

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Sustainable Products Initiative: Full lifecycle in the focus

Brussels, 30 March 2022: “We’re supportive of the European Commission’s focus on the full lifecycle in today’s Sustainable Products Initiative. All elements of a product’s sustainability must be assessed together, from recyclability to carbon footprint. We now need to see how today’s proposals will be carried forward for the product groups in scope”, said Guy Thiran, Director General of Eurometaux (European metals association), on the release day for the European Commission’s Sustainable Products Initiative.

Guy Thiran continued: “Metals have lifecycle benefits due to their permanent properties and infinite recyclability. Europe’s sustainability policies must optimise product recycling loops, while mitigating climate and environmental impacts during initial production. We’re asking legislators to develop a coherent and practical framework which keeps a level playing field for EU producers while creating lead markets for best performers”.

The EU’s Sustainable Products Initiative proposes to revise the EU’s Ecodesign Directive, with new rules for products that are more durable, reusable, repairable, recyclable, and energy efficient. The initiative also addresses the presence of harmful chemicals in products through information and tracking requirements.

Metals are contained in most focus product groups in the European Commission’s proposal, from electronics to furniture. The metals industry has already contributed to the EU’s development of sustainable product rules for batteries, one of the blueprints for today’s proposal. A learning lesson is that new rules must be practical and fitted to the realities of the European market, with sufficient time for proper implementation.

Guy Thiran continued: “We are concerned about the widened focus on “substances of concern” in today’s proposal. The Commission’s new definition covers over 80% of metals or their compounds, including those used and recycled safely. Think of the metals locked in batteries for our mobility and energy systems, the alloyed steel in a wind turbine, or a laptop circuit board. European companies are already recycling these metals efficiently and controlling risks, and so we question the value of adding extra information rules or undue stigmatisation”.

“Lastly, we emphasise that recycled content rules should remain a targeted measure for improving the uptake of secondary materials not able to compete with their primary alternatives. Recycled metals are produced to the same quality as primary metals and will not benefit from recycled content obligations”.

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About Eurometaux: Eurometaux is a trade 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.

