

# Rising Demand for Copper Recycling: Belgium Leads the Way

## Copper market: demand rising

World demand for refined copper is up from 0.5 million tonnes in 1900 to over 17 million tonnes in 2006 and may still rise by 4.7% in 2007<sup>1</sup>. In order to sustain its growth, Asia has become the world's largest copper user (7.2 million tonnes) overtaking Europe (5.2 million tonnes) and North America (2.7 million tonnes). This on-going rise in demand has been accompanied by a strong increase in the raw material cost: from US\$ 1,500/tonne in January 2003, to US\$ 8,000/tonne on 1 May. With these pressures on the market, recycled copper is becoming a major resource.

## Copper, a material 100% recyclable ad infinitum: the electronic waste situation

Copper is never thrown away: it can easily be used, recycled and used again indefinitely without any loss in quality or performance. This added value has spawned a high-technology industrial infrastructure that now meets 41% of requirements in Europe<sup>1</sup>. Recycling uses efficient collection systems put in place by the member states, setting out primarily to recover valuable materials from waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). This waste, a product of modern society, is rich in copper: computers, screens, mobile phones etc. may contain up to 20%. In Europe, 50 million tonnes of WEEE are dumped per annum, and this figure is increasing by some 3 to 5% every year<sup>2</sup>.

## Belgium, WEEE collection and recycling champion



Belgium has come out top of the class in the European Union: it exceeded the target set in the European Directive<sup>3</sup> (4 kg/head of population) back in 2003, before it had even come into force. In 2006, Belgium attained 7.7 kg of WEEE collected/head of population, spurred on by its waste management agency, Récupel.

However, all this scrap subsequently requires reprocessing and there are businesses that take on the job of dismantling it to sort out the recyclable materials. One such business is SIMS Recycling Solutions: set up in Saint-Nicolas in mid-April, the works will have a processing capacity of 40,000 tonnes of electronic appliances per annum. At the end of the chain are the copper founders and refiners, such as the Metallo-Chimique works in Beerse, in Flanders. This company, which specialises in the conversion of non-ferrous metal scrap into high-quality raw materials, has developed unique know-how, unmatched world-wide, which enables it to recycle scrap with a high mixed metals concentration. It melts down 1,000 tonnes of WEEE per month and produces 99.99%-pure copper cathodes.

Scrap when it goes in, pure new copper when it comes out: by closing the material cycle, the collection, treatment and recycling of copper scrap makes it possible to keep pace with the trend in copper demand and to secure primary commodity supplies over the long term.

## High-definition images and press kit available on request

*The European Copper Institute (ECI)* is a joint venture between the world's mining companies (represented by the International Copper Association, Ltd) and the European copper industry. Its mission is to promote copper's benefits to modern society across Europe through its Brussels headquarters and a network of eleven copper information centres. [www.eurocopper.org](http://www.eurocopper.org)

<i>Press Contact</i>	<i>European Copper Institute</i>	<i>Copper Benelux</i>	<i>Metallo-Chimique</i>
<b>Evelyn Gessler</b> - GSM: + 32 (0) 475 23 53 92 <a href="mailto:Evelyn.gessler@deciders.eu">Evelyn.gessler@deciders.eu</a> <b>Lorraine de Fierlant</b> – GSM : + 32 (0) 485 33 33 33 <a href="mailto:Lorraine.defierlant@deciders.eu">Lorraine.defierlant@deciders.eu</a> <b>Anna Macdougald</b> - GSM : + 32 (0) 477 60 2674 <a href="mailto:anna@eu4u.be">anna@eu4u.be</a>	<b>Christian de Barrin</b> +32 (2) 777 70 82 GSM : + 32 (0) 476 30 99 60 <a href="mailto:cdb@eurocopper.org">cdb@eurocopper.org</a>	<b>Benoît Dôme</b> +32 (2) 777 70 90 <a href="mailto:mail@copperbenelux.org">mail@copperbenelux.org</a>	<b>Everard van der Straten</b> Tel.: +32 (0) 475 24 16 93 <a href="mailto:esp@metallo.com">esp@metallo.com</a>

<sup>1</sup> Source: *International Copper Study Group (ICSG)*, Lisbon.

<sup>2</sup> Source: United Nations Programme for the Environment.

<sup>3</sup> Directive 2002/96/EC on the recycling and treatment of waste electrical and electronic equipment.

