

Beat: Politics

European Parliament call for systemic change to address resource scarcity

Can create an extra 2 million new jobs

Madrid / Strasbourg, 09.07.2015, 18:32 Time

USPA NEWS - The EU needs to use natural resources more efficiently. A 30% increase in resource productivity by 2030 could boost its GDP by nearly 1% and create an extra 2 million sustainable jobs, say MEPs in a resolution voted on Thursday.

But to achieve this growth, it needs binding waste-reduction targets, revamped ecodesign laws and measures to uncouple growth from resource use, they add, calling on the European Commission to table legislation by the end of 2015. "This is a paradigm shift, a systemic change that we are facing, as well as a huge, hidden, business opportunity. It can be created only by helping a new business ecosystem to emerge," said lead MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen, after her resolution was approved by 394 votes to 197, with 82 abstentions.

"But to make this happen, we need legislative, informative, economic and cooperative actions. First, we need a set of indicators and targets. We need a review of existing legislation, as it fails to incorporate the value of ecosystem services. We need a broadening of the scope of the ecodesign directive, a renewal of the waste directive, and a special focus on certain areas like sustainable buildings," she added.

The resolution responds to Commission communications on a "circular economy" package, tabled on 3 July 2014, jointly with a legislative proposal on waste which was withdrawn a couple of months later. New binding waste-reduction targets could lead to the creation of up to 180,000 jobs, MEPs say. They call on the Commission to propose such targets by the end of 2015, as well as a gradual reduction of all landfill waste. MEPs also call on the Commission to promote the creation in member states of conventions enabling the food retail sector to distribute unsold food to charity associations.

MEPs urge the Commission to promote a life-cycle approach to product policy and ecodesign, with an "ambitious work programme." This should include reviewing eco-design legislation by the end of 2016, with a view to broadening its scope and covering all product groups. They also ask the Commission to define requirements for criteria such as durability, reparability, reusability and recyclability and to draw up measures to eliminate planned obsolescence.

To tackle the problem of scarce resources, the extraction and use of resources must be reduced and the link between growth and the use of natural resources must be severed, say MEPs. To render resource use sustainable by 2050, EU policy must require a reduction of resource consumption to sustainable levels, a greater use of renewables and phasing out toxic substances, they add.

Indicators for resource efficiency, measuring resource consumption, including imports and exports, and their use should be mandatory from 2018, says the text. MEPs call for an EU-wide resource efficiency increase target of 30% by 2030 (from 2014 levels), as well as individual targets for each member state. Improving resource use could lead to substantial net savings for EU businesses, public authorities and consumers, estimated at €600 billion, or 8% of annual turnover, while also reducing total annual greenhouse gas emissions by 2-4 %. A 30% increase in resource productivity by 2030 could boost GDP by nearly 1% and create 2 million additional sustainable jobs, says the text.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-4471/european-parliament-call-for-systemic-change-to-address-resource-scarcity.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSStV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Jose A. Martin

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