PROTECTING ENDANGERED ELEMENTS

Every month millions of phones are discarded around the EU. Add to that millions of computers and car batteries and the amount of very many raw materials becomes huge. Some of these are reused in the developing world but almost all of them end up in landfill sites, causing pollution by leaching off metals such as lead and putting the elements involved in making them out of circulation. **It is estimated that 70% of the toxic pollution in landfill sites can be attributed to electronic waste.**

In many cases the known world reserves of raw materials will only allow current usage levels for 50-100 years. These are known as critical raw materials because once they have run out we shall not be able to use the technology we currently use. Critical raw materials are also important to many other fields and lost through other types of waste, *e.g.* anthropogenic phosphorus.

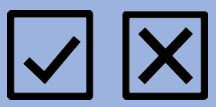
Recycle these materials. Almost nothing is done on this at the moment so it represents an opportunity for industrial innovation.

Substitute the components that use rare materials by ones that are earth abundant. This is an immense opportunity for research and development which is just taking off.

Private sector must join the public investment in finding solutions for protecting raw materials.

Have a long-term view for research, independent from artificial price-fluctuations in critical raw materials market.

New Circular Economy Package should substitute as much as possible the “linear economy” approach of previous directives.



Allow consumers to know if a product is critical raw materials-friendly or not.

Promote consistent and structured collection of data on usage, disposal and recycling of these materials.

These outcomes originate from the workshop Protecting Endangered Elements, co-organised by EuCheMS and MEP Ian Duncan. For more information on this event please visit www.euchems.eu/?p=5192

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