



CIRCULAR ECONOMY 2.0

GREEN DEAL POLICY BRIEF - METALS

Europe already has a position of real global leadership in metals recycling, with state-of-the-art facilities equipped to recover over 20 strategic metals. Achieving a European Circular Economy will allow us to save energy, reduce import dependency and increase the domestic supply of raw materials for the climate transition.

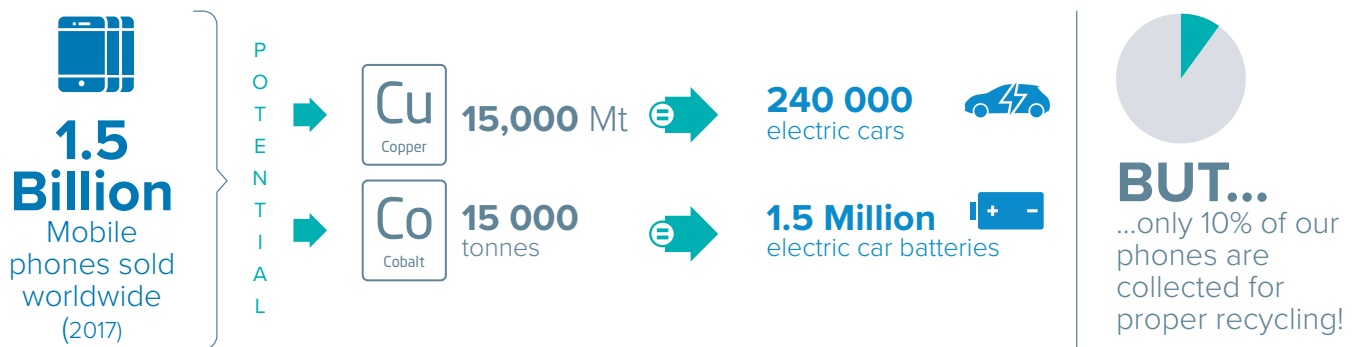
Metals are permanent and endlessly recyclable materials, which will continue to be a centrepiece in Europe's Circular Economy. We must do a lot more to make sure our waste metals reach Europe's recyclers. Too many are still discarded, exported or improperly recycled.

How the EU can help: Deliver a follow-up Circular Economy strategy, which improves the supply of recycled materials for the 2050 climate transition

1. Advance collection & sorting infrastructure in Member States

Electronics waste & portable batteries have very low collection rates across Europe, despite containing high concentrations of strategic metals. The EU can also greatly improve recycling rates for aluminium and other pure metals scrap by implementing advanced sorting technologies across Member States, for example to separate specific products and alloys families.

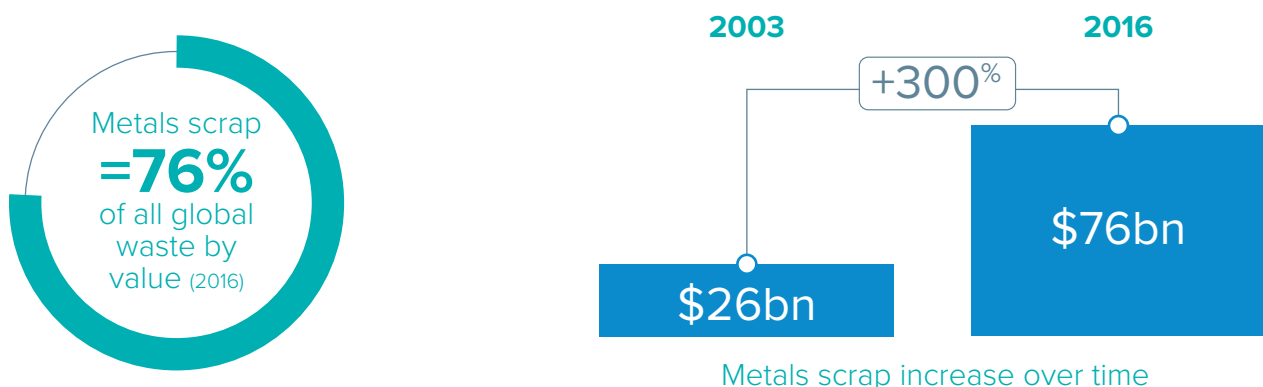
KEY FACT: Potential from our waste mobile phones to supply clean mobility



2. Streamline European waste flows to the right recyclers

Shipments of European metals waste are obstructed by high levels of bureaucracy. It can take several months for a planned intra-EU shipment to receive approval from all concerned authorities, and over a year from outside Europe. The EU should reduce red-tape for recyclers demonstrating they meet minimum standards for recovering strategic metals from complex products like electronics waste.

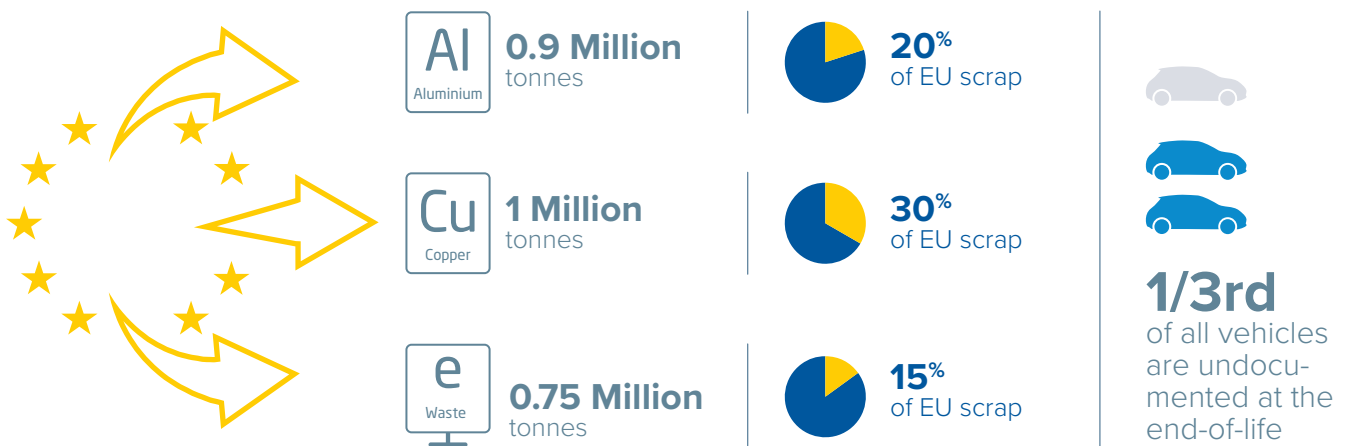
KEY FACT: Value of global waste and scrap trade in billion USD



3. Address global recycling imbalances

The global waste market has shifted in the wake of China’s import ban on certain scrap types. Nevertheless, Europe continues to export high volumes of metals waste to other parts of Asia & Africa, without guaranteeing it’s properly recycled. Electronics waste & end-of-life vehicles also suffer from illegal exports. The EU should only export scrap & waste products with a guarantee of good recycling.

KEY FACT: Exports of metals waste outside of Europe



4. Improve product design & innovation to facilitate recycling

Several of the specialty & critical metals required for Europe’s climate transition are used in very low quantities in their end-use products. Their chances of recovery can be improved through measures to improve product recyclability. The EU should also focus its research agenda on developing new technologies & processes for recovery of less recycled metals

KEY FACT: Metals currently recyclable from electronics waste

