Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on ‘A resource-efficient Europe — Flagship initiative under the Europe 2020 strategy’

(2012/C 9/08)

THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

— calls for the European Commission’s Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe timeframe, to be tightened and advocates adopting the indicators already in 2012; also urges that the competent local and regional institutions are consulted, in order to ensure that the indicators are realistic and deliverable both in terms of capacity and affordability;

— asks the Commission to consider adopting a ‘basket’ of four main resource-use indicators: land footprint, use of raw materials (biodiversity, biological and mineral resources), water footprint and greenhouse-gas footprint; stresses the need for the Commission to make the indicators an integral part of the national reporting system for Europe 2020 and its related Flagship Initiative, so that they guide the national reform programmes and budget preparations;

— deplores the roadmap’s failure to mention the possibility of involving the Covenant of Mayors in efforts to achieve resource efficiency and proposes to consider, jointly with the European Commission, specific ways of extending the Covenant to include key areas of the ‘Resource-Efficient Europe’ Flagship Initiative, such as biodiversity and land use, waste and water management or air pollution;

— recommends specific actions that in particular aim at moving to low-carbon, resource-efficient transport and energy systems, promoting green public procurement, achieving a zero-waste society through optimising waste prevention and seeing waste as a resource within a circular economy; promoting substitution and resource efficiency in the raw materials value chain; using efficiently, protecting and restoring ecosystem services, and at reducing the extent of existing soil sealing wherever needed.
I. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. believes that any forward-looking policy on the environment, climate and energy must be underpinned by the principle of good stewardship. In the Committee's view, that means that people should take responsibility for managing and utilising natural resources in such a way and at such a pace as to ensure their sustainability and maintain their diversity. The overall aim of a policy of this kind is to ensure that development meets the needs of current generations without undermined the capacity of future generations to meet theirs;

2. is alarmed that the European Union is currently engaged in a course of risky and non-viable development, production and consumption; as noted by the Commission in its flagship initiative, 'Continuing our current patterns of resource use is not an option';

3. in this context welcomes the launch of the flagship initiative A resource-efficient Europe, which is intended to make resource efficiency the guiding principle of European Union policy relating to energy and a low-carbon economy, transport, raw materials and commodities, sustainable consumption and production of goods and services, waste management, land and ecosystem use, and agriculture and fisheries; this initiative serves the important function of helping to create synergies between the various branches and to balance interests and objectives, while at the same time ensuring a joint, coherent and sustainable approach to resource use;

4. is delighted with the positive impact that the flagship initiative is having on European environment policy. However, European environment policy in general, and current resource-efficiency policy (e.g. the thematic strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources) in particular, focuses on reducing the negative environmental impact of economic development and the extraction of natural resources. The flagship initiative broadens the scope to include the negative impact on economic development of the inefficient use of natural resources, thus giving a necessary stimulus for integrating environment policy more closely with the EU's economic and product policy;

5. is pleased that the flagship initiative broadens the concerns of the European Union to include all natural resources, i.e. not only traditional energy resources, but also biotic and abiotic raw materials such as fuels, biomass, minerals, metals and wood, arable land and fish stocks, soils, water, air, as well as ecosystem or biodiversity protection services;

6. welcomes the European Commission's request that the Committee of the Regions present its views on the role that local and regional authorities should play in implementing this initiative upstream of the decision-making process, particularly when they have specific competences related to this initiative, mainly in relation to standards, for example for buildings or in waste management. This will allow the CoR to make its voice heard from the earliest stages in framing future policies;

7. fully shares the Commission's assessment that three key conditions must be met in order to enjoy the benefits of a resource-efficient and low-carbon economy, namely 1) the political will for change, 2) long-term policy and investment planning and 3) a long-term change in the public's awareness of and behaviour regarding resources. These principles should be developed and implemented using a multilevel governance approach. In this context, the Committee of the Regions points to the key role played by local and regional authorities in framing, implementing and evaluating such policies (1) which has already been clearly recognised by the European Commission and the European Parliament;

The Europe 2020 strategy and the flagship initiative 'A resource-efficient Europe'

8. welcomes the EU's efforts to establish a close link between economic development, social well-being and a responsible use of natural resources:

9. believes that transitioning to a resource-efficient economy will improve well-being for current and future generations. One aspect of this well-being will be the creation of huge opportunities for the economy, business and innovation, helping to maintain the EU's competitiveness by lowering the cost of raw materials and energy use and stimulating employment in the green technology sector;

10. stresses that in order to improve the environment and air quality there needs to be an ambitious policy to tackle the problem at source, together with a strengthening of EU policy with regard to greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution;

11. notes that many local and regional authorities have already adopted and successfully implemented various policies and practices intended to promote resource efficiency; these initiatives are worth knowing about and recognising at EU level so that everybody can benefit from the expertise acquired by certain stakeholders in this sphere and so as to promote the most effective and efficient initiatives;

12. draws attention to the lack of reference in the Commission text to all the EU policy instruments and strategies that are already being used to address the issue of resource efficiency, such as the Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, the Thematic Strategy on Waste Prevention and Recycling, and the Action Plan on Sustainable Production and Consumption and Sustainable Industrial Policy; these strategies are likely to serve as a precedent for the adoption and implementation of further strategies addressing other issues relating to natural resource management;

13. notes that the European Union and its Member States are responsible for promoting any initiative aimed at improving resource efficiency at global level; for this reason, supports all the initiatives the European Commission has proposed in the run-up to the Rio+20 conference in June 2012, particularly measures to mobilise funding and public and private investment and measures aimed at gradually establishing a more efficient multilateral international governance system; calls for the structure of this governance system to include multi-level participatory and cooperation mechanisms to allow regions and cities to play an active part in matters that concern them;

14. joins the Commission in calling for the expeditious implementation of the OECD Declaration on Green Growth adopted in June 2009;

15. welcomes the support of the European Union and its Member States for the work of the International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and its Green Economy Initiative;

16. regrets that the 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production for the period 2011-2021 could not be adopted at the 19th session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development;

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17. emphasises the fact that environmental and social policies are interdependent; the peak in oil and gas production – which some consider has now reached a plateau – together with the production peak of other materials, will inevitably lead to price increases; the first people to suffer the consequences will be people on the lowest incomes and the regions with the lowest average incomes;

18. underlines that due to the horizontal and complex nature of the flagship initiative it is essential for its governance to be effective and for its progress to be monitored in the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy and its European Semester and Annual Growth Survey exercise, with annual scrutiny of Member States' performance, so as to ensure that the EU achieves greater resource efficiency;

19. stresses the need to clarify the budget implications of the flagship initiatives under the Europe 2020 strategy (\(^2\)): the next multiannual financial framework should reflect the goals of the resource-efficiency flagship initiative, given that this initiative, by ensuring that EU interventions are coordinated through a Common Strategic Framework, cuts across a number of policies financed through the EU budget;

20. calls on the Commission to take account of Member States' real commitment to promoting resource efficiency when evaluating the National Reform Programmes presented by them in April 2011;

21. points out that the success of the Europe 2020 strategy will depend largely on decisions taken at local and regional level; has previously said in this regard that it advocates a reference in the NRPs to creating territorial pacts for Europe 2020 in the form of multilevel partnerships between EU, national, regional and local authorities (\(^3\));

22. would therefore encourage integrated local development as a key delivery method to implement the targets of this flagship initiative;

23. believes that it is essential for the Committee of the Regions to be involved in implementing the flagship initiative A resource-efficient Europe, as well as the integrated resource-efficiency policy, via its Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform;

\(^2\) CdR 73/2011 fin.
Roadmap to a resource-efficient Europe

24. calls for the roadmap's timeframe, which sets the end of 2013 as the deadline for successively deciding on and adopting indicators and objectives, to be tightened; advocates adopting these indicators in 2012; also urges that the competent local and regional institutions are consulted on these indicator deadlines, in order to ensure that they are realistic and deliverable both in terms of capacity and affordability;

25. welcome's the proposal set out in the Commission's Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe to adopt a limited number of indicators to ensure that policies are drawn up in an efficient way that is visible to the public; indicators should be selected according to their degree of importance, relevance, reliability and soundness, and should be as widely recognised as possible;

26. asks the Commission to consider adopting a 'basket' of four main resource-use indicators: land footprint, use of raw materials (biodiversity, biological and mineral resources), water footprint and greenhouse-gas footprint; these indicators are reasonably easy to measure, yet give an important indication of our resource use and its impacts, and they would complement indicators measuring the environmental impacts and efficiency related to a resource use;

27. stresses the need to adopt an overall indicator such as the 'ecological footprint' as a useful instrument for communication and awareness-raising campaigns, though it must be clearly understood that the highly aggregated nature of such indicators limits their use in policy-making: data and methodology should be harmonised between countries and the Commission could help to achieve this;

28. welcomes the Commission's proposal to adopt a limited number of objectives for resource efficiency that are ambitious, quantifiable, precise and coherent; the targets should be, for example, improving the results obtained from the four indicators set out in point 26, for example, zero growth of the land area covered by sealed soils, or improved waste prevention and recycling rates;

29. calls on the European Commission in its evaluation of indicators and objectives to consider the feasibility of policies that might be pursued on the basis of them by local and regional authorities;

30. stresses the need for the Commission to incorporate the indicators into its Annual Growth Survey that marks the beginning of the Economic Semester in 2012, so that they become an integral part of the national reporting system for Europe 2020 and guide discussions on how the national reform programmes and budget preparations need to be brought into line with the Europe 2020 strategy;

31. calls for these resource-use indicators to be made an integral part of the European Commission's and Member States' impact assessments of policy proposals; the European Commission should provide guidance and tools to enable Member States, local and regional authorities, companies and other operators to apply these indicators simply and effectively;

32. notes that the extent and diversity of challenges faced in relation to conserving resources requires mobilisation of all available instruments at European, national, local and regional level; the European and national instruments involve integrating environmental aspects more closely with economic and product policy, and one local instrument is the Covenant of Mayors, demonstrating its usefulness in the sphere of energy;

33. invites the international, European, national and sub-national institutions to take stock in this respect of the wide experience and results already compiled by the signatories of the Covenant of Mayors (around 3 000 municipalities, over 100 regions, in more than 40 countries);

34. asks the European Commission and the other EU Institutions to work together on concrete mechanisms which will allow sharing the experience of the Covenant of Mayors with our global partners, e.g. fostering cooperation at local and regional level on resource efficiency between EU cities and regions and those in our Southern and Eastern Neighbourhood, as well as with developing countries;

35. deplores the roadmap's failure to mention the possibility of involving the Covenant of Mayors in efforts to achieve resource efficiency; therefore urges the Commission to take steps to include the Covenant of Mayors in this area;

36. also proposes to consider, jointly with the European Commission, specific ways of extending the Covenant to include key areas of the 'Resource-Efficient Europe' Flagship Initiative, such as biodiversity and land use, waste and water management or air pollution (CdR 164/2010 fin);

37. bearing in mind the preparation of a 'Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Waters', calls in particular for the European Commission, in partnership with the Committee, to extend the Covenant of Mayors in 2012 to include the 20-20-20 targets for integrated water management referred to in Committee of the Regions opinion CdR 5/2011 fin;

38. strongly supports the creation of a 'multi-actor transition platform on resource efficiency', which should also include 'policy makers from various administrative levels including regional and local' (4); such a platform could be asked to look at interlinkages between the policies concerned and to help identify targets and barriers to transition;

39. supports the Commission's position on networking and exchange of best practice between agencies running schemes on resource efficiency; also asks the European Union to support the setting-up of national, regional and local agencies to manage resource efficiency, where such bodies do not exist; the remit of existing agencies could be extended to include all issues relating to resource efficiency and should include informing and advising public authorities, businesses and the general public on existing measures and solutions that are available for achieving resource efficiency;

**Means for delivering on the resource-efficient Europe flagship initiative**

40. maintains that a resource-efficient Europe will call not only for technological innovation but also for innovation in its socio-economic system, with new production and consumption patterns, a change in lifestyles and new governance models, as well as a strategic research agenda focused on system innovation;

41. in particular, calls for the necessary changes to the infrastructure to enable smart intergrids so that small and medium sized businesses and cooperatives can generate their own green energy and share it peer-to-peer across regions; calls on the European Commission to convene a special conference with local and regional authorities and relevant stakeholders to kick-start the transformation of Europe's energy production;

42. affirms that a number of measures – including changing the EU Member States' budget and economic policies, as well as environment-friendly fiscal reform that will take more account of resource use – will be needed to achieve the flagship initiative's targets; it will also be necessary to redirect national accounts towards resource efficiency, while supporting the internalisation of external costs with a view to setting appropriate prices, making polluters pay – while protecting consumers – and phasing out subsidies that have negative effects on the environment;

43. considers the development of a low-carbon, resource-efficient transport system in Europe to be crucial to the success of the flagship initiative; in this context, it is important to reduce the quantity of energy and raw materials required for the manufacture of motor vehicles and to support the industry in this area, to ensure that consumption is reduced substantially and to put in place transport systems that will, overall, have an ever-diminishing impact on resources;

44. welcomes the inclusion in the flagship initiative of steps to promote a European water policy that prioritises water-saving measures and improving efficiency in water use, and will present relevant recommendations in its outlook opinion on *The role of local and regional authorities in promoting sustainable water policy* (\(^{(5)}\));

**A low-carbon economy and resource-efficient energy system**

45. laments the fact that the energy efficiency policies currently being implemented are not adequate to meet the targets set out in the European energy-climate package for 2020; considers that energy efficiency should be made a mandatory objective and should make a major contribution to the 2050 objectives for reducing greenhouse emissions;

46. asks the Commission to continue focusing on the construction, services and transport sectors in the legislative and financial initiatives that will follow on from its recently adopted Energy Efficiency Plan 2011 (\(^{(5)}\));

47. emphasises that the construction sector should benefit from regulatory and financial incentives designed to increase rates of renovation to improve energy efficiency;

48. highlights the need for training and support to provide a skilled and readily available workforce for energy efficiency in all the relevant sectors of the economy and hence also in the construction sector; suggests that a European strategy be put in place for informing and training this workforce; in this connection, emphasises the potential of the flagship initiative and the innovative measures it will require to create highly-skilled and sustainable employment in a number of different sectors and professional fields in the EU;

49. asks the European Commission to propose specific measures on building renovation in its upcoming energy-saving directive and to earmark sufficient funding in the multiannual budget for repairing and renovating buildings in Europe to make them energy efficient after 2013; these measures should be combined with a strategy for subsidising buildings with very low energy consumption;

50. calls on the European Commission to put forward a standardised system for measuring energy efficiency across the EU based on a methodology that could be used by local and regional authorities;

51. commends the European Commission's objective of achieving a shift to a low-greenhouse-gas economy that uses resources efficiently (\(^{(5)}\));

52. asks that these objectives be duly taken into account in the multiannual financial framework, which would also include making additional funding available to local and regional levels of government;

53. recognises the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) as an important instrument for steering investment in the sectors it covers - power generation, energy-intensive industry and, from next year, aviation - which provides a financial reward for low carbon investments; hopes that the system will made more efficient from 2012;

\(^{(5)}\) CdR 5/2011.


\(^{(5)}\) COM(2011) 112 final.
54. nevertheless calls for the ETS to play a greater role in the promotion of low-carbon technologies, as long as these technologies also help to improve the results obtained from the resource-use indicators and do not increase the risk to the environment;

55. therefore welcomes the European Commission projects intended to withdraw some of the current allowances from the market in order to encourage transition of the European Union to a low-carbon economy;

56. endorses the inclusion in the roadmap of land management practices that are more favourable to conservation of soil carbon; points out that increasing the levels of organic matter in the soil has other benefits for the environment, agriculture, and soil fertility and conservation;

57. regrets however that the potential of the agricultural sector to mitigate climate change is fragmented between several different categories under the UN and Kyoto reporting and accounting protocols, when it is the agricultural sector that is called upon to play a key role in the efficient and sustainable use of resources;

58. underlines the importance of striking a balance between use of biofuels in a low-carbon economy and protection of biodiversity, water management and protection of the environment generally as well as global food supply;

59. emphasises the importance of implementing social measures alongside energy efficiency policies to ensure that the most vulnerable people and regions have access to efficient energy services;

Sustainable consumption and production

60. calls on the European Commission to ensure effective implementation of the EU Action Plan on Sustainable Production and Consumption and Sustainable Industrial Policy, and to adopt a broader stance on this;

61. urges the Commission to support a ‘top runner’ approach to product policy, employing more ‘push’ instruments to remove less effective products from the market and ‘pull’ instruments to reward the better ones and accelerate their market penetration;

62. encourages eco-innovation to create new resource-efficient products or services, as an essential tool in the pursuit of resource efficiency, competitiveness and job creation; thinks that the forthcoming eco-innovation action plan should mobilise new innovation partnerships that involve local and regional authorities;

63. reiterates its commitment to promoting the use of green public procurement (GPP) by local and regional authorities;

64. calls for mandatory GPP targets for national governments and the European institutions, as well as the inclusion of GPP as an integral part of the future public procurement directive so as to improve legal clarity and make GPP the norm;

65. calls for radical revision of the eco-design directive and its implementing measures so as to promote resource efficiency, by extending its scope to include non-energy-related products with a significant environmental impact (8); considers that the development of methods to assess the life cycle of products and services should be encouraged and that regional and local authorities should be given easy access to the results in order to support their decision making;

66. calls for measures to be taken to combat the calculated, unscrupulous practices which reduce the life span of products and services. Such measures will increase the useful life of products, make them easier to repair and easier to recycle at the end of their life, and support the economic and industrial initiatives that contribute to this process;

67. encourages more uptake of the Eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS) by local and regional authorities in particular, as a market-based instrument for organisations’ resource management; believes that broader participation in the scheme would be possible if the fees could be abolished or reduced and if the Member States were required to set their own targets for increasing the number of EMAS-registered organisations;

68. strongly urges the European Commission, the Member States and local and regional authorities to step up measures to raise awareness among consumers and businesses of the environmental and social implications of their consumption patterns, e.g. through labelling schemes, making sustainable consumption an integral part of education and training, and tightening control over green commercial claims;

Making the European Union a ‘circular economy’

69. calls for a zero-waste society to be the objective, through optimising waste prevention and seeing waste as a resource within a circular economy based on a materials cycle;

70. deplores the fact that landfill is still the most common form of municipal waste disposal, and therefore calls on the Commission to prioritise the implementation and application of existing EU legislation governing waste, which is essential to promoting resource efficiency;

(8) Article 21 of Directive 2009/125/EC.
71. urges the EU institutions, Member States and local and regional authorities to take effective action against the shifting of waste to sub-standard treatment plants within or outside the EU, to improve the competitiveness of EU recycling industries across the entire value chain, to stimulate innovation in resource efficiency and design of recyclable products, to provide economic incentives or new market-based instruments for recycling and promoting secondary raw materials, and to optimise the development and use of end-of-waste criteria and quality criteria for recycled materials, while recognising the progress made by the European Commission in relation to end-of-waste criteria; the CoR calls for special attention to be paid to products containing raw materials which are in increasingly short supply, particularly rare-earth elements;

72. encourages the Member States and local and regional authorities to adopt ambitious waste prevention programmes as required under Article 29 of the Waste Framework Directive, including clear quantitative benchmarks for waste prevention measures (9);

73. asks the European Commission to promote in particular bio-waste prevention and reduction of food waste, and to continue providing support for the European Waste Prevention Week, which has been a success in many regions and cities;

74. underlines the key role played by local and regional authorities in developing recycling and reuse markets, and renew its call for specific and detailed electronic waste reuse targets to be incorporated into the WEEE directive, while ensuring that the principle of producer responsibility is fully developed in the legislation;

75. points out that local and regional authorities have significant scope to promote recycling beyond the current EU targets, with many pioneering cities and regions already going far beyond the minimum European recycling or landfill diversion targets and now aiming to achieve zero waste to landfill or incineration and high levels of recycling of household waste; in view of this, can only urge the European Union and the Member States to further encourage the introduction of instruments to promote recycling that are used by high-performing cities and regions, especially in regions that are less advanced in this area;

76. asks the European Commission to bring forward its assessment, required under the Waste Framework Directive, of the benefits of introducing binding EU waste prevention targets and of tightening the current binding recycling target for municipal solid waste, a measure that could create 500 000 new jobs in Europe (10);

77. welcomes the inclusion of resource efficiency in the European Commission’s communication relating to the resource-efficient Europe flagship initiative, Tackling the challenges in commodity markets and on raw materials (11);

78. asks the European Commission and the Member States to further promote substitution and resource efficiency in the raw materials value chain, which includes exploration, extraction, processing, recycling, eco-design, industrial ecology and resource-efficient production;

79. encourages the Member States and regions, with continuing support from the European Commission, to decide on their sustainable and resource-efficient minerals policies, to establish a policy for land-use planning with regard to minerals and to put in place a clear process for authorising mineral extraction;

80. commends the Commission’s guidelines on non-energy extraction activities and the requirements of Natura 2000 (12) and calls for an integrated approach to be adopted to these issues in the future;

81. takes note that the Council has asked the European Commission to propose measures to address problems in supplying industry with raw materials sourced from forestry and the renewable energy sector;

82. calls for a compulsory certification system to be adopted across the EU, as well as incentives for using biomass for energy and timber sourced from sustainably managed forests; also draws attention to the potential management role of local and regional authorities here;

83. reiterates its call for the Commission to present proposals for binding minimum sustainability criteria for the use of solid and gaseous biomass sources in electricity, heating and cooling (13);

84. argues that the efficient use, protection and restoration of ecosystem services, as agreed on by the Member States under the new biodiversity target for 2020, and detailed in the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (14), are critical to resource efficiency;

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(9) CdR 47/2006 fin.
(10) CEE Bankwatch 2011, EEB & FoEE 2011.

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(14) COM(2011) 244 final.
85. welcomes the support provided by the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 to advancing work on the valuation of biodiversity, including the economic valuation of biodiversity and ecosystem services and encouraging the managing authorities of the structural funds to invest in natural capital as the heritage of future generations, including as a source of economic development, to promoting support for biodiversity through the CAP, to setting a subtarget for restoring ecosystems and to promoting the creation of 'green infrastructure';

86. regrets that notwithstanding its previous recommendations the key role that local and regional authorities will play in the success of this strategy is not sufficiently recognised;

87. calls on the European Union and Member States to launch local and regional pilot projects to preserve biodiversity, particularly TEEB ('the economics of ecosystems and biodiversity') pilot projects to help local and regional authorities adopt and implement the instruments provided for in the international TEEB for Local and Regional Policy Makers Report (15);

88. observes that the decline in natural and semi-natural habitats, including grassland, bogs, heaths and fens, which are critical in combating climate change, remains a major cause for concern, and therefore encourages the European Union, the Member States and local and regional authorities to apply themselves to drawing up relevant programmes for preserving and restoring these ecosystems;

89. is concerned about the continuing increase in land use resulting from urbanisation and expanding transport networks, which is raising the level of soil sealing and leading to reduced water infiltration and thus increased flooding and risk of erosion, fragmentation of habitats and animal populations, and exacerbated heat island effects in cities, making them more vulnerable to heat waves and climate change;

90. encourages the Member States to work with local and regional authorities to set up integrated land-use planning and spatial development systems that can help to achieve sustainable urban settlement patterns, provide incentives to encourage the reuse of brownfield land over use of greenfield land and rural areas, create a database of brownfield land, and reduce the extent of existing soil sealing wherever needed;

91. reiterates that a common thematic strategy on soil protection, including the aim of adopting a Soil Framework Directive, should remain part of future EU environment policy;

A resource-efficient Common Agricultural Policy, Common Fisheries Policy and Cohesion Policy

92. is concerned that estimated commercial fish stocks exceed safe biological limits, and therefore reiterates its call for adoption by 2015 of the maximum sustainable yield objective as a fundamental guiding principle of the future Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) (16);

93. supports the approach advocated by the European Commission in its communication Regional policy contributing to sustainable growth in Europe 2020 (17);

94. in particular calls for an increase in the contribution of the structural funds to implementation of the flagship initiative, inviting the managing authorities of the structural funds to invest more in a low-carbon economy, ecosystem services and biodiversity, as well as eco-innovation;

95. also supports optimising investment in resource efficiency;

96. strongly believes that a smart, sustainable and inclusive development in the EU and beyond can be achieved, having local and regional authorities as a driver for change and socio-economic development.

Brussels, 11 October 2011.

The President
of the Committee of the Regions
Mercedes BRESSO