

October 2021

Revision of the Waste Shipment Regulation - ferrous and non-ferrous metals sectors call for establishing a level playing field and equivalent conditions for EXTRA-EU exported waste

Europe's ferrous and non-ferrous metals sectors call on the European Commission to maintain its ambition of fully addressing the environmental and social impacts of EU waste exports through the Waste Shipments Regulation¹ review. **To fulfil the EU's Green Deal and industrial objectives, EXTRA-EU exported waste must in the future be treated to equivalent standards and techniques as in Europe.**

A level-playing field and clearly defined equivalent conditions for exported waste are vital for sustainably supplying Europe's Green Deal, avoiding harm in developing countries, and maintaining the competitiveness of the European industry.

The recent EU Green Deal and the new Circular Economy Action plan (CEAP) highlighted the role of waste recycling in delivering towards EU goals. The EC, in particular, highlighted out to the need to:

1. ensure, that the EU does not export its waste challenges to third countries²;
2. ensure that materials that can be treated domestically are recycled in the EU³;
3. address the loss of economic opportunities for the recycling industry in the EU.

Metals are the enabling materials for the Green Deal's energy transition, from electricity grids to batteries and electric vehicles, and from wind turbines to solar panels. According to the International Energy Agency, "a concerted effort to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement... [and]... hit net-zero globally would require six times more mineral inputs in 2050 than today". The corresponding supply has to be sustainable, including recycling to the maximum extent feasible. In Europe and globally, we need to recover the valuable materials from waste and recycle them in an environmentally and socially sound manner, respecting always high standards for health and safety.

The role of metals recycling in meeting Europe's Green Deal and Circular Economy objectives is evident. Recycling of base metals like aluminium, copper and steel saves up to: 95%, 90% and 80% respectively of the energy needed for primary production. Additionally, high quality recycling of electronics waste, batteries, vehicles, and other complex metals-containing products contributes to increasing Europe's resource autonomy, safeguarding resources which are on the EU's Critical Raw

¹ (EC) No 1013/2006

² Circular Economy Action Plan, 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1583933814386&uri=COM:2020:98:FIN>

³ Circular Economy Action Plan, 2020

Materials list⁴ or are used by EU strategic value chains⁵ and thus maximising social and economic benefits.

It is important that the EU export of waste only occurs where equivalent European standards in receiving countries outside the EU and efficient material recovery are guaranteed. In other words, as already established in Art. 49 of the Waste Shipment Regulation, **EXTRA-EU exports of waste have to be strictly controlled and require proof that they will be processed at the destination at least with standards and techniques equivalent to those at the European country of origin.** The ongoing revision of the Regulation is a timely and unmissable opportunity to deliver this principle, and supports more European businesses by reducing administrative and bureaucratic hurdles related to intra-EU waste shipments.

Without setting stricter rules under which waste can be exported, Europe's exports of waste metals and their wider products risk causing harm to the environment and health in developing areas of the world. A visible example is the 750,000 tonnes of electronics waste (and its contained metals) leaving Europe annually, a significant percentage of which is treated in the informal recycling sector of Africa and other regions. Such complex products can only be treated properly in state-of-the-art recycling facilities, to avoid losses of low-volume critical raw materials and to ensure safe treatment of hazardous substances.

The success of Europe's circular economy for the overall ferrous and non-ferrous metals sectors also depends on the sufficient supply of scrap. These scrap types are input materials recovered from waste that feed the recycling process for producing new metals. However, the volume of exported ferrous scrap dramatically increased from 2004 to 2019, passing from around 12,000,000 t to 21,500,000 t. Since 2002, the EU has been a net exporter of aluminium and copper scrap, with approximately 1,000,000 t each of aluminium and copper scrap departing from Europe to other parts of the world every year. These are quantities which could be absorbed in Europe, as the main reasons for their exports are higher prices paid due to the lower environmental, safety and labour standards in many importing destinations.

Without an adequate legal framework and clear applicative guidelines on controlling scrap exports and the standards and legislation at the destination, there is no level playing field, both in economic and sustainability terms. Moreover, losing valuable resources to competitors in countries with less ambitious environmental, health and safety regulations puts European producers at a disadvantage and jeopardises the EU's Green Deal ambitions.

Therefore, the revision of the Waste Shipment Regulation should substantially improve the methodology and criteria for checking the existing Environment, Health & Safety regulations and standards at the importing destinations. To that extent, strengthening the provisions of Article 49 of the Regulation is essential. More to the point, it will be necessary to impose a burden of proof on the exporters to demonstrate that conditions equivalent to the EU ones are met at importing destinations.

We urge the European Commission to define procedures and checks of effective equivalence at the destination that consider industrial emissions (BAT AELs⁶), climate change, waste legislation and the respect of the fundamental international rights on human, social and labour aspects in due time.

⁴ Critical Raw Materials Resilience: Charting a Path towards greater Security and Sustainability - <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/42849>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/europe-fit-digital-age/european-industrial-strategy_en

⁶ Best Available Techniques Associated Emission Levels

EUROFER 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.

Contact: Lucia Sali, Spokesperson & Head of Communications, L.Sali@eurofer.eu;
Miikka Nieminen, Senior Manager Public Affairs, M.Nieminen@eurofer.eu

Eurometaux is an industry association representing the collective European non-ferrous metals industry, including miners, smelters, refiners, fabricators and recyclers. The industry employs 500,000 people across over 900 facilities, with an annual turnover of €120bn.

Contact: Kamila Slupek, Sustainability Director, slupek@eurometaux.be

European Aluminium is the voice of the aluminium industry in Europe. Our 85+ members include primary aluminium producers, downstream manufacturers of extruded, rolled and cast aluminium, producers of recycled aluminium and national aluminium associations – representing in total more than 600 plants in 30 European countries. Aluminium products are used in a wide range of markets, including automotive, transport, high-tech engineering, building, construction and packaging.

Contact: Pia Alina Lange, Director Public Affairs & Communications, lange@european-aluminium.eu;
George Karkampasis, Manager Circular Economy & Recycling karkampasis@european-aluminium.eu

European Copper Institute (ECI) is the leading advocate for the copper industry in Europe. Through a team of policy, industry and scientific experts, ECI uses data-driven research and scientific thinking to support copper's role in achieving the EU's policy goals. ECI acts as the European arm of the International Copper Association (ICA). As such, ECI advocates for copper's crucial role in the energy transition, electromobility, and the building or renovation of sustainable, energy-efficient buildings.

Contact: Hans De Keulenaer, Knowledge Director, Clean Energy Transition,
hans.dekeulenaer@copperalliance.org