



# Recommendation of the Council on Resource Productivity



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## Background Information

The Recommendation on Resource Productivity was adopted by the OECD Council on 28 March 2008 on the proposal of the Environment Policy Committee. After the 2004 OECD Recommendation on Material Flows and Resource Productivity, the Recommendation is the second one committed to improve resource productivity. While the first Recommendation was to improve information on material flows and resource productivity, this Recommendation analyses material flows and the associated environmental impacts, to promote the use of resource productivity indicators, and to develop and implement policies to improve resource productivity and reduce negative environmental impacts of materials and product use.

**THE COUNCIL,**

**HAVING REGARD** to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

**HAVING REGARD** to the Recommendation of the Council of 26 May 1972 on Guiding Principles concerning International Economic Aspects of Environmental Policies [C(72)128];

**HAVING REGARD** to the Recommendation of the Council of 28 September 1976 on a Comprehensive Waste Management Policy [C(76)155(Final)];

**HAVING REGARD** to the Recommendation of the Council of 31 January 1991 on Environmental Indicators and Information [C(90)165(final)];

**HAVING REGARD** to Decision C(2001)107/FINAL of the Council [of 14 June 2001 and 25 February 2002, as amended by C(2004)20 and C(2005)141] concerning the Control of Transboundary Movements of Wastes Destined for Recovery Operations;

**HAVING REGARD** to the Recommendation of the Council of 21 April 2004 on Material Flows and Resource Productivity [C(2004)79];

**HAVING REGARD** to the Recommendation of the Council of 9 June 2004 on Environmentally Sound Management of Waste [C(2004)100];

**HAVING REGARD** to the Communiqué of the OECD Council meeting at Ministerial level of 17 May 2001 which stated "that OECD countries bear a special responsibility for leadership on sustainable development worldwide, historically and because of the weight they continue to have in the global economy and environment";

**HAVING REGARD** to the OECD's Environmental Strategy for the First Decade of the 21st Century endorsed by the OECD Council in May 2001;

**HAVING TAKEN NOTE** of OECD work on material flows and resource<sup>1</sup> productivity<sup>2</sup>, waste prevention and recycling, sustainable materials management, natural resource management, and trade and the environment;

**HAVING TAKEN NOTE** of international work on the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) steered by the G8, on sustainable resource management steered by the International Panel on Sustainable Resource Management and on energy efficiency steered by the International Energy Agency;

**CONSIDERING** the need for intensified efforts by OECD Member countries (both domestically and in the international context) to improve the productivity of natural resource use at all stages of the life-cycle of these resources (extraction, transposition, transportation, consumption, and disposal) so as to avoid waste of resources and reduce the associated negative environmental impacts;

**CONSIDERING** that increasing this productivity will also reduce demand pressure on natural resources more generally, thereby contributing to more secure supplies of natural resources for everyone;

**TAKING INTO ACCOUNT** the close co-operation on environmental matters between OECD and other international organisations;

**On the proposal of the Environment Policy Committee (EPOC):**

**I. RECOMMENDS, with regard to the analysis of the material flows and their environmental impacts, that Member countries:**

Promote resource productivity by strengthening their capacity for analysing material flows and the associated environmental impacts, and work to improve measurement systems for material flows and resource productivity, drawing on the expertise of all relevant ministries and departments of government, research and other non-governmental organisations, on OECD guidance and experience on

measurement and analysis of material flows and resource productivity and on other international work; and to this effect:

1. Improve the scientific knowledge concerning the environmental impacts and costs of resource use throughout the entire life cycle of materials and the products that embody them, from natural resource extraction and manufacturing to end of life management (as wastes, reusables and recyclables), including from resources that have been imported;
2. Upgrade the extent and quality of data on material flows within and among countries and the associated environmental impacts, giving particular attention to the availability and international comparability of data on physical trade flows, including flows of recyclable materials and waste, and selected material flows that are of economic and environmental importance;
3. Work to improve and use soundly based, relevant and internationally compatible material flow accounts that track natural resource stocks and flows and link them to critical environmental cycles;
4. Further develop and promote the use of indicators for the assessment of the efficiency of material resource use, having carefully considered the uses and purposes, practical arrangements, costs, benefits and statistical basis for such indicators, including:
  - Indicators to measure resource productivity and decoupling of resource use from economic growth, at relevant macro, sectoral and/or micro levels, considering both: overview indicators for monitoring natural resource use, resource productivity and the associated environmental impacts; and specific and disaggregated indicators for monitoring resource use, resource productivity, 3R (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle) related flows and the associated environmental impacts concerning particular resources, materials or activities;
  - Indicators to inform about the availability, quality and deterioration of natural resource stocks, in particular renewable resource stocks;
  - Indicators to track the flows and environmental impacts of materials, taking account of their entire life cycle from natural resource extraction and manufacturing to end of life management;
5. Co-operate with non-member economies to strengthen their capacity for analysis of material flows and the associated environmental impacts;
6. Share OECD guidance and experience on measurement and analysis of material flows and resource productivity with all relevant ministries and departments of government, research and other non-governmental organisations, and members of the private sector.

## **II. RECOMMENDS, with regard to the policies concerning the improvement of resource productivity, that Member countries:**

Take appropriate actions to improve resource productivity and reduce negative environmental impacts of materials and product use, by encouraging environmentally effective and economically efficient uses of natural resources and materials at the macro, sectoral and micro levels and by involving all relevant ministries and departments of government as well as research and other non-governmental organisations. To this effect:

1. Consider the use of information about material flows and their environmental impacts for planning purposes, as appropriate in a national context, including, for instance, using such information for target setting, and share these experiences and best practices with other Member countries;
2. Promote integrated life-cycle-oriented approaches, such as 3R policies (Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle), sustainable materials management and sustainable manufacturing as an input to decision-making and to increasing coherence among policies;
3. Further develop and promote the use of new technologies and innovations aimed at improving resource productivity;
4. Encourage co-operation and sharing of best practices among enterprises;

5. Contribute to the establishment of framework conditions that improve resource productivity through economic instruments;
6. Co-operate to ensure that policy measures taken to improve resource productivity are efficient in economic terms, effective in environmental terms and equitable in social terms;
7. Co-operate with non-member economies to strengthen their capacity for developing and implementing policies concerning the improvement of resource productivity.

### III. INSTRUCTS the Environment Policy Committee:

1. To review existing policies and practices and contribute to elaborating common principles and policy guidelines on resource productivity and sustainable materials management;
2. To strengthen its capacity for material flow analysis at the international level, with particular focus on key materials, on direct and indirect flows and their environmental impacts, including possible development of relevant databases in co-operation with other international organisations and non-Member economies;
3. To further develop and where appropriate promote the use of material flow analysis, resource productivity indicators, and methods for assessing the environmental impacts of resource use;
4. To support Member countries' efforts in developing and implementing integrated policies for managing natural resource and materials throughout their life cycles, by facilitating the exchange of experience and best practices in the field of resource productivity, including sustainable materials management and sustainable manufacturing;
5. To assist non-member economies in developing and implementing policy frameworks and measurement systems that contribute to the achievement of the objectives of this Recommendation both domestically and internationally;
6. To carry out these tasks in co-operation with other appropriate OECD bodies, other international organisations such as UNEP (including the Resource Panel) and the G8 (including the 3R initiative) and the private sector;
7. To report to the Council on progress achieved in implementing this Recommendation, within five years of its adoption.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this Recommendation, the term "resource" is understood to include natural resources (and the materials and products derived therefrom) whose extraction, processing, use and disposal are internationally significant, in both economic and environmental terms. The scope of the Recommendation is limited to minerals (metallic and non-metallic industrial minerals), and biomass. Energy resources (e.g. coal, oil, gas), water resources and fishery resources are excluded and are only covered to the extent that they are part of an integrated approach to the entire resource cycle.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this Recommendation, the term "resource productivity" is understood to contain both a *quantitative* dimension (e.g. the quantity of output produced with a given input of natural resources) and a *qualitative* dimension (e.g. the environmental impacts per unit of output produced with a given natural resource input). Energy efficiency is excluded, although it is recognised that energy efficiency and resource productivity are interrelated.

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