

Press release

EP vote is step in the right direction, but more efforts needed to ensure watertight environmental and social standards in waste shipments to third countries, says EUROFER

Brussels, 17 January 2023 – The revision of the Waste Shipment Regulation adopted by the European Parliament in today’s plenary vote is a welcome step towards a more sustainable approach in waste exports to third countries. Still, it remains urgent to close some critical loopholes to avoid circumvention of the new measures and ensure watertight environmental and social standards equivalent to those of the EU, urges the European Steel Association (EUROFER).

“The text approved today is a clear improvement compared to the initial Commission proposal. Yet, significant risks of circumvention persist as long as a genuine level playing field between the EU and third countries is not ensured, especially with respect to environmental, social, safety and health conditions in waste shipment and further treatment. Europe should not allow to export its waste challenges abroad, even more so when waste such as ferrous scrap is a strategic secondary raw material in the circular economy and for decarbonisation”, said Axel Eggert, Director General of the European Steel Association (EUROFER). “Scrap should be rather considered a critical raw material, as already today it is acknowledged to be a scarce resource, and our low-carbon projects will need significantly more ferrous waste already by 2030 and even larger quantities by 2050 to produce green steel”, he stressed.

Ferrous scrap is by far the most exported type of waste from the EU – 19.5 Mt in 2021, equal to 59% of all EU waste exports, according to [Eurostat](#). Yet, it is a valuable material that could be recycled into new steel following the highest European environmental, health and social standards. For every tonne of carbon steel scrap recycled, a saving of 1.5 tonnes of CO₂ is achieved, and in case of stainless-steel scrap this saving is even higher, reaching roughly 5 tonnes of CO₂.

Despite an improved verification of Environmental Sound Management (ESM) in the waste destination country, the introduction of best available techniques (BATs) as reference point for assessing and minimising the impact on the environment, more efforts are needed to make the new measures truly effective.

In particular, a stronger monitoring system applied to the most exported waste flows to OECD countries is absolutely necessary, including an effective verification of ESM compliance at country level. Anticircumvention measures should also be strengthened to prevent any undue use of the 'end-of-waste' classification. Finally, a more granular and harmonised definition of facility is needed to ensure a rigorous enforcement of the facility-based audit system.

“We count on the Council to incorporate these crucial improvements during the next legislative steps. It is of utmost importance to get this right early on, otherwise we risk jeopardising the EU’s climate, environmental and social targets as well as its strategic autonomy”, concluded Mr. Eggert.

Notes for editors

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About the European Steel Association (EUROFER)

EUROFER AISBL is located in Brussels and was founded in 1976. It represents the entirety of steel production in the European Union. EUROFER members are steel companies and national steel federations throughout the EU. The major steel companies and national steel federations in the United Kingdom and Turkey are associate members.

The European Steel Association is recorded in the EU transparency register: 93038071152-83.

About the European steel industry

The European steel industry is a world leader in innovation and environmental sustainability. It has a turnover of around €125 billion and directly employs around 310,000 highly-skilled people, producing on average 153 million tonnes of steel per year. More than 500 steel production sites across 22 EU Member States provide direct and indirect employment to millions more European citizens. Closely integrated with Europe’s manufacturing and construction industries, steel is the backbone for development, growth and employment in Europe.

Steel is the most versatile industrial material in the world. The thousands of different grades and types of steel developed by the industry make the modern world possible. Steel is 100% recyclable and therefore is a fundamental part of the circular economy. As a basic engineering material, steel is also an essential factor in the development and deployment of innovative, CO2-mitigating technologies, improving resource efficiency and fostering sustainable development in Europe.