

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

Waste Shipments Regulation revision will level the playing field for high-quality European metals recyclers

Brussels, 17 November 2021: “The European Commission has today given a clear and important message that Europe’s exported waste should only be treated by companies meeting equivalent environmental and social conditions to what we’d expect here”, said Guy Thiran, Director General of Eurometaux (European metals association), welcoming the European Commission’s Waste Shipments Regulation revision on its release day.

Guy Thiran continued: “This step change is important to level the playing field for high-quality European metals recyclers and better manage impacts from Europe’s waste abroad. It must now be implemented in a way that preserves the core principle of free and fair trade for global waste markets”.

Europe exports large volumes of its metals waste to other regions of the world, mainly to Asia and Africa, without any check on the climate, environment, and social standards followed. This includes 1 million tonnes of aluminium scrap, 900,000 tonnes of copper scrap, and 750,000 tonnes of metals-containing electronics waste. European metals recyclers have long requested a more level playing field with operators not investing into the same high standards of performance and protection, given that there is capacity to recycle Europe’s exported metals domestically.

The revised Waste Shipments Regulation proposal proposes a more rigorous system to mitigate environmental impacts from EU waste exports. Receiving countries outside of the OECD will have to express their interest to receive waste, and give proof that equivalent conditions for environmentally sound management of waste are met.

The text also includes several new provisions for speeding up shipments of waste within Europe and alleviating administrative burden for the domestic recycling value chain.

Guy Thiran reacted: “We’re pleased that today’s proposal introduces several necessary measures for easing the transport of waste across Member State borders. Shipments of metal-containing waste within Europe currently get delayed by several months due to the massive amounts of red tape for operators. It’s really welcome that the European Commission has proposed to fast track shipments to “pre-consented recovery facilities” and introduced an electronic system for waste flow registration. Member States must now ensure these new principles are implemented in practice”.

The European Commission’s proposal will now be reviewed and amended by the European Parliament and Council under the co-decision procedure.

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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.

