

From Waste to Resources

Non-Ferrous Metals in the Circular Economy Act

Non-ferrous metals are essential to high-tech, clean technologies, e-mobility and the green and digital transitions. Non-ferrous metals smelting and recycling rely on modern metallurgical processes that enable the simultaneous recovery of multiple metals, with strong potential for infinite recycling. However, this potential is still limited by gaps in collection, inadequate sorting and pre-processing within the EU, barriers to waste shipments, scrap leakage, and inconsistent implementation of EU waste rules.

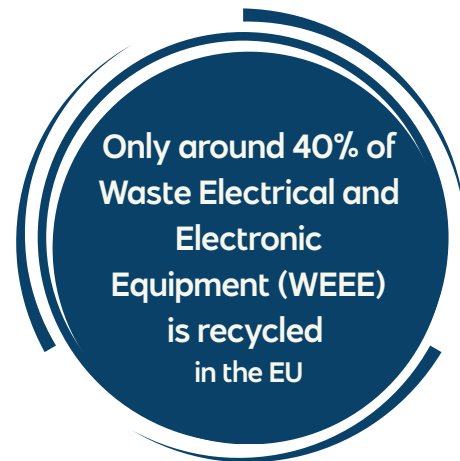
The Circular Economy Act is a key opportunity to strengthen the EU Single Market for Waste, boost recycling within Europe and contribute to secure access to raw materials from secondary sources, thus reducing dependencies on third countries and strengthening our strategic autonomy.

How the Circular Economy Act can drive Europe's Green and Digital Transition

1 EU Single Market for Waste

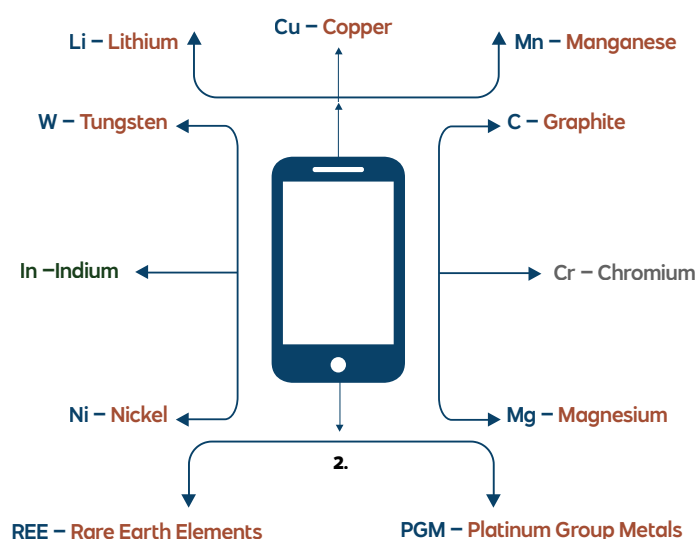
Establish a functional EU Single Market for Waste

A harmonised application of EU waste legislation across Member States can facilitate intra-EU shipments of waste containing non ferrous metals. This should include simplified procedures for shipments of metal-rich wastes to EU pre-consented facilities and measures to prevent metal scrap or battery black mass leakage from the EU.



Source: Eurostat, EU-27 WEEE collection and recovery

Selection of critical and strategic raw materials used in a smartphone



Source: European Commission, Joint Research Centre (JRC), 2023

2 Product Design & Increased collection

Ensure circularity in product design through life-cycle thinking and design for recyclability. In parallel, it is essential to further advance the collection, sorting, and pre-processing of metal-containing waste to maximise metals recovery and increased recycling.



Non-ferrous metals form an eco-system. Metal producers and recyclers are organised in a complex and highly integrated network of different operators. The Circular Economy Act should recognise the value of industrial symbiosis and reward synergies that advance a circular economy, valorising waste.

3 Harmonised standards on collection, logistics, and treatment of e-waste

The revision of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive, as part of the Circular Economy Act, **should introduce mandatory certification against the EN 50625 core standards** on collection, logistics, and treatment of e-waste. This will ensure legal certainty and create a level playing field for all operators in the metals value chain.

Currently, only around **23% of EU recycling facilities** apply high-quality treatment standards for WEEE

European Commission (2025), Commission Staff Working Document, Evaluation of Directive 2012/19/EU on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)



4 Coherence of EU Legislation

The Circular Economy Act should **complement and reinforce existing legislation**, including the Critical Raw Materials Act, Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, Batteries Regulation, Waste Framework Directive, Waste Shipment Regulation, chemicals legislation (REACH, CLP and RoHS) and the EU ETS.

For further information

Laura Fazio Bellacchio, Head of Sustainability | fazio@european-metals.eu

About European Metals

European Metals is an umbrella association representing the interests of the combined non-ferrous metals industry towards EU policy makers. We bring together the companies and associations shaping Europe's non-ferrous metals ecosystem: from upstream mining and refining to downstream use and high-quality recycling. By connecting technical expertise with policy action, we ensure that the importance of the metals sector is recognised, valued, and that our sector's future is secured. For more information, visit our website: <https://european-metals.eu/>

