and trans-European transport networks revision	Proposals are being developed within this period to reform all of these policy areas with the opportunity to align them more closely to the EU's 2020 and resource efficiency goals.
October - December	Energy roadmap 2050	Possible paths towards and low-carbon resource efficiency EU energy system
2011	Smart grids	Framework for 'smart' grids to increase energy efficiency, promote renewables & infrastructure for electric vehicles
2011	Security of energy supply & international cooperation	Comprehensive analysis of the external dimension of EU energy policy
2011	Review of priority substances in the Water Framework Directive	Review of priority substances that pose risks to or via the aquatic environment
2011	Strategy for the Sustainable Competitiveness of the EU Construction Sector	Identify ways to strengthen the competitiveness of the sector whilst meeting societal challenges
2011	European strategy and Action Plan towards a sustainable biobased economy by 2020	Integrate different sectors and policies across the bio-economy and improve conditions for innovation
2011	Strategic Transport Technology Plan	Outline how advanced technology can contribute to the future of transport
2011	Revision of the legislation on monitoring & reporting greenhouse gas emissions	Improve & simplify monitoring for the EU 2020 target

4. Initiatives by other organisations

4.1 Resource Cap Coalition

The Resource Cap Coalition has been established by CEEWEB (the Central and Eastern European Working Group on Biodiversity), which, like Eurosite, is a member of the European Habitats Forum. This new coalition brings together more than thirty organisations that share the goal of limiting human pressures on resources and promoting sustainable development. They are actively working to influence the delivery of the EU Resource-Efficiency Initiative and promote the view that it is not only important to use resources efficiently but to limit the actual amount of resources being used, because they can still be exhausted even if they're being used efficiently. The coalition has agreed the following aims:

- By 2012, all decision-makers realize that limiting the natural resource use of the EU is essential
- By 2014, relevant measures are taken to realize EU wide natural resource use limitation
- By 2016, an independent and transparent EU-wide accounting system is elaborated to assess Member States' direct and indirect consumption of energy and materials

To find out more about the coalition, including how to join, visit the website at:
www.ceeweb.org/workingareas/resource_use

4.2 Resource Efficiency Alliance

European Partners for the Environment is a multi-stakeholder organization that brings together public authorities, businesses, non-profit organizations and consultancies to work together on environmental solutions. They have set up the Resource Efficiency Alliance to accelerate the implementation of the EU's 2020 objectives in relation to climate change, renewable energy and resource efficiency. They have planned a number of activities and events to take place in 2011 around the four areas of: resource optimization; value chain innovation; global partnership for resource efficiency and resource efficient front runners. To find out more about the alliance, please visit the website at: www.epe.be/

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