



By 2005, the Eurozone will recycle 262,055 tonnes of old coins: an important contribution to sustainable development

In the year of the next World Summit on sustainable development, Europe has started to recycle its old coins.

Since March 1st, the twelve national currencies of the euro zone are no longer in commercial circulation, having been replaced by the common euro currency. This requires the demoneterisation, sorting and recycling, by 2005, of 262,055 tonnes of metal, divided into approximately 147,496 of copper, 54,000 of steel and 43,000 of nickel.

This is a non-negligible quantity for Europe, where recycled material makes up more than 45% of the annual demand for copper (i.e. 2 millions tonnes). This important level is due to copper's unique ability to be recycled 100%, time and time again, without any loss in performance. The production of copper, via the recycling of products that have reached the end of their useful lives, also only uses about one quarter of the energy necessary to produce the material from ore. This results in substantial savings (75%) in European energy usage, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Through its long experience of recycling copper and copper alloys, the Spanish company, Elmet, has achieved a leadership position, across Europe, in this specialised activity of coin demoneterisation and recycling.

Elmet, who opened their doors in Bilbao to the international press for the first time today, has demonetised 35,000 tonnes of Spanish pesetas and 6,600 tonnes of Irish punts and pence since January 21st. 1 500 tonnes of demonetised pesetas are ready to be sent in Korea to Daewoo in order to produce a new currency.

With recycled copper indistinguishable from virgin material – we will soon find our old coins reappearing as connectors for our mobile phones, as chips in our personal computers, as distribution tubes for our drinking water, as well as in the electric cables in our homes.

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