
Potential of the Ecological Footprint for Monitoring Environmental Impact from Natural Resource Use

Project

Duration

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Ecologic led a comprehensive review of possible resource-specific indicators that might be used to monitor the decoupling of resource use from negative environmental impacts. The study focused particularly on the Ecological Footprint indicator and also developed a small set of indicators that together could assess progress toward decoupling. The study employed several evaluation methodologies, including RACER analysis, SWOT analysis and expert survey techniques.

The study found that the Ecological Footprint is a useful indicator for assessing progress on the EU's Resource Strategy and is unique among the 13 indicators reviewed in its ability to relate resource use to the concept of carrying capacity. The indicator is most effective, meaningful and robust at aggregate levels (national and above). Further improvements in data quality, methodologies and assumptions are required, however, and the study identifies a short- and medium-term research agenda for the Ecological Footprint that focuses on experts' top recommendations for further development of the methodology.

In order to effectively monitor EU progress on the Resource Strategy, this study recommended adoption of a small indicator basket consisting of four resource indicators:

- Ecological Footprint (EF),
- Environmentally-weighted Material Consumption (EMC),
- Human Appropriation of Net Primary Production (HANPP) and
- Land and Ecosystem Accounts (LEAC).

The identified basket of indicators can be applied to monitor de-coupling of economic activity from environmental impacts as well as illustrating the effectiveness of a number of specific policies aiming at a more sustainable use of natural resources (especially energy and climate policies, agriculture and forestry policies, material policies and spatial planning/urban planning). A research agenda for the basket of indicators was also proposed.

The [Executive Summary](#) [pdf, 328 KB, English] as well as the [full study report](#) [pdf, 2.7 MB, English] are available for download.

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