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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your letter to President von der Leyen dated 17 September in which you urge us to look beyond GDP as a measure of well-being and to reorient our economies towards more circular models. The President has asked me to reply on her behalf.

I am glad to say that we fully share the considerations put forward in your letter. Indeed thinking along those lines has accompanied our work in the recent past and will surely guide our actions in future.

Since 2007, the European Commission has an ongoing work stream on 'Measuring GDP and beyond'. A dedicated website¹ illustrates many EU and worldwide initiatives on measuring progress. In 2011, the European Statistical System Committee adopted a report on Measuring Progress, Well-being and Sustainable Development², and decided to work further on three areas: multidimensional measurement of the quality of life; household perspective and distributional aspects of income, consumption and wealth; environmental sustainability.

The necessity of jointly monitoring economic, social, and environmental aspects was recognised in the Europe 2020 strategy³. The Commission is already doing so through the Sustainable Development Goals indicators, the circular economy monitoring framework, the resource efficiency scoreboard, the social scoreboard, energy union indicators, and statistical annexes in European Semester country reports.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/beyond_gdp/index_en.html

² <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/ess/about-us/measuring-progress>

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

Our thinking on the most efficient use of resources is encapsulated in the new Circular Economy Action Plan that the Commission adopted in March this year (following the first such action plan of 2015). This plan is one of the main building blocks of the European Green Deal, Europe's new agenda for sustainable growth. With measures along the entire life cycle of products, the new Action Plan aims to make our economy fit for a green future, strengthen our competitiveness while protecting the environment and give new rights to consumers. Building on the work done since 2015, the new Plan focuses on the design and production for a circular economy, with the aim to ensure that the resources used are kept in the EU economy for as long as possible. The plan and the initiatives therein will be developed with the close involvement of the business and stakeholder community.

We understand that making our economies fully circular is an indispensable condition for achieving our goal of climate-neutrality by 2050, preserving our natural environment, and strengthening our economic competitiveness. We are happy to be able to count on the support of the academic community in our actions.

Yours sincerely,

(e-signed)

Reinhard FELKE