

Doubling recycling across Europe is feasible, for certain waste streams

Increased recycling rates are being hindered due to economic, technical and regulatory barriers. Low market prices for virgin resources, recycling capacity and the complexity of certain products are holding up increased recycling rates, according to the EEA briefing '[The case for increased recycling: estimating the potential for recycling in Europe](#)'. The briefing notes that the full implementation of measures supporting the recycling targets set under European Union legislation will help. Additionally, implementing new policy measures, some of which are included in the EU's 2020 circular economy action plan can also help increase recycling of waste materials.

Recycled amounts from municipal, construction and electronic waste have increased over past years. Landmark EU directives, such as the Waste Framework Directive (WFD) and the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive, have fuelled the increase. These laws follow principles designed to achieve a gradual, but steady, increase in the level of recycling of a waste stream compared with the amount generated. For example, the existing municipal waste recycling target for 2035 aims to exploit much of the waste stream's recycling potential. In addition, the new circular economy policy framework also calls for keeping materials in the economy for as long as possible and their value as high as possible.

Potential for increasing separate collection for recycling and current (based on latest available data) generation and recycling for construction and demolition, municipal and electronic waste



Note: Data for construction and demolition waste are from the EU-28, Iceland and Norway (2016). Data for municipal waste are from the EU-28, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey (2018). Data for electronic waste are from the EU-28, Iceland, Lichtenstein and Norway (2017).

Source: Eurostat, EEA.

The EEA briefing is based on a [technical study](#) commissioned by the EEA which looks more in-depth into what factors hinder wider recycling.