Posters

Translating a Factor X into Praxis

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Prologue - Setting the Factor X Target
With respect to the use of resources in our society today senior governmental, non-governmental, industry and academic leader argue the following: the total resource productivity of a nation should be increased by a Factor of 2 globally a Factor of 10 in industrialised countries within one generation and by a Factor of 4 within the next decade in order to redirect our course towards a sustainable economy. To achieve these factors every individual actor within the economy has to optimise its use of resources from the national (macro) level, over sector, regional (meso) levels on to the single firm and the household (micro level). The Factor of 10 refers to total material flows (that include also material flows for energy production) within the economy and can be set e.g. in the national policy plan as quantitative goal. For the industrial production of goods and services within this national economy, this does not mean that the resource productivity of every single process or every individual phase of the life cycle must be drastically increased. Rather those whole industry sectors contribute with different factors to the Factor 10 goal according to their life cycle wide potential to reduce resource consumption. If the goal for optimisation chosen, it is even more important to benchmark the current resource productivity and to develop possible implementation measures to improve the material flow.

The Performance Assessment - Measuring the Distance to Target
Only what is measured gets done is also the underlying principle of the Factor X discussion. What we prefer to measure resource productivity are methods which can be chosen according to the information extend (unit) desired: Should the information be based on mass units we prefer MIPS (Material Input per Service Unit), should it be based on combined mass and monetary units we prefer REA (Resource Efficiency Accounting) and on combined mass and monetary units with social considerations COMPASS

(companies´ and sectors´ path to sustainability).

The Improvement Management - Optimising the Material Flow
All three methods provide the data for an improvement management, specifying in which processes resource consumption is particularly high. In this way businesses receive information on where optimising potential is greatest (both „in-house" and from „cradle to grave"). Simultaneously businesses receive information about which purchased inputs are particularly resource intensive. Such information should be made available to management as soon as a new product or process-line decision is in order. Until today this knowledge is presently exceedingly uncommon. With having this knowledge the purchasing policies could not only save resources but would also help to reduce costs.

Communication - Show the Improvements
To translate resource efficiency as a strategic management goal into praxis and to achieve system wide improvements towards the goal of Factor X networking and the exchange of knowledge is important. Therefore two new platforms has been launched: Together the Word Business Council for Sustainable Development international conferences have been organised to discuss ideas towards increased resources productivity. Similar conferences are planed for the year 2000. Jointly with the Factor 4+ association the institute provides a yearly platform - the Factor 4+ trade fair - where all stakeholders and especially industry are invited to show their concept and practical achievements towards the goal of Factor X.