

SPOTLIGHT ON STEEL

STEEL A SOLUTION, BUT STILL A MAJOR PROBLEM

To meet EU and global climate targets, decarbonisation of the steel industry is essential: the sector produces 200 Mt CO₂ per year in the EU¹ alone, and is responsible for approximately 5% of global CO₂ emissions, a large portion of which still comes from coal-based production. Circularity, resource efficiency and decarbonisation of production processes are key to reducing these emissions. Unfortunately, industry and policymakers have not yet proposed to tackle the environmental impacts of steel production and product manufacturing. This approach supports unsustainable emission levels, while creative carbon accounting seeks to reduce reported emissions, resulting in greenwashing.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

- Currently, there is no specific EU regulation on the performance and environmental sustainability of steel intermediary and end-products;
- Major steel industry derogations exist under the Industrial Emissions Directive and EU Emissions Trading System, weakening their potential for decarbonisation and reducing environmental impacts;
- Voluntary standards for declaring performance of steel products should be revised: they are too flexible and so do not allow for a true comparison between equivalent products or materials, making it difficult to choose more sustainable solutions;
- Policies, standards and assessment methods do not appropriately reflect real-life impacts of steel throughout its lifecycle, neglecting contributions to global warming and failing to accurately integrate circularity.



More than 1,800 million tonnes of steel are produced worldwide every year, and it is mostly used in construction and public, energy and transport infrastructure (42% combined), transport (31%), and industrial applications (16%).

ECOS WORKS TO...

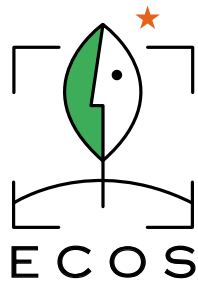
- Transform the steel industry into a circular and resource-efficient sector, reducing its environmental impacts, such as carbon emissions;
- Support stringent environmental requirements within forthcoming product and communication standards to help create a market for low-carbon steel for major sectors such as construction;
- Develop accurate and reliable methods for assessing the environmental sustainability of steel that can then be integrated into relevant policies and standards.

IN AN IDEAL WORLD...

Policies follow a real circular economy hierarchy, prioritising value retention. The lifespan of steel products and structures is extended through maintenance and improvements in-use, reuse is favoured before recycling, and waste is prevented. Primary virgin steel production is dramatically reduced, and when unavoidable low-carbon production routes are used, powered by renewable energy.

In addition, standards help shift business models and value downstream, through a circular economy approach, while sectoral regulations such as the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) are adapted to qualify secondary products and materials as eligible for the EU Single Market.





ECOS is an international NGO with a network of members and experts advocating for environmentally friendly technical standards, policies and laws.

We ensure the environmental voice is heard when they are developed and drive change by providing expertise to policymakers and industry players, leading to the implementation of strong environmental principles.

The green line to standards



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