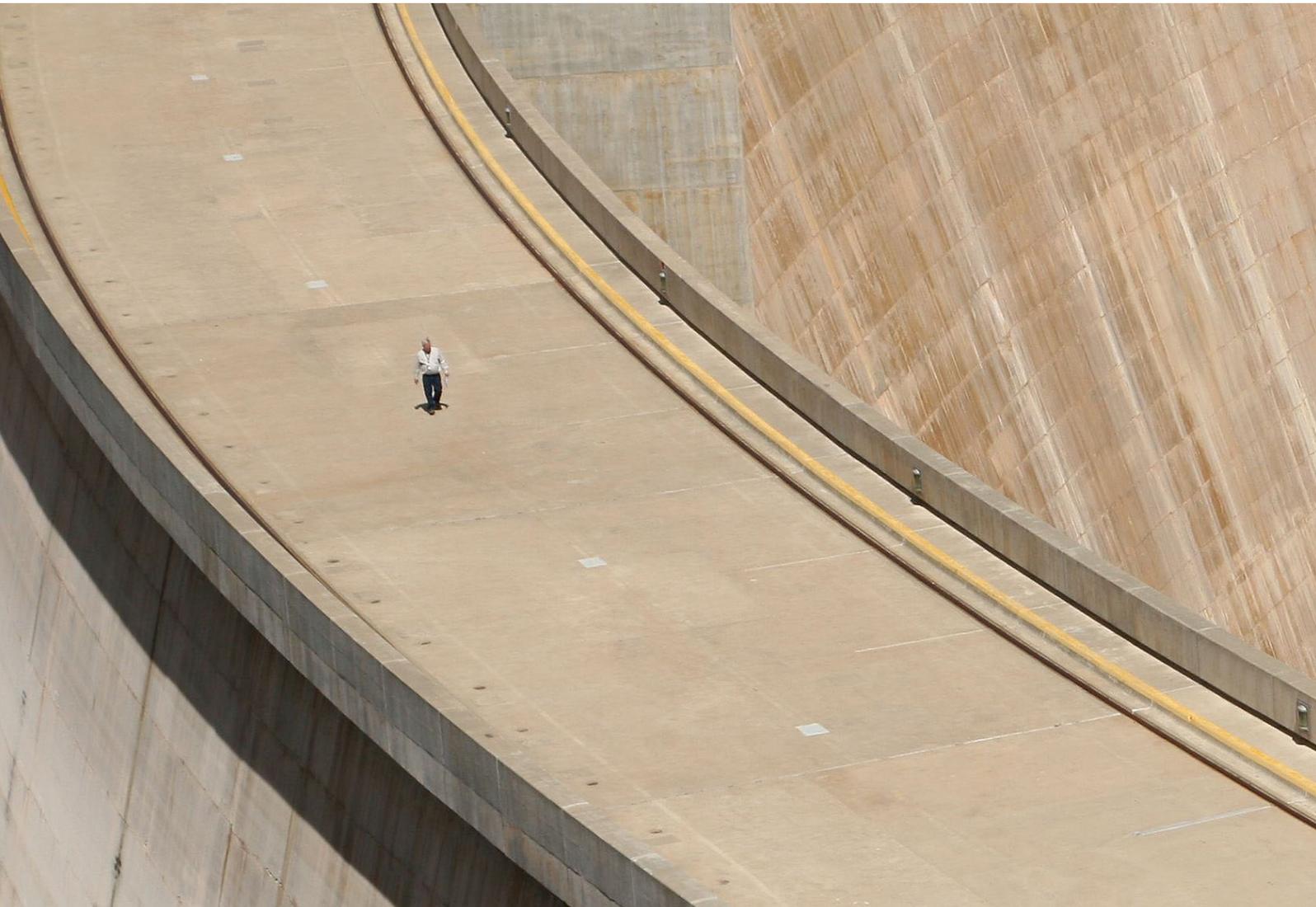


More from less — material resource efficiency in Europe

2015 overview of policies, instruments and targets in 32 countries



Ireland 

May 2016



This country profile is based on information collected by the Eionet network in Ireland. This document should not be seen as an official list of government priorities and is not necessarily an exhaustive list of all national material resource efficiency policies, objectives, targets or activities in place. The information is current as of June 2015.

This country profile was prepared as part of the 2015 EEA review of material resource efficiency policies, that aimed to collect, analyse and disseminate information about the development and implementation of material resource efficiency policies in EEA member and cooperating countries. The work resulted in the following outcomes:



32 short country profiles (this document) – self assessments prepared by countries, describing the current status of material resource efficiency policies including key strategies and action plans, policy objectives, instruments, targets and indicators, and the institutional setup. Countries were also invited to share reflections on the future direction of resource efficiency policies.

EEA report *More From Less – material resource efficiency in Europe* – prepared by the EEA and ETC/WMGE, the report analyses trends, similarities and differences in policy responses, showcases selected policy initiatives from the countries, and offers some considerations for the development of future policies.

The EEA report *More from less – material resource efficiency in Europe* and the 32 country profiles are available at: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/resource-efficiency>

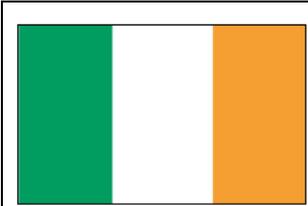
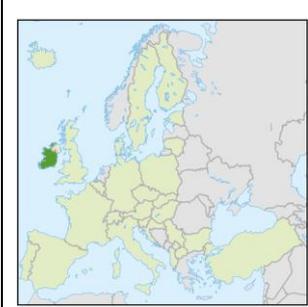
For information about trends and policies on municipal waste management in the participating countries, please visit: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/managing-municipal-solid-waste>

Information about EU Member States' waste prevention programmes can be found at: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/waste-prevention-in-europe-2015>

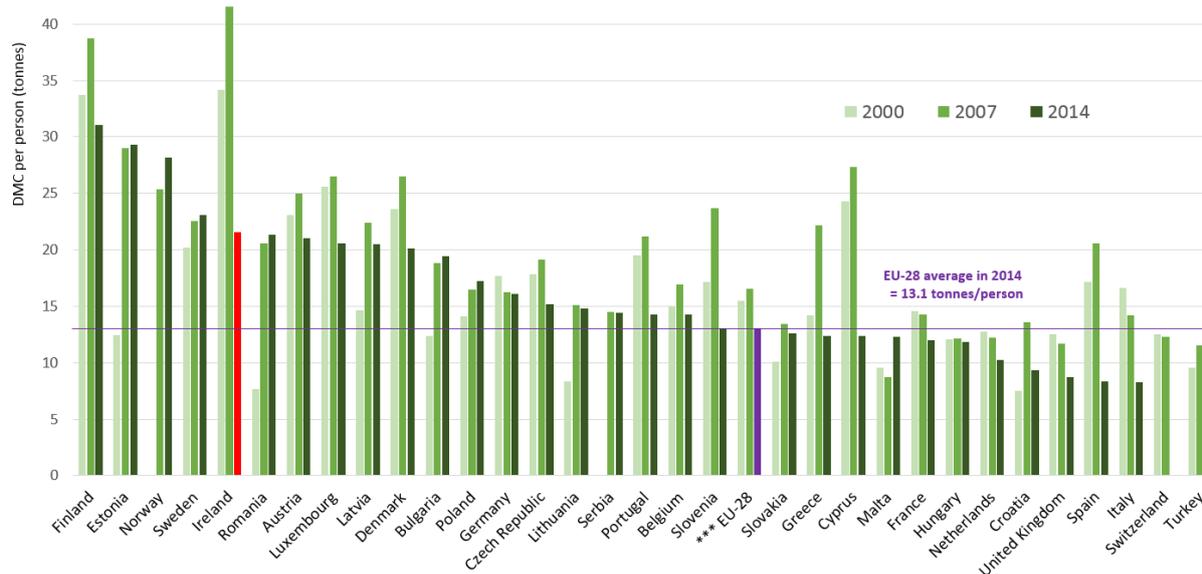
For information on climate- and energy-related policies, including those on energy efficiency, in the participating countries, please visit: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/climate/ghg-country-profiles>

Ireland, facts and figures

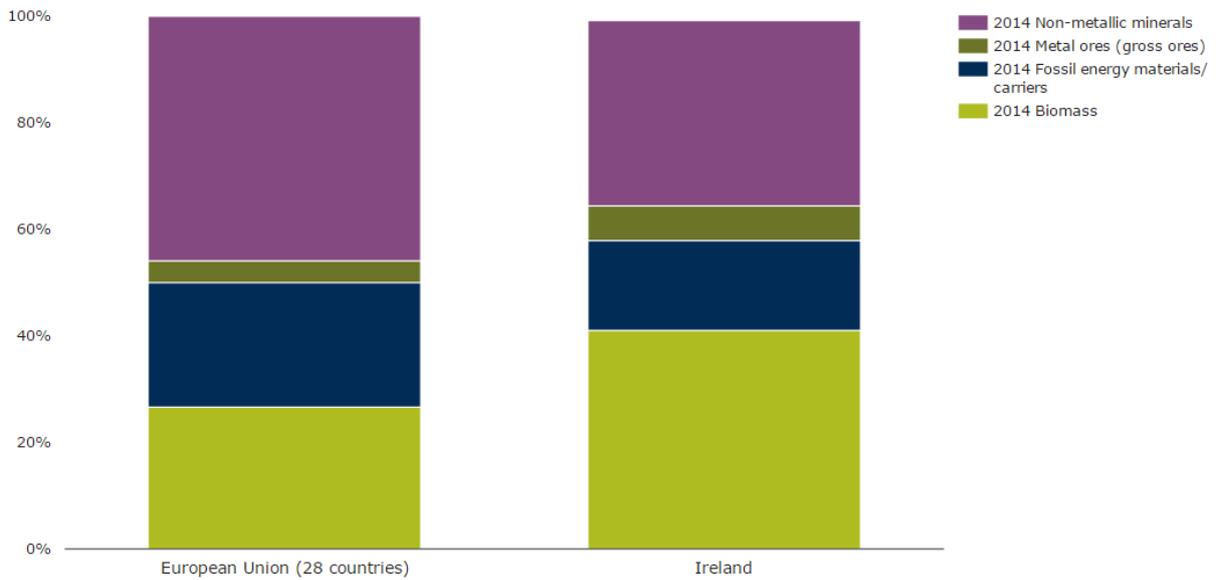
Source: Eurostat

	<p>GDP: EUR 189 billion (1.4 % of EU-28 total in 2014)</p>
	<p>Per person GDP: EUR 36,800 (in purchasing power standard) (134 % of EU-28 average per person in 2014)</p> <p>Use of materials: 99 million tonnes DMC (1.5 % of EU-28 total in 2014) 21.5 tonnes DMC/person (165 % of EU-28 average per person in 2014) Resource productivity 1.83 EUR/kg (92 % of EU-28 average in 2014)</p> <p>Structure of the economy: agriculture: 1.6 % industry: 27.0 % services: 71.4 % (2014 est.)</p>
<p>Surface area: 69,900 square kilometres (1.6 % of EU-28 total)</p> <p>Population: 4.6 million (0.9 % of EU-28 total)</p>	

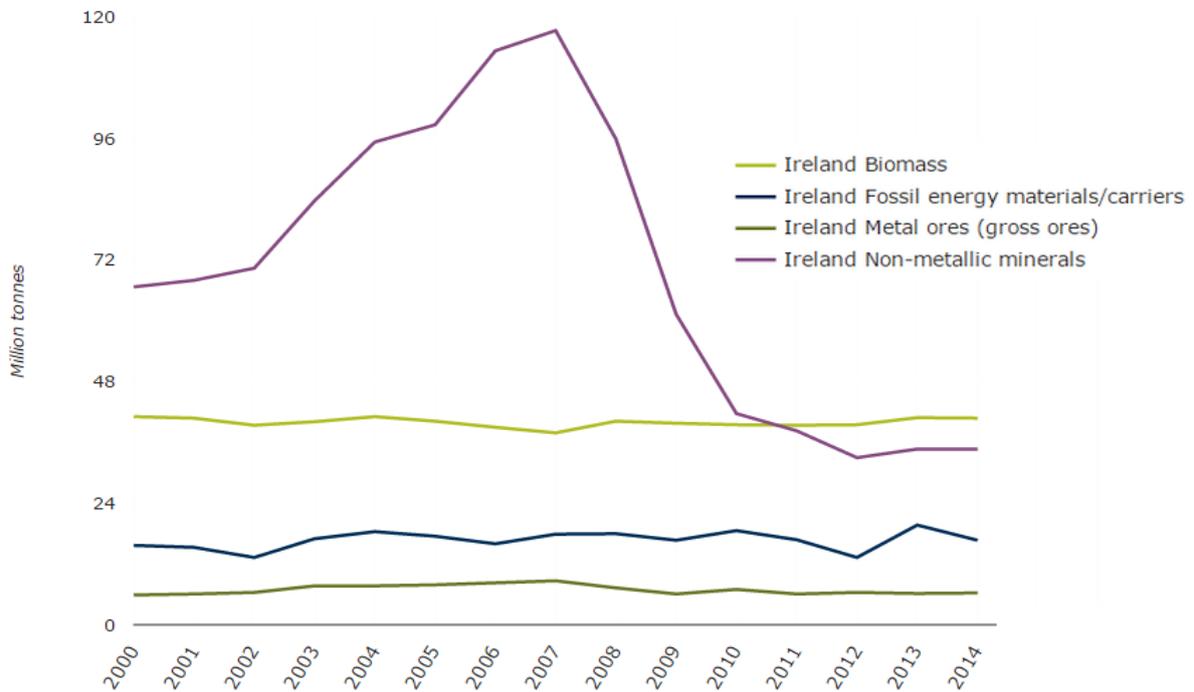
Use of materials (DMC) per person, participating countries and EU-28
(2000, 2007 and 2014)



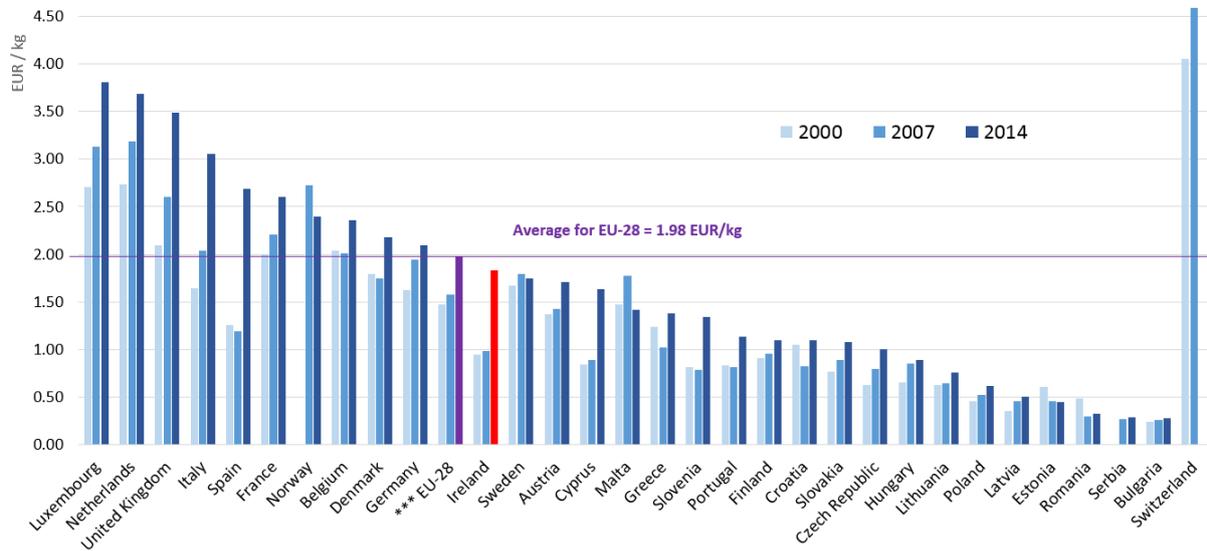
Domestic material consumption by category, EU-28 average and Ireland (2014)



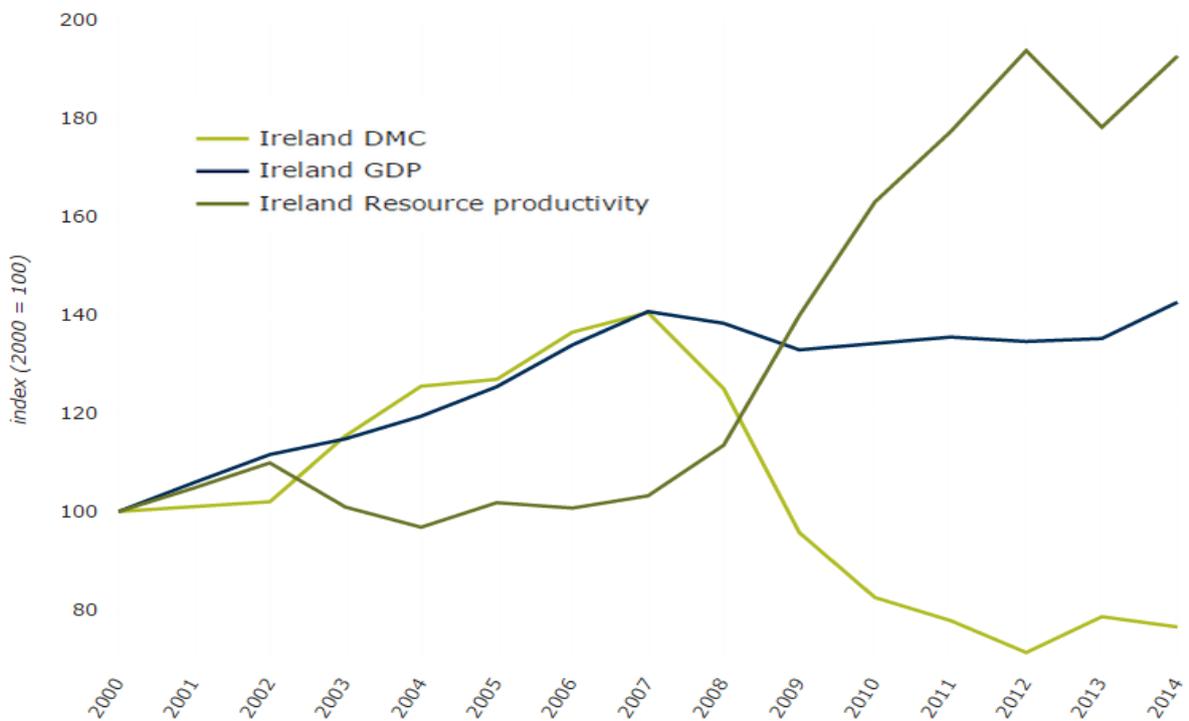
Trends in material consumption, Ireland by category (2000–2014)



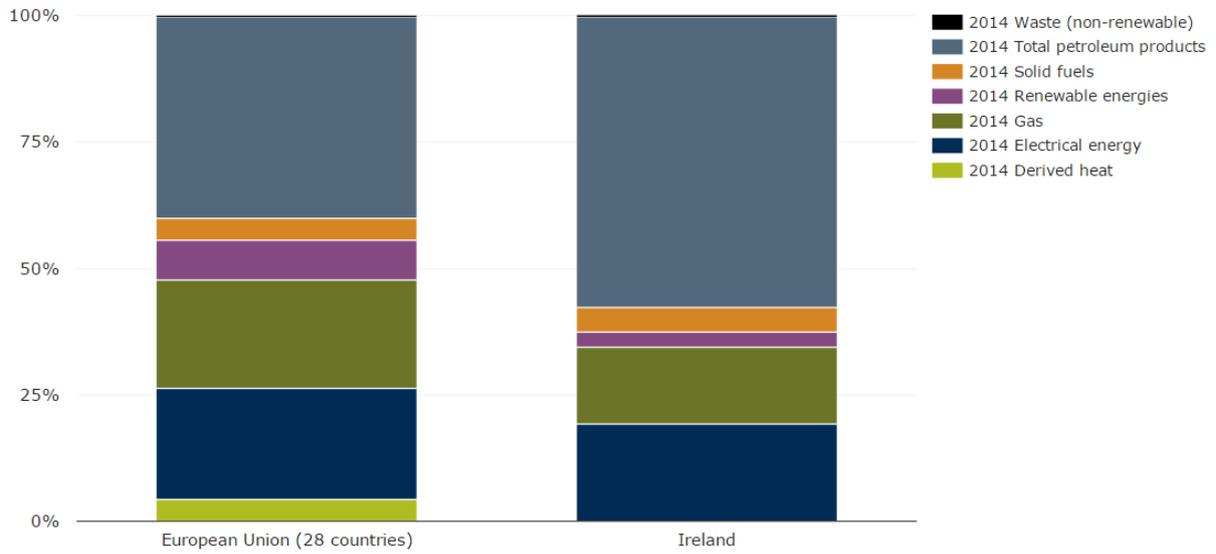
**Resource productivity (GDP/DMC), participating countries and EU-28
 (2000, 2007 and 2014)**



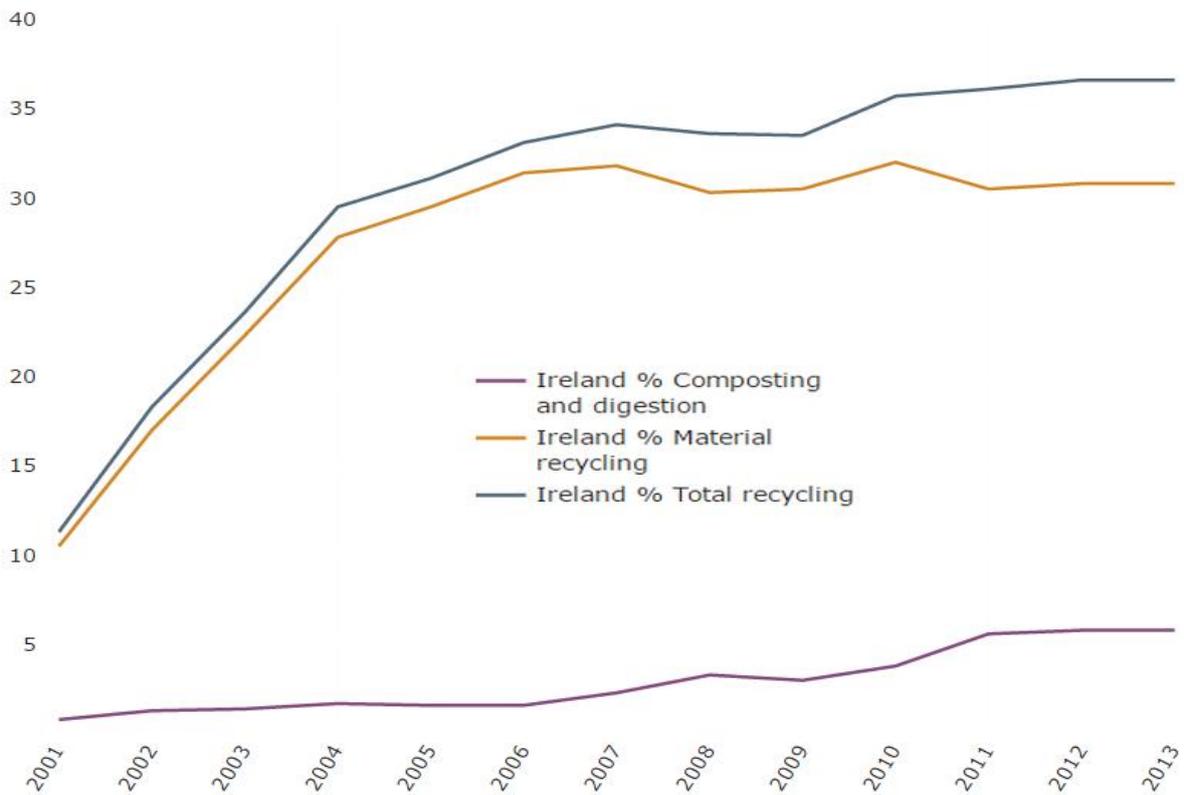
GDP, DMC and resource productivity trends, Ireland (2000–2014)



Share of final energy consumption by fuel type, EU-28 and Ireland (2014)



Recycling of municipal waste, Ireland (2001–2013)



Introduction

Ireland does not have a dedicated National Resource Efficiency Strategy or Action Plan.

Actions in this area are largely guided by the **National Waste Prevention Programme** (NWPP) – which has been in operation since 2004. The latest phase of the NWPP is titled '[Towards a Resource Efficient Ireland](#)' which runs over the period 2014-2020.

Scope of material resource efficiency

Resource Efficiency is not explicitly defined in 'Towards a Resource Efficient Ireland' – instead a tagline is used: "*Living Better; Using Less*". In practice, this concept is further developed within the strategy to embrace actions on

- preventing unnecessary and inefficient consumption of reducing consumption of water, energy and resources;
- recovery of residual resources from waste streams; and
- clever re-use of end-of-life goods.

Driving forces for material resource efficiency

Competitiveness is a key driver in Ireland with a clear focus on policies to reduce costs for energy; materials; water; and waste management.

National economic and social development ambitions – which are based around a recognition that scarcity of fossil fuels, the impact of climate change and the need to fundamentally change the way we use the Earth's finite resources will be key drivers of how we evolve as an economy and as a society.

Strategic goals and regulatory requirements (mostly originating from EU) have been an influential foundation to resource efficiency approaches – e.g. the Europe 2020 Strategy, or looking further back: the waste hierarchy.

Ireland's energy policy has been driven by three primary objectives; security of supply, environmental protection and cost competitiveness. Ireland imports nine tenths of its energy needs - so greater energy independence through increased use of renewable energy alternatives is important to ensure security of supply.

As a highly open economy with a growing manufacturing sector, the sustainable availability of raw-materials is a significant factor for continued prosperity.

Priority material resources and sectors

Priority materials

National priorities are mainly focussed on broad categories such as waste, water, energy, etc. However Biowaste & Food Waste have been identified as areas of specific interest:

The [National Strategy on Biodegradable Waste](#) was published in April 2006 and set out measures to progressively divert biodegradable municipal waste from landfill in accordance with the agreed targets in EU Directive 1999/31/EC on the landfill of waste. To address recommendations in the Strategy, many of the relevant NWPP projects are adapted specifically to give due regard to food waste:

- The information needs for tracking indicators on the implementation of the national strategy are integrated into the data collection processes involved in the compilation of the annual National Waste Reports;
- Waste characterisation studies are undertaken as needed to determine the biodegradable elements arising or being sent to landfill;
- Considerable input and support has been provided to the EPA Landfill Pre-treatment Guidance initiative aimed at enforcing the diversion of biodegradable waste from licensed landfills;
- The EPA has reviewed all landfill waste licences to limit the amount of biodegradable waste that may be deposited;
- Considerable quantities of biodegradable waste are being prevented or diverted from landfill with the implementation of the Green Hospitality Awards programme;
- A hospitality/catering sector food waste prevention guide "[Less Food Waste More profit](#)" is being widely disseminated arising from the GHA project;
- The extension of the prevention projects to the mass catering, restaurant and HSE/private hospital sectors will also realise significant prevention/diversion of biodegradable waste;
- The Greenbusiness.ie audit tools emphasise the prevention of biodegradable waste;
- The Food Waste Prevention and Home Composting project commenced in 2009 (see www.stopfoodwaste.ie);
- Guidance and training on home composting has been developed, as well as two demonstration sites and Master Composter programmes;
- Promotion of home composting is an integral part of the Green Home Programme (as well as the Green Schools programme). These programmes will include food waste prevention also to help people save money by avoiding wasting food in their homes;

- Under the Local Authority Prevention Network Programme, priority is given to projects dealing with biodegradable waste prevention, e.g. the new publicans' prevention guide *Calling Time on Waste* includes tips on food waste prevention; festivals; canteens & healthcare facilities
- Ongoing input is provided to the Market Development Group (now branded as rx3) on developing markets for compost and to Cré, a group involved in promoting the commercial biological treatment sector.

Priority industries and economic sectors

- Agriculture
- Food & Drink processing
- Other manufacturing
- Healthcare
- Services, including retail

There are no specific sectoral resource efficiency actions plans at present.

Priority consumption categories

Resource Efficiency activities are managed through three target-areas: Business; the public-sector; & Households. In each case, efforts are focussed on generating reductions on water, energy and materials usage.

As noted above, Food Waste has been identified as an area of specific interest.

Policy framework

National strategies or action plans for (material) resource efficiency

Actions in this area are largely guided by the **National Waste Prevention Programme (NWPP)** – which has been in operation since 2004. The latest phase of the NWPP is titled '[Towards a Resource Efficient Ireland](#)' which runs over the period 2014-2020. The central message of the Towards a Resource Efficient Ireland strategy is around sustainability and in particular the concept that in order for Ireland to be competitive and sustainable we need to live better while using less. The new programme aims to ensure that water, energy and raw materials are used in a better way - through efficient production processes and less wasteful consumption.

There is resonance between National Waste Prevention Programme and Ireland's national sustainable development framework: [Our Sustainable Future](#), which was published in 2012. Publication of the 'Towards a Resource Efficient Ireland' strategy was highlighted in the [2014 update report](#) on Our Sustainable Future.

The sustainable development framework does note challenges relevant to Resource Efficiency, including: *Sustainable Consumption & Production*; and *Conservation & Management of Natural Resources*. It is more wide-ranging however and includes themes from diverse areas including such as public health, education, social inclusion and economic resilience.

The NWPP does not exist in a vacuum, its programme is part of a national family of programmes designed to promote a more sustainable society and economy, e.g. Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland Energy Efficiency activities, Resource Efficient farming and Food Harvest 2020, Industrial Development Agency (IDA) and Enterprise Ireland Greentech programmes. The EPA works closely with these state agencies to promote and support sustainable enterprise attitudes and behaviours within organisations. It is this close working relationship that in 2011 yielded the [Green Enterprise Guide](#) which represents the coming together of five State agencies to produce a valuable business resource for private and public enterprises.

In 2014, an EPA-funded research project assessed the current situation in Ireland with regard to resource efficiency and to prepare a [Roadmap for a National Resource Efficiency Plan for Ireland](#))

Key policy documents in this area include:

A Resource Opportunity was published in 2012 and provides a roadmap for waste management in Ireland. The policy covers the full spectrum of waste management, compliance and enforcement, taking into account the principles set out in the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC), especially the regard of the five tiers of the EU waste hierarchy. The guiding principles behind the strategy include

- Prevention and minimisation at the heart of waste policy;
- Maximum value to be gleaned from waste by re-use, recycling and recovery;

Running to 2020, with a midlife review in 2016 to assess performance, the policy integrates its aims with other strategic priorities such as sustainable development, the green economy, and green public procurement.

Our Sustainable Future: A joined-up approach to policy making on sustainable development with 70 measures targeted to improve quality of life for current and future generations. Published in 2012, the document describes measures, responsibilities and timelines, in areas such as economic resilience, natural resources, agriculture, climate change, transport etc.

The measures of greatest relevance to Resource Efficiency are grouped under the 'Sustainable Consumption & Production' challenge:

- A new Waste Management Policy will be finalised by mid 2012, adhering to the waste hierarchy and moving Ireland away from an overdependence on landfill, where a range of alternative treatments will have a role to play
- In line with the development of the EU Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe under Europe 2020, the Government will work to ensure the effective implementation of this initiative in Ireland.
- Green Tenders, An Action Plan on Green Public Procurement will be fully implemented to act as a driver in developing the green economy in Ireland.
- The relevant agencies (e.g. IDA Ireland, EI, SEAI and the EPA) should continue to work to offer an integrated suite of resource efficiency programmes for business.

Delivering our Green Potential: Government's Policy Statement on Growth and Employment in the Green Economy in Ireland. Published in November 2012, the document provides an overview of the policy commitments in various sectors of the Green Economy in Ireland.

Regional Waste Management Plans: For the purposes of waste management planning, Ireland is divided into three regions (Southern, Eastern-Midlands and Connacht-Ulster). The regional waste management plans for 2015-2021 were published in May 2015 and the plans identify measures to develop a circular economy where waste management initiatives stop being confined to treating and disposing of waste, instead supporting initiatives that value waste as a resource or potential raw material. All three plans contain similar objectives relating to resource efficiency and waste prevention (see also section on policy objectives).

<http://southernwasteregion.ie/content/southern-region-waste-management-plan-2015-2021-associated-reports>

<http://emwr.ie/>

<http://www.mayococo.ie/en/Services/Environment/ConnachtUlsterRegionalWastePlan/>

Market Development: The Government funded **rx3 programme** (www.rx3.ie) is another national platform contributing in a very notable way to resource efficiency through market analysis and development, including the publication of standards for recyclates and secondary raw materials. The rx3 programme has also been charged with developing research into green public procurement methodologies, target-setting and effective implementation, evaluation and monitoring.

The EPA's Research Programme 2014-2020 is designed to identify pressures, inform policy and develop solutions to environmental challenges through the provision of strong evidence-based scientific knowledge. The overall goal is to support research that will deliver solutions for more efficient use of resources, water and materials.

National Policy in relation to Climate Action & Low Carbon development: The Programme for Government includes a commitment to "publish a Climate Change Bill which will provide certainty surrounding Government policy and provide a clear pathway for emissions reductions, in line with negotiated EU 2020 targets". The National Energy Efficiency Plan provides a framework to assist all

sectors to achieve approximately €1.6 billion of savings by 2020. In 2014 the Government published its National Policy Position in relation to climate change for the purpose of pursuing the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy. A Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development Bill is currently working through the legislature.

[\[http://environ.ie/en/Environment/Atmosphere/ClimateChange/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,37827,en.pdf\]](http://environ.ie/en/Environment/Atmosphere/ClimateChange/PublicationsDocuments/FileDownload,37827,en.pdf)

Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth is an Integrated Marine Plan (IMP), setting out a roadmap for the Government's vision, high-level goals and integrated actions across policy, governance and business to enable our marine potential to be realised. Implementation of this Plan will see Ireland evolve an integrated system of policy and programme planning for our marine affairs.

General policy objectives for material resource efficiency

The overarching objective of the 'Towards a Resource Efficient Ireland' strategy is to implement EU and national policy on resource efficiency to break the link between economic growth and environmental impact.

Specific objectives are to:

- Reduce wasteful consumption of material, water and energy resources by changing behaviours in businesses, households and the public sector;
- Enhance competitiveness and reduce business costs by delivering programmes that stimulate resource efficiency and the circular economy;
- Support sustainable growth and employment in the green economy - including re-use enterprises;
- Minimise generation of hazardous wastes through efficient practices and use of safer alternatives;
- Manage hazardous substances in products through efficient regulation;
- Inform and influence evidence-based decision-making by compiling and publishing high quality data on waste.

At a regional level, Ireland's three regional waste management plans have three common strategic objectives relevant to resource efficiency:

- The region will implement EU and national waste and related environmental policy, legislation, guidance and codes of practice to improve management of material resources and wastes.
- Prioritise waste prevention through behavioural change activities to decouple economic growth and resource use
- The region will encourage the transition from a waste management economy to a green circular economy to enhance employment and increase the value recovery and recirculation of resources

Some examples of resource efficiency objectives from national policies and strategies:

For a more detailed summary of key measures relevant to resource efficiency in other Government policies see the NWPP annual reports (<http://www.epa.ie/waste/nwpp/report>)

Delivering Our Green Potential (2012) recognises that “the Green Economy can be a key driver of economic growth and job creation for Ireland. We already have inherent strengths which we can build upon, including world-class renewable energy resources, our excellence in Research, Development and Innovation, an outstanding natural environment and a cluster of Irish companies that are true world-leaders in green goods and services”.

In the National Reform Programme for Ireland the Government identified key linkages in the reform programme, one of which was ‘decoupling economic growth from resource use while at the same time turning environmental challenges into growth and employment creation opportunities’. Similarly, the operation of the NWPP supports policy statements in the National Recovery Plan (2011-2014) relating to improving the efficiency and competitiveness of companies, through actions concerning energy use and waste generation.

An initiative under the Government’s **Action Plan for Jobs, Supporting Economic Development and Jobs – Locally** recognises that development of the Green Economy provides an opportunity for business to reduce costs, improve their environmental performance and engage in the shift to a new economic paradigm. Local government will be part of the network of assistance to business and industry in delivering this, including through action under the green public procurement action plan which is underway. Enhanced environmental protection is also identified as continuing to underpin the agri-food sector and secure down-stream employment. The Strategy also recognises that planned increases in the landfill levy are necessary to drive improved waste prevention and recycling, and to divert material from landfill. It also explains that these levies act as an encouragement to those businesses developing alternative waste treatments. Any resultant increase in waste management costs can be minimised by greater waste prevention measures and greater source segregation of the waste generated.

The EPA’s Research Programme 2014-2020 recognises that increasing resource efficiency is key to securing growth and jobs for Ireland as well as reducing our carbon footprint, limiting the environmental impact of resource use and increasing our sustainability. In line with the Waste Framework Directive waste treatment hierarchy, prevention and minimisation should be prioritised. Where waste arises, research will be supported into approaches and technologies that recover the value in waste to yield raw materials for other processes and/or energy.

In the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan (2009) the Government has committed to generate a 20% reduction in energy demand across the economy through efficiency measures. In addition, the public sector is charged with becoming 33% more energy efficient in the same timeframe. A

Government White Paper on Energy is currently in preparation and is expected to deal with stated Government policy ambitions to transition to a low-carbon society between now and 2050.

The circular economy and closing material loops

Circular Economy activities are largely fragmented and ad-hoc at present. A notable exception is the SMILE Resource Exchange. This is a free industrial symbiosis service for businesses that encourage the exchanging of resources between members in order to save money, reduce waste going to landfill and to develop new business opportunities. Potential exchanges are identified through networking events, an online exchange facility and through direct contact from SMILE technical advisors. <http://www.smileexchange.ie/>

Also the three regional waste management plans identify measures to develop a circular economy where waste management initiatives stop being confined to treating and disposing of waste, instead supporting initiatives that value waste as a resource or potential raw material. All three plans contain a similar objective relating to the circular economy:

- The region will encourage the transition from a waste management economy to a green circular economy to enhance employment and increase the value recovery and recirculation of resources by:
 - Establishing reuse, repair, and preparing for reuse activities and networks to recirculate and extend the lifespan of items.
 - Optimising the value of recycled and residual waste resources in the system to turn these materials into reliable sources of secondary raw materials for reprocessing and recovery.
 - Identifying and promoting the growth of secondary material markets and enterprises in the region through regional and local supports.

Targets and indicators

Targets for material resource efficiency policies

The Government has committed to achieving, by 2020, a 20% reduction in energy demand across the whole of the economy through energy efficiency measures.

On a regional level, the regional plans all contain the same specific target relating to household waste: 1% reduction per annum in the quantity of household waste generated per capita over the period of the plan (2015 – 2021).

In 2014, an EPA-funded research report ([Roadmap for a National Resource Efficiency Plan for Ireland](#)) proposed a target of a **two per cent reduction in material consumption spending per annum**. The authors estimated that this reduction - achieved through resource efficient practices - would yield savings of about €928 million in the first year. Over an eight to ten year period, this could lead to a 25% improvement yielding a total saving of €7 billion.

Indicators to monitor use of materials and resource efficiency:

National comparator indicators are published by Eurostat: DMC, Resource productivity, etc., based on data compiled by Ireland's Central Statistics Office.

The national Sustainable Development Indicator Set contains numerous environmental indicators including some relevant to this questionnaire: Recovery of packaging waste; Total primary energy requirement; Domestic Building Energy ratings; Domestic water supply sources.

Project indicators for all the programmes are published in the National Waste Prevention Programme annual report for 2014.

<http://www.epa.ie/waste/nwpp/reports/>

Policy instruments

Most important policy instruments for material resource efficiency.

A broad spectrum of policy instruments (regulatory, economic/financial, information-based and voluntary agreements) are important, and have been applied successfully in Ireland.

As a fundamental driver of change, EU Directives are a particularly powerful instrument (in a top-down model).

Waste Management Regulations:

A significant proportion of national policy is governed by European Union (EU) Directives which are transposed into Irish law. A large number of legal instruments govern the management of waste and outline the responsibilities of waste generators, waste management organisations (private companies and local authorities), waste planning authorities and waste regulators. The principal law is the Waste Management Acts 1996 to 2005

(<http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Waste/WasteMgmtActs/>).

A series of regulations have been made under the Acts. These Regulations address matters such as waste planning, producer responsibility obligations, the movement, transshipment and general control of hazardous wastes, and public access to information, as well as waste licensing and permitting.

In March 2011 the revised EU Directive on waste (98/2008/EC) (Waste Framework Directive) was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011 (SI 126 of 2011) (the Transposition Regulations).

The Transposition Regulations detail clear responsibilities for waste producers and holders. Namely, it is a duty to ensure recovery in accordance with the hierarchy (with prevention at the top), and it is an offence not to. Moreover there is a responsibility on waste producers to treat waste or have it treated in accordance with the hierarchy. The Regulations also provide a framework for decision makers to consider a by-product of a production process a resource rather than a waste. This provides significant advantage to production activities wishing to find alternative acceptable uses for production residues and for some production activities wishing to source secondary raw materials.

[\[http://www.environ.ie/en/Legislation/Environment/Waste/WasteManagement/\]](http://www.environ.ie/en/Legislation/Environment/Waste/WasteManagement/)

The Waste Management (Amendment) Act, 2001 provides for the establishment of an Environment Fund, to be managed and controlled by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government. Revenues from the levies on plastic shopping bags and the landfill of waste are paid into the Fund, which may be utilised, for a range of purposes (see Q 13). In particular, the National Waste Prevention Programme is funded by the Environment Fund.

Examples of good practice

Initiated in 2009, [Stop Food Waste](#) is an awareness and enabling initiative aimed at householders and individuals (and recently very small businesses such as cafés, pubs serving food and small local supermarkets). The programme promotes changes in behaviour that lead to reducing food waste and composting at home, through a combination of education, training, local champions, peer example and easy to use information.

Developed in 2014, the Stop Food Waste Challenge is an easy to follow stepwise programme that guides people through the food cycle to identify areas where changes in behaviour can lead to reducing food waste. The challenge involves a series of workshops covering a range of issues including awareness of what is being wasted, meal planning, smart shopping, proper food storage, and composting methods. While each of these areas is important, the most important one will be different for everyone and the programme helps people find the best solutions to their specific food waste issues. Working together, participants were able to share their experiences to reduce the quantities of food that their households wasted each week. As well as improving their shopping habits and saving money, participants reported food waste reductions between 30-50%.

Developed by the EPA as part of Ireland's National Waste Prevention Programme, the [Local Authority Prevention Network \(LAPN\)](#) builds capacity for the promotion of resource efficiency and waste prevention at a local and grassroots level, for the benefit of the locality. Since 2006, the programme has been successfully developing capacity in Irish local authorities for implementing prevention projects locally across the country. The programme provides technical assistance, funding, training and networking opportunities. While co-ordinated nationally, the programme empowers local authorities to develop and maintain their own projects, facilitates best practice sharing between participants and has demonstrated that local authorities can design and implement effective local integrated waste prevention programmes and projects.

[freetradeireland.ie](#) is a free online reuse service which allows its users to pass on unwanted items for free, from beds and furniture to electronic goods and garden equipment and more. The service is free to use and delivers real financial savings to all its users, as well as being good for the environment.

In 2014, FreeTrade Ireland diverted 18,220 items, amounting to more than 216 tonnes of materials away from landfill to users of the service. This means materials are being used for longer and the resource value is being maximised. The use of the service resulted in CO₂ savings of approximately 1,944 tonnes. Using conservative estimates for item values, it is calculated FreeTrade users saved €679,000 in terms of avoided purchases.

In 2015, the significant milestone of the reuse of 100,000 items through the FreeTrade service will be reached and this will have resulted in carbon savings in excess of 10,000 tonnes. The service

continues to prove an excellent value-for-money waste prevention initiative with a €17 return on every €1 invested by the NWPP in 2014.

The membership base continued to grow in 2014 with 3,321 new members signing up to use the service. The overall number of members now using the service stands at 51,200. The website maintains a high level of activity, with over 630,000 visits to the website in 2014 from over 26,000 unique visitors.

FreeTrade Ireland has also developed a partner reuse exchange service that is solely for the use of public sector organisations in order to maximise resource efficiency in the public sector. The Public Resource Exchange Platform (PREP) will go live in 2015 and continue to demonstrate the value of the FreeTrade Ireland concept and how it can be used to increase reuse and waste prevention across a range of sectors.

Revival by CRNI was a pop-up shop showcased and marketed re-used products made by members of the Community Re-Use Network Ireland. It was located in a stylish, city centre retail space with the intention of bringing re-use to mainstream shoppers. The shop stocked a wide range of upcycled products including furniture; fashion; bikes; laptops; and art materials. Footfall was in the order of 100 customers per day, and total sales over its 12-week duration were over €18,000. The products in the shop were quirky, but were also well designed & expertly crafted – demonstrating the high level of finish that can be achieved for re-use items. An integral part of this project was a series of workshops to teach upcycling skills & techniques, and to inspire participants to think in new ways about reusing, rather than junking discarded items.

Financial Instruments:

The plastic bag levy is a charge on plastic shopping bags. It was first introduced in 2002 and applies at the point of sale in shops, supermarkets, service stations and all sales outlets. Its primary purpose is to reduce the consumption of disposable plastic bags by influencing consumer behaviour. It had an immediate effect on consumer behaviour with a decrease in annual plastic bag usage from an estimated 328 bags per person to 21 bags per person. In 2007 the levy was increased to 22 cent (from 15 cent) - as plastic bags usage had begun to increase again.

A levy per tonne of waste sent to landfill was also introduced in 2002 to encourage the diversion of waste away from landfill and generate revenues that can be applied in support of waste minimisation and recycling initiatives. The levy, which currently stands at of 75 euro/tonne, has been a strong driver of change in relation to waste management practices in Ireland.

All monies collected from both of these levies are remitted into a national 'Environment Fund' which is used to support a range of activities including :

- Schemes to prevent/reduce waste
- Research & development into waste management
- Development of producer initiatives to prevent/reduce waste arising from their activities
- Initiatives undertaken by community groups and others for protection of the environment

[More: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Waste/>]

Producer Responsibility Obligations

As an alternative to the imposition of statutory controls and obligations, the Government's preferred approach is, in the first instance, to afford a relevant business sector an opportunity to formulate and implement proposals for an appropriate voluntary producer responsibility initiative. This approach is intended to facilitate the business sector concerned, by enabling it to bring its expertise to bear to devise workable and least-cost arrangements that are sensitive to both commercial and environmental requirements. Significant producer responsibility obligations have been introduced in relation to several waste streams including packaging waste; end-of-life vehicles; and waste electrical & electronic equipment.

As an example, a scheme operated by the Irish Farm Films Producers Group (IFFPG) since 1997 has achieved significant success in the recovery of waste farm plastics. Under the scheme, producers apply a levy on the sale of farm plastics which in turn is transferred to the IFFPG for use in funding the collection and recovery of farm plastics waste.

[More: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Environment/Waste/ProducerResponsibilityObligations>]

Institutional setup and stakeholder involvement

Institutional set up for material resource efficiency policies

The Minister of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government launched the National Waste Prevention Programme (NWPP) in April 2004. It is led by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The Minister also set up a National Waste Prevention Committee (NWPC) which includes a broad stakeholder group *) that meets periodically to provide strategic direction for the EPA in implementing the programme. The programme works with stakeholders to explore gaps, opportunities and synergies in EU, national and local policies and exchange knowledge with a wide range of sectors on waste prevention and resource efficiency.

There is also a cross-government committee established to oversee and promote implementation of Our Sustainable Future. This group is chaired by the environment ministry and includes high-level representatives from all government ministries.

The enterprise ministry (Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation) has taken an active interest in this area and in 2012 published a strategy '[Delivering Our Green Potential](#)' which was signed-off by the Irish Prime Minister. Actions under this strategy are interconnected with actions under the national waste prevention programme, and many initiatives established under 'Towards a Resource Efficient Ireland' are used as case studies in this strategy.

In 2012, the public-expenditure ministry, together with the environment ministry published [Green Tenders, an Action Plan on Green Public Procurement](#). This plan assists public authorities to successfully plan and implement green public procurement (GPP) by highlighting existing best-practice and outlining further actions to boost green public procurement. EPA supplemented this plan with publication in 2014 of [Green Procurement Guidance for the Public Sector](#). National procurement is led by the Office of Government Procurement who sit on a implementation group with the environment ministry, EPA and others to promote green public procurement.

Waste management is now organised on the basis of splitting the country into three regions. Each of these has a modest staff and works with municipalities and county-level authorities to implement activities including those on waste prevention and resource efficiency. A steering group advises the three regions from a national perspective and a working-group has been established between the National Waste Prevention Programme and the Regional Waste Management teams to ensure co-ordination between national and regional waste prevention/RE objectives.

** Membership of the NWPC comprises:*

- *Environmental Protection Agency;*
- *Department of Environment, Community & Local Government;*
- *Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine;*
- *Department of Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation;*
- *Irish Waste Management Association;*
- *Chartered Institution of Wastes Management;*
- *Small Firms Association;*
- *Irish Small & Medium Enterprises;*
- *Pharmaceutical Ireland;*
- *Irish Business and Employers Confederation;*
- *Irish Farmers Association;*
- *Enterprise Ireland;*
- *IDA Ireland;*
- *Clean Technology Centre;*
- *Environmental NGOs;*
- *Chambers of Commerce of Ireland;*
- *Community Re-Use Network Ireland;*
- *Health Service Executive;*

- *Industrial Development Authority;*
- *Engineers Ireland;*
- *Regional Waste Management Offices.*

Process to ensure stakeholder participation

Ireland's National Waste Prevention Programme (Towards a Resource Efficient Ireland) was subject to a full public consultation during its preparation. Implementation of the programme is overseen and guided by the national waste Prevention Committee which includes a broad range of stakeholders from government, business and community interests.

In a similar vein, preparation of the three new regional waste management plans was also guided by a full public consultation. A working-group has been established between the National Waste Prevention Programme and the Regional Waste Management teams to ensure co-ordination between national and regional waste prevention/RE objectives

Partnership & collaboration is also proactively pursued with organisations (e.g. Green Business/Board Bia, Green Healthcare/HSE; Smart Farming & IFA; Stop Food Waste & LAs, communities & food waste supply chain; etc.). In some cases these organisations jointly funded activities with the Environmental Protection Agency.

Suggestions for international support mechanisms to exchange experience and share lessons from the implementation of material resource efficiency policies

EEA and Eionet mechanisms are very useful.

Also European Commission working groups.

The process behind the Informal European Workshops on Resource Efficiency is good and the proposed "European Resource Efficiency Excellence Centre" would be a very effective support mechanism.

Optional questions

Which way should resource efficiency go in the future?

A strong focus is needed on messaging, so that the public and business operators think about 'resource efficiency' in the same way that thinking about 'energy efficiency' has now become natural.

Reflections on the trends in use and efficiency of material resource in Ireland

At present much of the specific 'Ireland' data for environmental issues show trends that have moved very significantly in the 'right' direction – see DMC and Resource Productivity for example (but also GHG emissions). This is probably due, in a large part, to the recent severe economic contraction that Ireland experienced. The challenge for us as economic recovery takes place is to avoid returning to previous poor position.