

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

## Zero Pollution Action Plan: Balancing pollution prevention & reduction with our climate ambition

- **Today's Zero Pollution Action Plan confirms the need for close synergies between Green Deal initiatives, such as the Circular Economy Action Plan and the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability**
- **The metals industry is on board with a zero pollution vision for 2050 to reduce pollution to levels that do not harm health and the environment, and actions that go beyond the substance per se to tackle the different sources of emissions**

Brussels, 12 May 2021: "Today's Zero Pollution Action Plan has a clear ambition to provide a compass for including pollution prevention and reduction in all relevant EU policies. We welcome its call to tackle pollution 'at source', rather than focusing on the actual chemicals emitted. It is important to identify the sources of emissions/exposure (including diffuse emissions to air, water, and soil) to compare their potential contribution to overall risks to health and the environment," said Guy Thiran, Eurometaux Director General, on the day of publication of the Action Plan.

"Our industry is contributing and striving towards zero pollution, with significant investments already made to meet the Best Available Techniques standards and implement chemicals management. Today, most metals released into the environment (i.e. not naturally occurring) are not from our industrial facilities, rather these are indirectly released from other sources, such as transports or fossil fuel burning."

The Action Plan calls for investments in clean and sustainable design, circular economy business models and low-emission technologies, which are paramount to achieve the many objectives of the Green Deal, including the ultimate goal of climate neutrality. This will require striking the right balance between more stringent requirements imposed on key value chains, and the need to produce and recycle the many metals needed for today's rapidly growing clean energy technologies – from wind turbines and electricity networks to electric vehicles. As highlighted on 5 May by the International Energy Agency (IEA) in [a new report](#) on The Role of Critical Minerals in Clean Energy Transitions, today's supply and investment plans for many critical metals fall well short of what is needed to support the transition to clean energy, and policy-makers need to provide clear signals to industry about how to turn their targets into action.

Guy Thiran added: "A key element mentioned in the Action Plan is the need for coherence with the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability and circular economy. We therefore call on the Commission to take a proportionate approach to 'substances of concern', which once again are stigmatised in this Action Plan that seeks to "substitute and minimise" all of them. According to the definition from the Chemicals Strategy, over 80% of the metals Europe needs for its green and digital transitions would be within scope, despite most of them being used safely in products and their virtue of endless recyclability. Think of the metals locked in batteries for our mobility and energy systems, the many alloys used in clean energy technologies, or a laptop circuit board. We need a proportionate approach to this purely hazard-based approach to 'substances of concern' if we want to complement and not conflict with the goals of a circular economy and climate neutrality."

The metals industry likewise supports the EU willingness to tackle the global issue of informal recycling of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and end-of-life vehicles (ELVs), notably in developing countries. The safe and sustainable recycling of metals from those products is important for keeping valuable materials in use and avoiding pollution and health impacts from their improper treatment.

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**About Eurometaux:** Eurometaux represents the collective European non-ferrous metals industry, including smelters, refiners, transformers, and recyclers of all non-ferrous metals produced industrially in Europe. In total the industry employs 500,000 people across over 900 facilities, with an annual turnover of €120 bn. Our [2050 Blueprint](#) outlines the framework conditions required for transitioning towards climate neutrality.