

**"A Resource-Efficient Europe"  
Survey of the Local and Regional  
Authorities  
Summary of the Results**

**These conclusions are based on the file note titled: "Assessment of the Resource-efficient Europe Flagship Initiative" written by Vienna University of Economics and Business, Research Institute for Managing Sustainability (RIMAS) (Zoran Rušnov, Umberto Pisano and Norma Schönherr).**

**They do not represent the official views of the Committee of the Regions.**

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## Basic information

In the second quarter of 2013, the Committee of the Regions conducted a study on the flagship initiative “**A resource-efficient Europe**”<sup>1</sup>, through its Europe 2020 Monitoring Platform, providing the current status on this topic from the viewpoint of Local and Regional Authorities.

This survey is part of a broader monitoring exercise on Europe 2020, which was launched by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in December 2012 and will last until November 2013. The results of these individual assessments have been providing the backdrop for seven conferences – one for each flagship initiative assessment – and will subsequently feed into the contribution of the Committee of the Region to the EU Commission’s mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy due in 2014. The present survey report is based on **55 responses from 20 EU Member States and Turkey** (Figure 1.1 below). The findings will be presented at the CoR conference on 2 and 3 September 2013 in Vilnius.

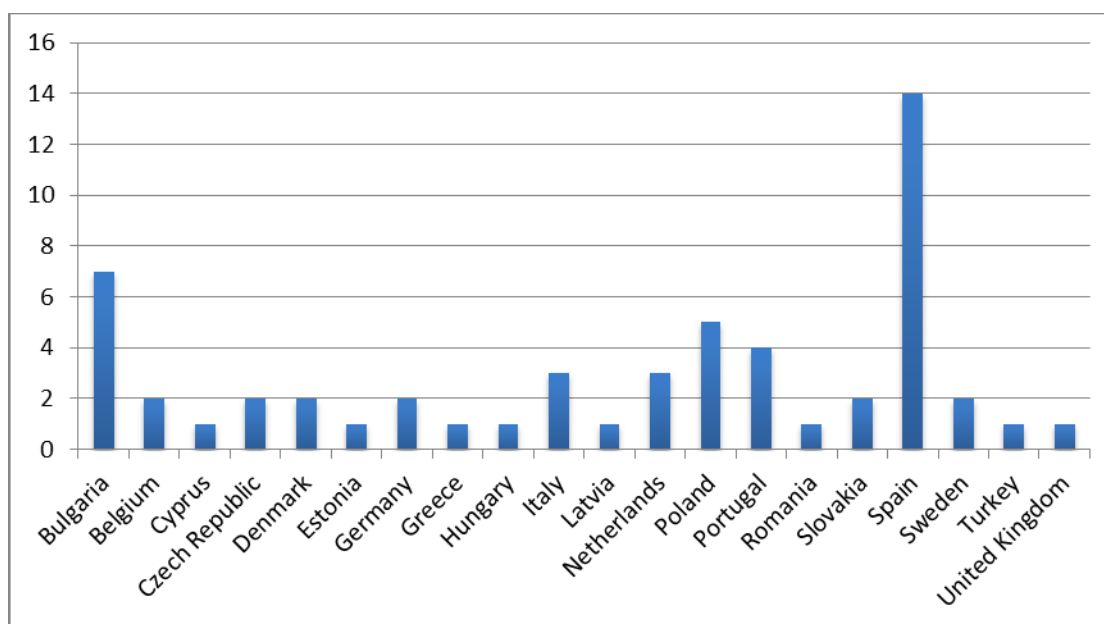


Figure 1: The number of survey responses received, by EU Member State

The majority of responses were provided by – or on behalf of – Cities (56%), followed by Regions (27%), Counties, Associations of Cities and Regions and European Grouping of Territorial cooperation - each (4%), Provinces (3%), and Others (2%) as depicted in Figure 1.2. Out of the 55 participants 27 are

<sup>1</sup> The survey was open between 30 April and 11 July 2013; the questionnaire and basic background can be found at: <http://portal.cor.europa.eu/europe2020/ClosedSurveys/Pages/A-Resource-Efficient-Europe.aspx>

members of the Committee of the Region’s Monitoring Platform for the Europe 2020 Strategy.

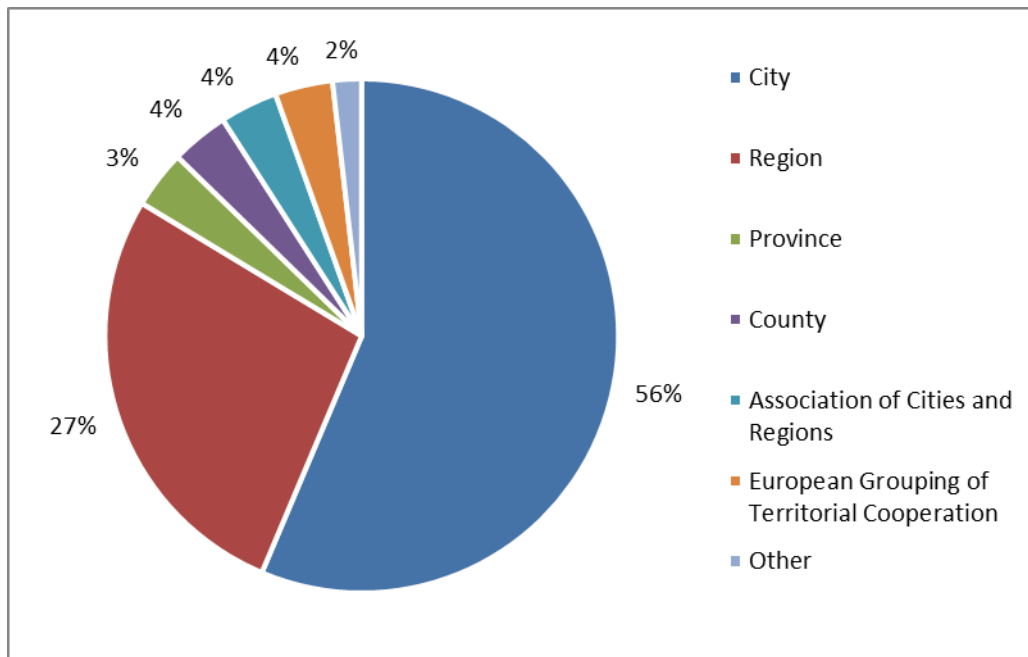


Figure 2: Survey responses, by type of authority

This report is divided into four sections in accordance with the blocks of questions included in the survey questionnaire. These sections are:

- Policy challenges and responses at regional and local level;
- Relevance of “A resource-efficient Europe” for local authorities;
- Relevance of national policies for local authorities;
- Policy and funding issues.

Each section summarises the main trends emerging from the responses and highlights particular perspectives as well as unique comments. These four sections are preceded by an introductory section, which provides information on the flagship initiative itself as well as on current issues and challenges in the related policy fields.

## Summary and conclusions

The survey was based on 18 questions clustered in four sections. The main results are summarised, followed by the conclusions that can be drawn from the answers received:

- **71%** of the LRAs perceive **energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources** as the **main challenge** their region/city is facing, whilst **58%** of responses see it in a **more efficient use of resources**. This is followed by the challenges **shifting towards a low carbon economy** and **modernisation of the transport sector**, which are mentioned by **44%** respectively.
- **67%** of the respondents view **identifying and creating new opportunities at local level for economic growth and greater innovation and boosting the EU's competitiveness** as the **most relevant aim** in view of challenges currently faced by their region. Another **58%** point to the **fight against climate change and limit the environmental impacts of resource use** as the most important goal, while an additional **56%** of participants mention the aim of **boosting economic performance while reducing resource use**.
- **53%** of the participants in this survey have adopted policies with regard to resource efficiency in the field of **low-carbon, resource efficient energy systems**. **44%** of the respondents have implemented both **sustainable consumption and production** and **low-carbon, resource-efficient transport** related policies. Another **35%** have implemented **efficient use of raw materials (minerals, forests and biomass)** policies on a regional basis, while **29%** have adopted policies in the field of **zero-waste economy** and **biodiversity, ecosystem services and land use**.
- **65%** of the LRAs answer that they have **adopted policies that are interlinked as a part of an integrated framework**, whereas **only 15%** **negate the adoption of integrated policies** and **20%** did not answer this question.
- **44%** of the respondents state that a **20% reduction of GHG emissions below 1990 levels** is **fairly realistic**. **35%** answer that this target is **highly appropriate**. Concerning the goal of **reaching 20% share of renewable energy**, **56%** of the respondents consider this is **fairly**

**realistic**, whilst for **33%** this would be **highly likely**. Furthermore, in terms of **reaching a 20% improvement in energy efficiency**, **56%** respond that this is **fairly realistic**, and **31%** consider the achievement of this goal to be **highly likely**.

- **65%** of respondents would **expand the Covenant of Mayors framework** to the key area of **waste management**. Another **55%** would also like to see the inclusion of **water management**, and **53%** of participants point to **biodiversity and land use**. Additionally, **51%** of the respondents wish to see **air pollution** being a part of the Covenant of Mayors.
- **Almost 46%** of the participants consider the goal of achieving a **20% reduction in the food chain's resource inputs** as **fairly realistic**, while for **27%** this goal is **not feasible**. In terms of the milestones of all **new buildings to be built to quasi zero-energy standard with a high degree of material efficiency**, **45%** of the respondents see this as **fairly realistic**, and **42%** consider this **highly likely to be achieved**. Concerning mobility, **44%** of the respondents consider the likelihood of achieving an annual **1% reduction of transport-related GHG emissions** as high, while **36%** of them consider this goal as **fairly realistic**.
- **64%** of the LRAs report that **promoting better management of water resources** is the **most relevant** policy to the situation in their region/city. Another **55%** point to **promoting sustainable consumption and production** while another **53%** mention **turning waste into resources**. Additionally, **45%** highlight the importance of **supporting more research an innovation**.
- **51%** of the respondents report **innovation and investment** to be the **hardest action to achieve** under the resource efficiency flagship initiative. Another **47%** regret that **subsidies** are also **hard to receive**.
- When asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the 'A resource-efficient Europe' flagship initiative, from their regional/local perspective LRAs give very diverse answers that converge on two main positive points: on the one hand, LRAs appreciate the intention of the flagship initiative of providing goals, and on the other hand, of giving more weight to environmental policy in Europe. In terms of weaknesses, LRAs

point to the Resource-efficient Europe flagship initiative's insufficient adjustment to the economic crisis, slowing down progress towards resource efficiency at regional level. Other remarks indicate inadequate involvement of local players as well as loose guidelines on goals.

- **27%** of respondents **would recommend changes** to the ‘**A resource-efficient Europe**’ flagship initiative.
- **For 36%** of the participants, their **National Reform Programme (NRP) responds to their local/regional needs** in relation to the policy areas covered by the ‘A resource-efficient Europe’ flagship initiative. Conversely, **20%** of participants feel that their NRP does not adequately respond to their local/regional needs concerning the respective resource efficiency policy areas.
- When asked whether or not they would suggest any changes to their country’s NRPs in the area of resource efficiency, only **25% of respondents would recommend changes to their NRP**.
- With **71%** of the respondents indicating reliance for financing, the **ERDF** appears to be the most used source of funding for actions related to the resource efficiency flagship initiative. However, LRAs also make use of the **cohesion fund (47%)**, followed by the **ESF (40%)**, and **LIFE (35%)**.
- **49%** of respondents have carried out action to implement the resource efficiency flagship initiative in partnership with different tiers of government.
- **40%** of the respondents point out that there are **not sufficient links between the EU policy framework and the local levels**.
- **73%** of LRAs state that they **have a strategy to involve various actors in order to achieve the policy goals set under ‘A resource-efficient Europe’**. Out of those 73%, a fifth are implementing information campaigns in order to involve and engage the public. Only 10% are actively involving SMEs in the multi-sectoral approach.

Overall, LRAs seem to be on their way to meeting the goals of the “A resource-efficient Europe” flagship initiative. However, some challenges need to be

overcome in order to achieve certain objectives. For instance, as described above, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources are the main challenges perceived by LRAs. This can be argued by the fact that the transition from common energy systems to renewable ones is posing issues in its implementation, be it due to financial or technological constraints.

Moreover the need for innovative energy systems that cut costs and hence boost the economy is underlined by the importance LRAs attach to the identification and creation of new opportunities for economic growth and greater innovation. A trend emerging in the context of reducing GHG emissions by 20% that is reported by LRAs is the promotion and expansion of public transport, with the aim of reducing traffic emissions.

LRAs also describe difficulties in the matter of reducing food chain resource inputs, due to the lack of guidelines by national governments. Further emerging issues include obtaining investment for resource efficiency projects, whether through EU or private financing.

Concerning the proposed changes to the flagship initiative, LRAs mention similar arguments, in particular the need for an extended budget and clear binding targets. Moreover there is a clear call for better links between LRAs and the European policy framework, illustrating the low level of LRA involvement in this matter.

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