



The German Resource Efficiency Programme II

Summary

In February 2012, Germany adopted the German Resource Efficiency Programme (ProgRes). By doing so, it was one of the first countries in the world to adopt principles, strategies for action and measures for the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources. The German federal government committed itself to reporting every four years on the development of resource efficiency in Germany and to assessing progress and updating its Resource Efficiency Programme accordingly. The first update of the programme (ProgRes II) was adopted by the German cabinet on 2 March 2016.

1. Scope and objectives of ProgRes II

The fundamental goal of the German Resource Efficiency Programme is to make the extraction and use of natural resources more sustainable, and to minimise the associated environmental pressures as much as possible, also with regard to future generations.

Like ProgRes I, ProgRes II is based on four guiding principles:

1. Combining ecological necessities with economic opportunities, innovation support and social responsibility;
2. Viewing global responsibility as a key focus of our national resource policy;
3. Gradually making economic and production practices in Germany less dependent on primary resources, developing and expanding a circular economy;
4. Securing sustainable resource use for the long term by guiding society towards qualitative growth.

ProgRes II provides an up-to-date overview of numerous existing activities and initiatives and describes fields of action and measures for increasing resource efficiency across the entire value chain. The programme is aimed at safeguarding a sustainable supply of raw materials, enhancing resource efficiency in production, making consumption more resource-efficient, expanding a resource-efficient circular economy and making use of overarching instruments.

One of ProgRes II's main new developments is an integrated perspective on material and energy flows. This allows decision-makers to harness synergies and to recognise and address conflicting targets at an early stage.

In addition, there will be a stronger focus on sustainable building and sustainable urban development and on resource-efficient information and communication technology as stand-alone fields of action.

2. Indicators

To make the overarching goals and principles operational, additional indicators and targets will be added to the National Sustainable Development Strategy.

The raw material productivity indicator in the National Sustainable Development Strategy is a central point of reference for the German Resource Efficiency Programme in this respect. This indicator will be paired with a new indicator: raw material input productivity. Raw material input productivity is an extension and enhancement of the raw material productivity indicator and is normally expressed in €/tonne. This indicator includes both abiotic and biotic materials. In addition, figures for imported goods include not only their actual weight, but also the total weight of all raw materials used during their production. This guarantees that productivity increases will not be falsely registered because resource-intensive processes are shifted abroad.

Apart from this, ProgRes II also includes a series of circular economy-related indicators and targets.

3. Fields of action

ProgRes II builds on the goals and principles of ProgRes I with ten overarching fields of action, each of which lists a number of approaches, measures and instruments. ProgRes II, like ProgRes I, focuses on market incentives, information, consultation, education, research and innovation, and on strengthening voluntary measures and initiatives in industry and society. Example measures include expanding consulting services for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), supporting environmental management systems, boosting resource-efficient product and service procurement in the public sector, improving consumer information, building up resource-efficient circular economy systems, integrating the topic of natural resources into all areas of education and making technology and knowledge transfer to developing and emerging countries more robust.

The building sector in Germany is one of the most resource-intensive sectors of the economy. For this reason, sustainable building and sustainable urban development are of great significance for German resource policy. Numerous design approaches foster resource-efficient development in constructing, renovating and using neighbourhoods and individual buildings. The government supports the development and application of optimised building methods, the use of modular construction, the development of measurable standards for efficient manufacturing and construction site processes as well as for buildings themselves and, finally, measures to increase the useful lifespan of structures. In addition, the government is pursuing transparent labelling schemes for building products to inform consumers about the products' impacts on the environment and health as well as their consumption of raw materials. The government is also looking into strengthening the closed cycle management of building activities.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is an increasingly important field of action. ICT is changing faster and faster, especially due to the ongoing digitalisation of almost all social and economic sectors. Because of this, an early focus on resource-efficient solutions is necessary. The government intends to improve the environmental performance of ICT. Thus, for example, requirements for ICT products will be reviewed to ensure they lead to a useful

product lifespan that is as long as possible. In addition, the government will support separate sales of mobile devices and their corresponding charging equipment, resource-efficient operation of data centres in Germany and preferential purchasing of environmentally friendly ICT.

The international dimension of resource efficiency policy and the further development of policy frameworks in the international context are also important to the German government. Resource efficiency should have a stronger foundation in international processes, institutions, treaties and measures. One clear step forward was made in this area during the German G7 presidency with the establishment of a “G7 Alliance for Resource Efficiency” as a permanent forum for exchange of best practices. The government will also push future development in appropriate international platforms such as the G20.

In the European context, the German government supports activities for increasing resource efficiency in the EU, for example, the European Commission’s plans to establish a European Resource Efficiency Excellence Centre. In particular, the centre will be active in providing effective support to SMEs across the EU in the implementation of resource efficiency measures. The German government is also striving for the development and adoption of resource efficiency targets and indicators at the EU level. These should be based on Germany’s domestic goal of doubling raw material productivity by 2020 in comparison with 1994 and support the EU’s industrial policy objectives.

4. Knowledge and information exchange

In order to promote the transfer of knowledge about the potential that resource efficiency holds for the business sector, the BMUB will continue to operate the Centre for Resource Efficiency under a new contract with the VDI Centre for Resource Efficiency (VDI ZRE) that will run until mid-2019. The most important task of the centre is to support SMEs in particular in improving resource efficiency by providing platforms for information, consulting services and qualification.

A variety of networks related to resource efficiency have formed for targeted dissemination and quick exchange of knowledge. The Resource Efficiency Network (Netzwerk Ressourceneffizienz – NeRess) has been in place since 2007 and currently has 36 network partners. The network holds public conferences with changing themes every six months.

As an initiative of the government and building sector associations, the round table on resource efficiency in building (Runder Tisch Ressourceneffizienz im Bauwesen), was established in 2013. It serves as a joint information and knowledge transfer platform for various initiatives and promotes networking among building industry stakeholders.

The national resource efficiency platform (Nationale Plattform Ressourceneffizienz – NaRess) was also founded in 2013. This platform allows the government to discuss a spectrum of resource efficiency activities with economic, environmental and consumer associations, workers’ unions and local authority associations every six months.

Finally, a network on education for resource efficiency (Bildung für Ressourceneffizienz – Bil-Ress) was set up in 2014. Here, stakeholders from politics, industry, and the scientific community pursue the goal of better integrating sustainable use of natural resources as a topic in all areas of education.

5. Contributions from policy, industry and civil society

During the drafting of ProgRess II, private citizens had the opportunity to participate and share their ideas for the programme in a national public dialogue on “resource-efficient living”. The resulting “advice from citizens” (Bürgerratschlag) is included in the annex to ProgRess II, which also contains descriptions from six federal ministries, all 16 Länder and 40 associations and institutions detailing their activities in the area of resource efficiency.