

3rd European Resources Forum, Berlin – 9/10 November 2016

Minutes from the European Resources Forum 2016

Minutes by:

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DAY 2 – Thursday, 10 November 2016

Panel discussion: New impulses for a resource efficient Europe

- **Magda Stoczkiewicz** Director, Friends of the Earth Europe, Belgium
- **Karl Falkenberg** Senior Adviser for Sustainable Development in the European Political Strategy Centre (EPSC), European Commission
- **Werner Bosmans** European Commission, DG Environment, Sustainable Production, Products & Consumption
- **Chair: Dr. Harry Lehmann** General Director, Division I "Environmental Planning and Sustainability Strategies", German Environment Agency

In his impulse presentation, **Karl Falkenberg, European Commission** pointed out that companies are spending a lot of attention on costly resources they are working with – cheaper resources receive much less attention in companies as regards reducing resource use. Resources are not just minerals, but key resources we are talking about are natural resources, which are normally not priced, such as air, land, biodiversity. Adding planetary boundaries into discussion with businesses sees them not liking this discourse because than no longer will work what we have always done, but (more radical) change is needed. A circular economy will contribute to such change and will lead into the next step of sustainable economies, looking at environmental, social and economic consequences at the same time – so we need to get out of our silos, also out of our environmental silos.

We need a sound economy; we need economic growth as long as we have demographic growth, but we need qualitatively different and dematerialized economic growth. In this context, the case of carbon cement is a relevant example – people want decent housing, so we will have to build a relevant number of new dwellings. But instead of using steel cement, we replace steel grids with a carbon grid, which do not rot when coming into contact with water. It is important not to talk just to those who are convinced – we need to reach out to consumers and to the vast majority of the marketplace. We need policies and we need regulation and we need to convince policy makers that regulation is nothing evil – which they often hear in particular from industry lobbies. We need to maintain focus on “small issues”, such as hair driers in the Ecodesign Directive because scaling this up to European consumer this is relevant for EU energy consumption.

Werner Bosmans, European Commission, presented some of the Commission’s view on resource efficiency, green growth and the circular economy. He highlighted that a transition towards a circular economy should focus on the following four dimensions: (1) Maintaining the value of products, materials and resources in the economy for as long as possible; (2) Minimising waste generation; (3) Boosting our competitiveness with new business opportunities and innovative products and services; (4) Bringing economic, social and environmental gains. Sup-

porting a circular economy requires innovation, investment and monitoring in four areas along the entire value chain, from production to consumption to waste management to secondary raw materials. As priority sectors the Commission identified Biomass and bio-based products; construction and demolition; Critical raw materials; food waste; and Plastics.

Mr Bosmans then presented ongoing and upcoming activities of the Commission in the context of the Circular Economy Action Plan, for instance work on quality standards for secondary raw materials market; the use of Cohesion funds for Circular Economy; activities related to a revision of the Eco-design Directive; and the establishment of a European Resource Efficiency Excellence Centre. Implementing the Circular Economy Action Plan encompasses a first report to the European Parliament in January 2017, followed by a progress report 5 years after adoption. Furthermore, the European Parliament and the Council are to decide on the 4 legislative proposals on amending waste directives in the next weeks and months.

In her impulse presentation **Magda Stoczkiewicz, Director of Friends of the Earth Europe (FoEE)**, recalled the story of bringing resource use beyond resource efficiency into the discussions in Brussels. Around 2008, FoEE started from saying that what you can't measure, you can't manage – leading to the development of the four footprint indicators, which now are also being part of the Resource Efficiency Scoreboard of the European Commission. We need to measure our consumption, because with it we import materials, land and carbon from other countries, thereby diminishing the use rights and access to resources from people in the exporting countries. Under Environment Commissioner Potocnik we were close to doing something real about sustainable resource management. With the new Juncker Commission and their focus on the "Jobs and Growth" agenda this has changed – and we have had hard times to get through to higher level people from the European Commission as an environmental NGO.

Mrs Stoczkiewicz highlighted 4 impulses: 1st – Donald Trump as US president will bring us a more volatile world, hence we need to be as resource efficient as possible in order to reduce vulnerabilities from volatilities. 2nd – Financial value and benefit of being more resource efficient in the long term needs to be communicated even more. While part of industry has understood that, a part of industry still seems to think we have to use the time for business as usual for as long as possible before we are forced to change because we do not know how to do it and because changing would incur costs. 3rd – Governments would need to become facilitators between industries and beliefs for more resource efficiency; the European Resources Forum (ERF) is a good platform for this if we succeed in linking it better beyond the ERF and in scaling it up through encouraging national governments to tell the European Commission that it has to consider Ecodesign. Governments need to set the framework in which businesses that want to change can change. 4th – the European Commission should deal with issues mentioned in the Roadmap to a resource-efficient Europe, e.g. removing environmentally harmful subsidies. In the centre of all policy is the citizen and its well-being and health – and the environment is a crucial part of it; we need to improve this alongside policy making to increase social cohesion.

In the **plenary discussion** it was stressed that the European Commission will continue pushing Ecodesign also from a business perspective to make sure the Ecodesign is not just something that green NGOs push. Recycling by design is challenging, for instance as regards composite materials needed in windmills. Progressing on design for recycling is also interesting for the automotive sector for light-weight materials. Furthermore, we could reduce the need for cement drastically by using carbon cement, but this needs concerted action at all levels, from European institutions to national governments and businesses. We need to make it known and share it with as many users as possible in order to overcome barriers – construction norms on fire resistance, stability, etc. have to be convinced that new materials comply with all existing norms, which includes processes on municipal, national and European level.

As regards the question of targets on resource productivity, the current Commission focuses on monitoring and indicator development. Target setting rather is a political conviction, which is not part of the reasoning of the college of Commissioners under Juncker, who wants to see their effects judged by action on the ground. The basic idea of environmental integration is the pollut-

er-pays principle; this is a sound way to make sure that we take the negatives into account. We need to ensure that the polluter-pays principle really applies and is enforced on the really polluting producers. For many years we have not progressed on internalization of external costs; it is a government task to ensure that such costs are not accruing to citizens.

Putting people from different disciplines together will help getting out of silos, e.g. people from different ministries, within the European Commission (not only on the level of the college of Commissioners). We need to bring colleagues that know a lot about specific and small things; the community level is a good level for such inter-/transdisciplinary exchange. This will take time, but it is beginning to emerge. For instance, the French government has nominated 150 additional posts in government across all ministries as sustainability advocates across all areas.

Concluding the discussion, the three panelists were asked to highlight one key recommendation for what Europe should do. Here, Karl Falkenberg argued that we need to base standards solidly in science, based on verification systems to test claims on environmental performance. That requires good cooperation with science. Furthermore, we should have targets, which work if you have the measurements in place. Eventually, we need to focus on the quality of growth: with continued demographic growth in some parts of the world people have all the rights to want to have our standards of life, but degrowth in some parts will be a relevant option to talk about; using a circular economy and dematerialisation helps creating economic growth that is neither austerity nor transgressing planetary boundaries. Magda Stoczkiewicz called for targets and regulation and for that governments need to get the guts again to make decisions for the citizens – currently, she does not see any leadership on going beyond GDP from the European Commission. Werner Bosmans highlighted that ongoing provision of sound scientific advice, e.g. the UNEP IRP report on energy-resource nexus, allows taking informed policy decisions. But we need to be aware that all policies will have an impact. So eventually, we must consider stopping using fossil fuels, stopping eating meat, and shifting taxation from labour to resource use.