

European Aluminium is already helping Europe decarbonise, but more must be done

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European Aluminium is already helping Europe decarbonise, but more must be done, says Gerd Götz.



Photo credit: European Aluminium

As we gear up for a new political cycle, our industry is anticipating its role in realising Europe's long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate neutral economy.

Aluminium already contributes to energy and CO₂ savings in many key sectors, giving lightweight to mobility, making packaging more resource-efficient and allowing the construction of energy efficient buildings.

The endless recyclability of our metal further contributes to decarbonisation. Recycling aluminium uses just five percent of the energy used for primary production while reducing equivalent CO₂ emissions by 95 percent.

Thanks to aluminium's unique properties, global demand is expected to grow by 50 percent by 2050. Half of this will be met by primary aluminium and the rest by recycling.

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We realise that increasing production to satisfy growing demand has an environmental impact. We have a long-standing commitment to sustainability and fighting climate change.

Since 1990, European primary aluminium production has reduced CO2 emissions by 55 percent. The carbon footprint of European primary aluminium production is now around three times lower than the global average. But we can and must do more.

This is why we launched our [Vision 2050 strategy](#) [7], which sets out different scenarios on how the industry can contribute to Europe's mid-century climate action strategy and the Paris Agreement.

It also outlines the necessary conditions for our industry to realise its full potential for decarbonisation.

We are already delivering impressive recycling rates of over 90 percent in transport and building and more than 60 percent in packaging.

We are committed to achieving a 100 percent recycling rate across all sectors and to embracing higher EU recycling targets.

“The leading challenge for our industry remains Chinese excess capacity of primary and semi-fabricated aluminium. Today, Chinese primary production is five times greater than the EU total”

Unfortunately, there are challenges to overcome before European producers can fully benefit from aluminium's growing demand and key position in the circular economy.

Rising energy prices and the lack of market predictability are holding back investment in large scale breakthrough pilot projects.

We must also ensure we have enough high-quality scrap metal in Europe by investing in improved waste collection and sorting technologies.

The leading challenge for our industry remains excess Chinese primary and semi-fabricated aluminium capacity.

Today, Chinese excess production is five times greater than total EU production.

Our concerns are echoed in the recent OECD report “[Measuring distortions in international markets: the aluminium value chain](#) [8].”

This proves that non-market forces are responsible for the recent increases in China’s smelting capacities, with adverse impacts felt throughout the value chain.

We look forward to engaging with newly elected MEPs in finding policy solutions to these challenges in the context of a holistic industrial policy framework that allows all European industries to thrive.

I invite you to look at some of our proposed solutions outlined in our [Industry Plus Manifesto](#) [9].

About the author

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