

OPEN LETTER:

Yes to an EU legislation on Sustainable Resource Management

Brussels,
XX April 2024

To:

Ursula von der Leyen, *President of the European Commission*

Maroš Šefčovič, *European Commissioner for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight*

Virginijus Sinkevičius, *European Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries*

Thierry Breton, *European Commissioner for Internal Market*

Wopke Hoekstra, *European Commissioner for Climate*

Willem van de Voorde, *Belgian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the EU*

Charles Michel, *President of the European Council*

Member State Ministers for environment, climate, energy and industry

Honourable European and national decision-makers,

We, the undersigned NGOs, academics, think tanks, trade unions, and industries call for an EU legislation on Sustainable Resource Management. This collective endorsement reflects a shared commitment to address the core challenges driving global crises and to champion an EU that thrives within planetary boundaries.

The EU's outsized impact on climate, nature, and people:

Resource extraction and processing are the catalysts behind the most pressing challenges of our time, including global warming, biodiversity loss, water stress, pollution, and social injustices. We cannot address these challenges unless the EU, a major consumer using between 70% and 97% of the 'safe operating space' available for the whole world in terms of impacts from resource use, aligns with planetary boundaries and reduces its outsized impact on the environment and people. While the EU has introduced new measures and targets on climate and biodiversity, there is a crucial gap in current European legislation on resource consumption, underscoring the need for a new law with science-based and binding resource reduction targets.

Our proposal for a legislative framework:

We are calling for an EU Directive that will set binding EU material footprint reduction targets to 5 tonnes per capita by 2050 in line with the best available research on sustainable consumption levels, with incremental targets to monitor and ensure progress.

The Directive will steer the EU and its Member States to develop implementation strategies, emphasising reductions in high-consumption sectors like transport, construction, and digital industries, and to develop sector-specific roadmaps with binding sub-targets. This approach can support a just transition, in line with ILO guidelines, while respecting workers' rights. The Directive will also ensure the EU's strategic autonomy and reduce supply chain vulnerabilities.

To respect people's rights and ensure social justice, the Directive will push for the redistribution of resources and the redressal of inequality in Europe through measures such as redistributive taxes and social programmes.

To bolster scientific guidance, the Directive will establish an EU Scientific Advisory Board on Sustainable Resource Management. Additionally, it needs to include a commitment to global engagement, aligning with the UN International Resources Panel towards a Global Resource Treaty to create a pathway towards equitable use of resources globally.

Benefits for everyone:

1. **Addressing the ecological crises:** Reducing material extraction and use is crucial to mitigating environmental harm and thus essential for achieving decarbonisation and biodiversity goals.
2. **Transitioning to a true circular economy:** Circularity is impossible without a holistic shift towards strategies that reduce production and consumption, such as sufficiency, repair and reuse.
3. **Achieving strategic autonomy:** Reducing dependence on external sources will foster strategic autonomy, enhancing resilience in case of shocks and conflicts.
4. **Fostering global peace & security:** Mitigating risk factors linked to resource exploitation such as violence, poverty, and poor governance, will promote global peace and security.
5. **Delivering resource justice:** Reducing resource consumption in Europe will enable lower-income countries to exercise their right to thrive and meet their own needs through a fairer global distribution of natural resources.
6. **Respecting human & workers' rights:** The initiative will bolster broader efforts to ensure respect for human and workers' rights, particularly in EU value chains.
7. **Towards societal wellbeing & equity:** Reducing resource consumption is pivotal for transitioning to a future-proof economic model that prioritises the wellbeing of people and the planet.

The time is now

Acknowledging the existing political will within the European Commission, European Parliament, and among EU Member States such as Austria, Belgium, Finland and the Netherlands, this collective endorsement seeks to channel and amplify citizen support, as surveys and popular manifestos underscore a rising number of Europeans advocating for a more resource-conscious society.

Now is the time for EU legislation on Sustainable Resource Management. We call for a rapid and well-prepared shift towards a fair, autonomous, resilient, and sustainable EU economy within planetary boundaries.

Signed,

