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Percentage of Copper Recycled in Europe Continues to Grow

The latest annual report published by the International Copper Study Group (ICSG) announced a record high proportion of recycled copper in Europe (Russia included) in 2009. With a 3.5 percentage point increase, recycled copper met 45.7% of Europe's demand, compared with 42.2% in 2008. Due to the strong overall demand growth in Asia, the global recycling percentage fell from 35.3% in 2008 to 33.7% in 2009. The building and construction sector continues to make the greatest use of recycled copper, with some of its key products already produced from 100% recycled content.

The late 2008/2009 economic crisis severely impacted the European copper industry, with overall demand falling by 23%. The resulting market pressures encouraged European players to maximise their use of recycled materials. By recycling over 2.2 million tonnes of copper, the European region achieved a Recycling Input Rate of 45.7%, compared with 42.2% in the previous year. This surpassed the 2002 value of 44.4%.



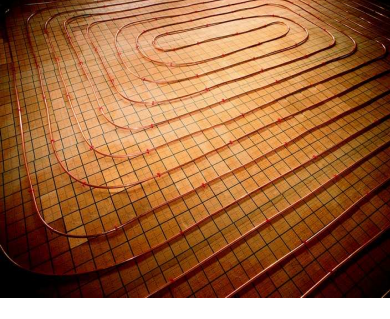
Driven by strong demand in China, the 2009 global demand for copper, at 23.1 million tonnes, was similar to that in 2008. In total, 7.8 million tonnes were sourced via recycling, both through secondary production (linked to the recovery of end of life materials) and the direct melt of scrap recovered from the value chain. This resulted in a global copper recycling rate of 33.7%, down 1.4 points compared to 2008.

The higher European percentages reflect the larger installed societal stock of copper products and the European industry's investments in world-class secondary production technologies, as well as policy and recovery efforts, such as the EU's Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive.

John Schonenberger, Chief Executive of the European Copper Institute, explains: "With the EU being a major net importer of copper, recycling, which delivers 80% energy savings compared to primary production, prevents the release of over 650,000 tonnes of EU CO₂ each year. In addition to this significant environmental impact, recycling strengthens the supply security of one of the EU's most important raw materials."

The red metal is used for its intrinsic qualities of electrical and thermal conductivity, corrosion resistance and workability in the building and construction sector, and its environmental reporting requirements are steadily increasing. One of the real sustainable benefits of copper is that many of the copper and alloy products used in plumbing, heating and cooling, solar thermal installations and architectural applications can be produced with 100% recycled content.

“Today, copper products used in the construction sector contain, on average, 70% recycled content,” says Schonenberger. “With no difference versus the quality of products made from primary copper, the red metal is a very important contributor to environmentally-friendly and sustainable building development in the EU. As more and more scrap is recovered, the industry is ready and capable to make use of it.”

		
Copper gutter © Achard-SA	Copper building façade	Copper in underfloor heating

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