THEY ARE SCARCE, BUT WE CONTINUE TO LOSE METALS

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Given the shortage of certain materials such as For example, non-ferrous metals, the idea of promoting **rolling in landfills** becomes increasingly viable. Many **waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)** are not properly recycled, which not only generates soil and water pollution, but also represents a great waste of natural resources with a notable market value.

The OCU has tracked 15 used electrical and electronic devices using GPS to find out where they end up really going. A study that, although it is somewhat small in the sample, is well representative of the ineffective management of electrical and electronic equipment waste that is carried out in Spain.

According to the investigation of the OCU (on its website you can access a synthesis of the study, although the extended version should be request it directly to the association or subscribe to your publication), less than half of the devices were managed properly: only 6 of the 15 devices reached an authorized recycling plant. The rest ended up in scrapyards, junkyards, storage warehouses or wastelands. A curious case is that of a computer that had to travel more than 1,200 kilometers from Cáceres to Erandio (Bizkaia) to finally reach an authorized plant.

It is difficult to find exact data on the percentage of recycled devices, but it is possible to compare the number of devices that are placed on the market each year and those that are officially managed, taking into account that the replacement rate of the same is not going to be annual.

According to the National Integrated Waste Plan 2008-2015, in 2007 **795,035 tons** of electrical and electronic appliances for domestic use were placed on the market, while the amount managed by any of the authorized SIGs was **269,017 tons**. Is all this gap in unmanaged tons from the devices that are accumulating in homes? Probably a large number escape the official waste management circuit, getting lost along the way metal, plastic, glass, etc. that could perfectly be re-introduced into the production system.

An example: in 2009 ECOTIC, one of the GIS authorized for WEEE, it managed more than 29,000 tons of televisions, computer monitors and other computer equipment, recovering more than 3,4040 tons of iron materials (in addition to 4,600 plastic or 14,000 glass). The recovery of materials is possible and profitable for organizations such as ECOTIC and other WEEE management companies, so what are the barriers that prevent increasing their recycling?

It is clear that there is room to launch other eco-innovative initiatives to take advantage of this flow of materials that, having market value, end up in landfills. Resources such as metals, whose scarcity increases without preventing them from continuing to be lost. In the meantime, we will continue to wait for projects like that of Advanced Plasma Power mining in landfills.

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