

2019 Annual Report

Looking back at an eventful 2019

All of our activities are geared towards a common goal: the recovery of as much high-quality raw materials as possible and the proper disposal of hazardous substances. Over the last 30 years, we have recovered 880,000 tonnes of recyclable materials. Our current Annual Report includes impressive facts and figures from the financial year 2019.

SENS – From us for you

Working in sync with responsible ARF partners (manufacturers, retailers and importers) and specialist waste disposal partners is crucial to the success of the SENS take-back system. Let us give you some insights into what we have achieved together.

Foreword by the Foundation President 30 years of SENS eRecycling

In 2019, eRecycling was shaped by politics. Should it be completely obligatory? Partially obligatory? Or not obligatory at all? Where do we go from here? How and with whom? These questions dominated discussions and were frequently the subject of heated debates. But when we try to see the bigger picture and look beyond the political machinations, we see that the world keeps on turning and nothing stays still. For SENS eRecycling, it is quite the opposite: new recycling performance records are being hit all the time.

Last year, we celebrated our 30th anniversary. We were the first organisation in Europe to implement manufacturer responsibility (for manufacturers, importers and retailers), ensuring that products that have become waste are disposed of in the best possible way and that they can be reintroduced into the cycle – nota bene: on a voluntary basis – in compliance with the relevant environmental regulations. From the outset, we have been pioneers in returning used electrical and electronic appliances.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped make our success possible over the last 30 years:

- The recycling companies, who with their expertise and innovation, together with the transporters ensure the return of the highest amount of used electronics and electrical appliances in Europe every year via more than 500 collection points and many thousands of retailer return points.
- The manufacturers, importers and retailers who entrust us with implementing manufacturer responsibility.
- The federal, cantonal and local authorities who put their trust in us.
- And last but not least, the consumers who bring their decommissioned appliances to the right collection point and comply with waste separation rules.

The future of the take-back system that has been politically set in motion in Switzerland is yet to be determined. For me and for SENS eRecycling, the top priority is and will remain protecting the environment, which also entails implementing recycling efficiently according to the principles of sustainability, including in the private sector. We are working hard to make this a reality and we want to continue to hold the top recycling spot for another (30?) years with your cooperation. Now that's something to get excited about!

Andreas Röthlisberger

One more thing: At the start of the year (in the time before the coronavirus crisis), we commissioned a five-episode documentary film. It tells of the power of innovative ideas – and the efficiency of solutions that are based on the principle of voluntary participation and taking personal economic responsibility.

Want to see the trailer? [Click here to watch the trailer.](#)

Foreword by the Managing Director

“Normally ...”

When writing the foreword, I would normally be sitting in my office and reflecting on the year gone by. I enjoy this opportunity to speak to you directly about the highlights of the past year and to share some recent experiences at SENS with you. But nothing about right now can be described as normal.

This should not be taken as a lament about the current situation. We all have our daily obstacles to overcome, but for us, when we dig deeper, we see that these challenges also spur us on. They make us more inventive and show us just how important our partnerships are. The figures and reports for the last financial year clearly reflect this.

In cooperation with Swiss Post, we have developed a pilot project for collecting electronic waste from the household parcel box. A letter was sent with a collection bag enclosed and our Junkopus asked children in the test region to dispose of their old electric toys in a collection bag in their own parcel box. The number of returns far exceeded the target and the quality of the collected goods was very good, with only 1 per cent impurities. Consistently positive feedback was also received from a variety of people from the test region. We were able to recruit numerous families to the eRecycling cause by giving away a keyring and by awarding the title of Recycling Hero. We made recycling fun – and since this pilot project was such a success, we are continuing it and expanding it to a larger test region.

I was particularly pleased by the many projects we have under way in cooperation with our customers and partners. Thanks to these partnerships, we attended two trade fairs (BEL.CH and FEA-EXPO) and we were able to demonstrate the valuable contribution that the SENS take-back system can make through our contractual partners. At the Wiederkehr Recycling AG open day, we had the opportunity to explain eRecycling to the general public and help raise their awareness of it.

The stellar reputation of Switzerland’s recycling systems reaches far beyond our borders. We have hit recycling quotas that other European countries can only dream of. The WEEE Forum is the world’s largest international centre of competence for the management of electronic waste. In May 2019, Switzerland hosted the General Assembly of the WEEE Forum and impressed guests from across Europe with a visit to Europe’s leading refrigerator recycler, Oeko-Service Schweiz AG in Rheinfelden.

Even now, when we have to keep our distance physically speaking, we have the opportunity to draw closer together and support each other. Thanks to its solid foundation of cooperation, the SENS take-back system is continuing to run. eRecycling is still working and proper disposal is guaranteed. Things are almost exactly the same as “normal”, just with a few small differences. Although the protection of the environment is not heavily featured in the headlines at the moment, it is still what we strive for, and what we will continue to strive for in the future.

With warm regards
Heidi Luck

Spring clean

Junkopus explains

Spring means spring cleaning. We decided to use this as an opportunity to raise public awareness about how to dispose of used electrical or electronic appliances correctly. Through a social media campaign, Junkopus explained how the eRecycling cycle works and what recyclable materials are hidden within electronic waste.

The people of Switzerland were always finding broken electrical or electronic appliances in their home, especially during spring cleaning. So Junkopus explained what to do with the used appliances and what recyclable materials were hidden within them through two short videos that were posted on the social media channels Instagram and Facebook.

We placed various advertisements on online media in order to specifically target our key target group – young adults. Through Real Time Bidding (RTB), placement of ads on Facebook and Instagram and video advertising on YouTube and the Goldbach video network, we were able to gain very good access to our target audience. The response to this completely digital campaign was excellent. Compared with the previous month, visits to our website were up by more than 470 per cent. In addition, display advertising also achieved excellent results with 2 million impressions. These figures demonstrate that the younger generation is also interested in eRecycling.

During the campaign, members of the public were offered the chance to take part in a competition on our Facebook channel. They were asked to tell us why they wanted to do a spring clean. There were some very creative, funny and uplifting stories among the 479 entries. We randomly selected two entries to win a spring clean voucher with a value of CHF 500.00. This competition was another good example of high levels of interest in eRecycling.

Overview

Key objective	To inform the younger target group about correct, environmentally friendly recycling
Measures	An online campaign with ad placements via RTB, on YouTube, on the Goldbach video network and on our social media channels on Instagram and Facebook
Reach	124,427 reached on social media as well as 290,430 impressions 1,963,706 impressions via display advertising 6,599 visits to our website with 479 competition entries 473 per cent more users on our website compared to the previous month
Summary	A campaign that successfully reached the target audience – social media works for eRecycling

A sustainable Christmas

Committing to professional recycling

Christmas is a time when electrical or electronic appliances sell like hot cakes – and many of them are purchased abroad or from online retailers based abroad. When this happens, the advance recycling fee (ARF) is usually not collected. This is why our social media activities towards the end of the year were focused on raising awareness about Fair ARF. It makes paying the ARF really easy.

Many people in Switzerland are not aware that buying electrical or electronic appliances abroad or from online retailers based abroad leaves a gap in terms of funding their disposal because the ARF is not collected. Three animations posted on Instagram and Facebook explained how the SENS eRecycling cycle works and showed viewers how they could pay the ARF retroactively. The campaign had a very good reach with almost 4 million views and a high level of advertising pressure. The click rate was moderate at 0.29 per cent. Since this campaign did not involve a competition, this was to be expected. However, overall, there were 500 registered visits to the landing page. The figures show that the target audience was reached and that the level of interest in eRecycling is high. A mix of RTB, social media and video channels such as YouTube was found to be what works.

Overview

Key objective	To explain correct, environmentally friendly recycling and raise awareness about voluntary ARF (bilingually in German and French)
Measures	An online campaign with ad placements via RTB, on YouTube, and on our social media channels on Instagram and Facebook
Reach	620,601 impressions on Facebook, 1,113 clicks (click rate 0.18 per cent) 2,658,538 RTB ad placements. 8,219 clicks (click rate 0.31 per cent) 694,099 impressions on YouTube, 2,139 clicks (click rate 0.31 per cent)
Summary	The option of paying the ARF retroactively by text message has proven successful – we are reaching a large portion of the key target audience via social media

Voluntary ARF

Closing the gap together

When electrical or electronic appliances are purchased abroad, the ARF is not collected. However, the ARF is easy to pay retroactively from home. This allows these appliances to be disposed of correctly. End consumers were made aware of this on our social media channels in 2019 as before.

On our social media channels on Instagram and Facebook, we informed the public about voluntary ARF and raised awareness about it. We highlighted how simple it is to pay the ARF retroactively: a simple text message to the number 488 saying “vRG” (the German term for ARF) is all that is required to arrange fair, correct and environmentally friendly disposal of an electrical or electronic appliance. The ARF can also be paid on our website. Payment can be made by PostFinance, e-finance, Visa, Mastercard, Twint or a traditional payment slip. This ensures that everyone has a way to pay that suits them.

In 2019, we successfully increased the number of retroactive ARF payments compared to the previous year.

Overview

Key objective	To raise public awareness and present the retroactive payment of the ARF via text message as a simple and smart solution
Measures	Social media campaign, option to pay the ARF retroactively by text message and on our website
Reach	82,720 impressions on Facebook alone
Summary	There is still room for improvement in terms of use of the option to pay by text message but the trend is increasing

FEA-Expo 2019

SENS eRecycling supported its ARF partners at this exhibition by providing exciting insights into the disposal of waste electrical and electronic equipment

This year, the FEA-EXPO took place at its new location at Messe Luzern for the first time. Around three dozen exhibitors demonstrated their latest small appliances there from 17 to 20 March 2019. SENS eRecycling was also there with its own stand as a guest exhibitor.

At this trade fair organised by the Swiss Professional Association for Electrical Appliances in Household and Industry (FEA), FEA members present their latest products. SENS eRecycling was there as a guest exhibitor. We used display cases to show what important raw materials are hidden within electrical or electronic appliances and how the eRecycling cycle works. This display often made an impression that opened the door to interesting discussions and sharing of information with manufacturers, retailers and purchasers. We were also able to highlight the valuable contribution that our FEA partners make to supporting eRecycling. Raw materials obtained from the recycling of electrical or electronic appliances were also used as an eye-catching highlight at the stand with photos of beautifully presented secondary raw materials obtained from recycling.

Overview

Key objective	To exchange information with manufacturers and raise awareness about eRecycling
Measures	Own stand, display case with raw materials, discussions with manufacturers, handing out informational materials and promotional giveaway items
Reach	Four-day exhibition, 22 exhibitors and over a dozen guest exhibitors
Summary	Successful event participation and numerous conversations with manufacturers. Since the FEA-EXPO 2020 has been cancelled due to COVID-19, we are looking forward to taking part again in 2021.

BLEe.CH 2019

There at the start of something great

BLE.CH is the technology trade fair for chip-free metal and steel processing in Switzerland. It was held for the first time from 5 to 7 March 2019. SENS eRecycling was invited by Swissmem's specialist group for welding and cutting technology and ran a stand together with them.

This first edition of the trade fair was very well attended and it took place at the BERNEXPO site. As an organiser of recycling for welding and cutting devices, SENS eRecycling has a responsibility to ensure that they are disposed of professionally and in an environmentally friendly manner. BLE.CH was therefore the ideal platform for us to get together with the manufacturers and suppliers of these devices and have a discussion with them. At the stand we ran together with Swissmem's specialist group for welding and cutting technology, SENS eRecycling used this opportunity to demonstrate the SENS eRecycling cycle to interested visitors.

Visitors to our stand got an insight into the SENS eRecycling cycle. There was plenty of time and opportunity for discussions. Again and again, people's focus came back to the recyclable materials obtained from the recycling process displayed in the display case. Many were shocked at just how much raw material was hidden within a decommissioned welding device. The advantages for us were not only the many stimulating conversations we had with trade fair visitors, but also the fact that we strengthened and reinforced our cooperation with Swissmem. This trade fair was a complete success for us, so we are looking forward to taking part again at the second one in 2021.

Overview

Key objective	To exchange views with the members of the specialist group and increase awareness about eRecycling
Measures	A stand in cooperation with Swissmem's specialist group for welding and cutting technology, display case with raw materials, discussions with manufacturers, handing out informational materials and promotional giveaway items
Reach	Three-day exhibition, over 5,000 visitors from all language regions of Switzerland, over 96 per cent of trade fair visitors were satisfied
Summary	Successful event participation and rich, stimulating and instructive discussions with members of the specialist group and the public. We are delighted that we will also be there with a stand in 2021.

Jumbo's spring energy-saving lamp offer

Saving electricity together

SENS eRecycling supported this special spring offer by DIY store Jumbo from 16 to 30 March 2019 as its disposal partner. Disused lighting equipment was collected as part of energyday19.

As a SENS eRecycling partner, the DIY store Jumbo ensured that any old electrical or electronic appliances and lighting equipment that were returned to them as part of the take-back system were disposed of professionally and in an environmentally friendly manner. As part of their special spring offer, the first 2,000 customers were able to exchange their old lighting equipment for a RGBW-LED CONNECT bulb from EGLO, worth CHF 49.90. It was a swap that gave twice the value. A modern LED bulb not only allows you to control the lighting colour via an app, it also saves electricity. This cooperation with DIY store Jumbo not only allowed us to make an important contribution to energy saving, but also allowed us to inform the public about the SENS eRecycling cycle.

Overview

Key objective To increase awareness about eRecycling and energy saving

Measures A collection and exchange promotion in cooperation with the DIY store Jumbo

Reach 2,000 customers were able to exchange their old lighting equipment for new

Summary The new bulbs went quickly and there was a great deal of interest in eRecycling and in professional, environmentally friendly disposal of lighting equipment. The promotion was a great success with pleasing results.

Open day

A successful day at Wiederkehr Recycling AG's event

On 26 October 2019, our recycling partner Wiederkehr Recycling AG celebrated their 60th anniversary. At their open day, we had the opportunity to get together with the public and show them the benefits of eRecycling at our stand.

Wiederkehr Recycling AG is one of our disposal partners that is specialised in recycling scrap metal. At their site in Waltenschwil in the Canton of Aargau – surrounded by mountains of waste metal – we were able to give interested visitors an insight into the world of electronic waste recycling as part of this well-attended open day. Our informational brochure “Five myths about electronic waste – and the whole truth” left many astounded and successfully debunked stubborn myths that were prevalent among the Freiamt population. Our comic, “Lila and Tim and the invisible mountains” was also very well received by the younger audience.

The event was a great opportunity to say a big thank you to the public – which we did with chocolate. After all, the SENS eRecycling cycle would not work without the active support of the Swiss public. This is precisely why we like to use such events as an opportunity to get together with the public and talk to them about eRecycling. We would like to thank Wiederkehr Recycling AG for this great opportunity and we wish them every success!

Overview

Key objective	To inform the public about eRecycling
Measures	Stand at the open day, conversations with visitors, handing out informational materials and promotional giveaway items
Reach	Approximately 5,000 visitors
Summary	A very well-attended and successful open day

THE FUTURE – Making progress together

Keep looking forward – that is what we strive to do every day. We want to do more than just follow trends: we want to set them. As a dynamic, innovative team, we are constantly shaping every aspect of the future of eRecycling, big and small. Sometimes, our innovation even has an impact beyond Swiss borders.

Special compensation for small appliances and refrigerators

Challenges for our recycling partners selling metals and plastics

Last year our recycling partners were faced with the challenge of a collapse in metal purchase prices. They also had to contend with the continuing problems in plastics sales. The indices used in the remuneration model (BDSV, LME) were only partially able to compensate for these changes. Together with our recycling partners, SENS eRecycling analysed the situation and came up with a countermeasure. The difficult situation that recycling partners were facing was eased by special compensation for small appliances and refrigerators amounting to CHF 1.1 million.

The collapse in metal prices last year was not only a major challenge for our recycling partners, but also for the entire European recycling industry. Ample supplies from the aluminium and copper smelters led to a significant reduction in prices of secondary metals. The increased deductions for aluminium and copper in particular have caused problems for recycling companies. Because the indices (BDSV, LME) in the remuneration model are based on primary metals, they do not reflect the deductions. This meant that the price changes were not included in the remuneration models for the take-back systems. Plastics sales were another thorny issue. The price pressure on plastics from waste electrical and electronic equipment has increased again and revenues have halved in some cases compared to previous years.

A working group set up by SENS eRecycling worked to address this extraordinary situation. The working group consisted of recycling partners, representatives of the SENS Foundation and an independent consultant. It collected facts, analysed data and promptly drew up a proposal for the Finance Committee. The analysis showed that the 50 per cent buffer contained within the remuneration model already partially covers the increase in deductions for metals and that the price change for plastics is not currently taken into account. Using the market data collected, the working group determined that small appliances and refrigerators were the categories most affected by the plastics sales problem.

In April, the Board of Trustees approved the working group's proposal on the recommendation of the Finance Committee. Special compensation of CHF 30.00 per tonne for small appliances and CHF 10.00 per tonne for refrigerators was introduced with retroactive effect from January 2020 . Based on the quantities invoiced last year, the total special compensation distributed amounts to around CHF 1.1 million.

Overview

Key objective To support recycling partners through a time of extraordinary market conditions

Measures A working group consisting of recycling partners, SENS Foundation representatives and an independent consultant, plus special compensation for plastics in the case of small appliances and refrigerators

Reach 19 recycling partners

Summary SENS eRecycling was able to provide rapid support to its recycling partners during challenging times

Collection point meetings

Discussion of challenges in the collection of electronic waste

In 2019, the popular collection point meetings were once again attended by many of the people responsible for collection points. With two venues available, one in Olten and one in Yverdons-les-Bains, participants were able to attend a conveniently located meeting either in German-speaking Switzerland or in French-speaking Romandy.

The collection point meetings are used to discuss current issues surrounding the daily operation of collection points. This allows us to foster our relationship with those responsible for collection points and to better respond to challenges in the collection of electronic waste. One of the key topics that the around 60 participants at Olten touched upon was the high cost of collecting lighting equipment. SENS eRecycling runs the collection of lighting equipment on behalf of the Swiss Lighting Recycling Foundation (SLRS). Another key issue that was frequently mentioned was the handling of lithium-ion batteries. Based on the many conversations that took place, it was clear that those responsible for collection points are aware of the hazards this involves and are prepared to take the necessary measures to ensure that handling of these materials is as risk-free as possible.

Around a dozen people responsible for collection points from Romandy met at Tripôle in Yverdons-les-Bains. The problems here were the same. Handling of lithium-ion batteries and collection of lighting equipment is a challenge here too. SENS eRecycling takes these concerns seriously and is ready to help collection points with any questions they may have. In addition to the opportunity for discussions, there was a chance to visit the impressive STRID collection point in Romandy. Those who came along were given an interesting insight into the plant.

Overview

Key objective To exchange views with collection points

Measures Two collection point meetings: one in German-speaking Switzerland and one in Romandy

Reach Over 60 people from collection points attended the meeting in German-speaking Switzerland and about a dozen attended the one in Romandy

Summary SENS eRecycling remains an authoritative source of information about recycling of household appliances. We will continue to provide collection point meetings in the future to promote the exchange of ideas between collection points and SENS eRecycling.

Collection points project

Joint project to promote quality

In 2019, SENS eRecycling launched an interesting project aimed at promoting quality in the collection of decommissioned electrical or electronic appliances. The focus was on communal collection points.

High levels of quality in the collection of electrical or electronic appliances make the downstream recycling process easier. It also reduces the amount of impurities in the collected material. SENS eRecycling therefore launched a project to incentivise increasing quality in collection. As part of the project, collection points that delivered particularly high quality would be given significantly higher compensation. SENS eRecycling hoped that this would increase quality in the collection of decommissioned electrical or electronic appliances. We wanted to implement the project in cooperation with the communities running the collection points. In order to monitor the quality of the collections, transportation was organised by SENS Logistics. It was found that for various reasons, higher compensation alone did not motivate people to switch to the new model.

Nevertheless, SENS eRecycling believes in the project and is developing it further in order to better meet the needs of the collection point operators and to allow new incentives to be put in place. After all, high-quality collection not only makes the downstream recycling process easier, but also reduces the amount of impurities and cuts out unnecessary transport routes. Better collection monitoring can also help minimise risks. This is something that is particularly close to our hearts at SENS eRecycling.

Overview

Key objective	To increase quality in the collection of decommissioned electrical or electronic appliances
Measures	A project in cooperation with the communities running the collection points
Reach	Around a dozen collection points were invited to take part in the project
Summary	SENS eRecycling believes in the project and is developing it further

Contractual partners in 2019

Pleasing growth in numbers of new contractual partners

The number of ARF partners working with us once again increased significantly in the past year. There were 81 new companies joining forces with SENS eRecycling in 2019, thereby making a real commitment to responsible, professional and environmentally friendly disposal of decommissioned electrical or electronic appliances. These results make us truly proud.

The increase in the number of contractual partners shows that our services are valued and that they keep up with market standards. Because we guarantee state-of-the-art, environmentally friendly disposal, we fulfil a need for many companies. At the same time, we keep the administration involved in the reporting and payment process simple and minimal. We are flexible in response to what our partners need. For instance, partners are free to choose the type and frequency of reports. They are also welcome to work with us in developing the system further – either as a member of the ARF Committee or by submitting feedback to the Head Office.

We have found that having a direct dialogue with our partners shows us what we are doing well and what we can do better. For this Annual Report, we wanted to give an insight into what starting to work with SENS eRecycling is like for a new partner. To that end, we asked the Managing Director of Beurer Schweiz AG three questions. Our straightforward relationship with our partners is a source of motivation for us every day – thank you!

Three questions for the Managing Director of Beurer Schweiz AG



Overview

Key objective	To increase the number of ARF partners
Measures	Convincing potential partners of the benefits of joining the SENS system
Reach	81 new contractual partners in 2019
Summary	SENS eRecycling offers a flexible, simple solution for manufacturer and importers to meet their statutory take-back and disposal obligations

ARF Committee

Great news regarding ARF tariffs

Great news for our contractual partners: the ARF Committee and the Board of Trustees have implemented a selective reduction in the advance recycling fee.

The ARF Committee supports the Head Office and oversees the SENS take-back system as a supervising body. The 14 members of the committee include representatives from the sectors involved in the system. They represent the interests of those sectors, particularly in the drawing up and annual review of the official ARF tariff and equipment list. During the 2019 spring session, the positive annual result allowed the committee to consider adjustments to the advance recycling fee. On the basis of proposals from Head Office, they decided to reduce the tariffs in one weight category each for large appliances and refrigerators. The Board of Trustees approved the committee's proposal. The tariffs came into force on 01.01.2020 and can be viewed in the [Tariff and appliance list](#).

We are very pleased about this positive development and we would like to thank our ARF partners for their trust and constructive cooperation. Making progress together – step by step!

Overview

Key objective	To implement tariffs for our ARF partners that keep up with market standards
Measures	Regular checking by the ARF Committee
Reach	All contractual partners for large appliances and refrigerators
Summary	Reduced tariffs in the categories of large appliances and refrigerators

WEEE Forum

The association of take-back systems for electrical or electronic appliances visits Basel

The WEEE Forum, which was founded in 2002, counts among its members forty take-back systems from across Europe and other continents. It is the world's largest centre of competence for the management of electronic waste. For this year's General Assembly, members came from across the globe to Switzerland. Switzerland's spring weather, though wonderful, was not the main thing that impressed these illustrious guests – they were even more impressed by a visit to one of the world's leading refrigerator recycling companies, Oeko-Service Schweiz AG in Rheinfelden.

There, refrigerators are recycled in Europe's most advanced facility, which not only recovers recyclable materials, but also prevents hazardous emissions. The fact that a small country like Switzerland is setting the bar here on a global level makes us proud – and we are proud to count Oeko-Service Schweiz AG among our disposal partners. The visit to Oeko-Service Schweiz AG kicked off the two-day WEEE Forum event, which was followed by the dinner and networking evening that over fifty guests attended – more than in any of the countries previously. The board of the WEEE Forum is very selective in choosing places to share expertise. The high number of attendees speaks to the high esteem in which Switzerland is held when it comes to eRecycling.

At the General Assembly, Heidi Luck provided in-depth insights into eRecycling in Switzerland and presented the SENS take-back system with facts and figures. As one of the countries with the highest take-back rates, Switzerland has always had a great global reputation in this area. At the conference, it was decided that the WEEE Forum Conference 2020 would be hosted in Switzerland. The conference initially scheduled to take place in May 2020, but due to the global COVID-19 crisis, it has been postponed until autumn 2020. We are delighted that we will be able to welcome the world to Switzerland once again and we hope that the conference can be held soon.

Overview

Key objective	To strengthen international cooperation and the network
Measures	Two-day General Assembly in Basel with a tour of Europe's most state-of-the-art refrigerator recycling plant
Reach	40 WEEE Forum members present, resonated positively worldwide
Summary	SENS eRecycling was able to showcase its strengths once again and compare itself to other similar organisations on the international level. As the leading organisation in the field of eRecycling, SENS is actively involved in shaping international events.

Environment – Naturally sustainable

Protecting the environment is behind everything we do. This is reflected in the environmental impact points saved through our work every year. We calculate this saving in our life cycle assessment. This is how eRecycling helps the environment. The figures are impressive!

2020 Life Cycle Assessment

150,000 billion environmental impact points saved over 30 years of eRecycling

SENS eRecycling has been actively committed to the environment through working together with partners for 30 years. With a life cycle assessment, the Foundation can show how effective the recycling of electrical and electronic appliances really is.

In 2019, around 16 kilograms of electronic waste was amassed per person in Switzerland. In the last 30 years, 1.2 million tonnes of electrical and electronic appliances were introduced to the SENS eRecycling cycle. Viewed in the context of the amount of waste produced, the level of utilisation of this professional, environmentally sound recycling system for electrical and electronic appliances is impressive. The figures from the [2020 Life Cycle Assessment](#) demonstrate this.

Enough materials for 66 Eiffel Towers, 2.33 million bicycles and 40 million trumpets

Since SENS eRecycling was founded in 1990, we have recovered 830,000 tonnes of recyclable material through eRecycling. Steel and iron make up the largest portion of this, accounting for about 80 per cent. 660,000 tonnes out of this amount would be enough to build 66 Eiffel Towers. The 35,000 tonnes of aluminium would be enough to make 2.33 million bicycles and the 40,000 tonnes of copper would be enough to make 40 million trumpets. These are astounding quantities. They make it clear just how important it is to recover recyclable material.

Thousands of billions of environmental impact points saved

To protect the environment, it is also crucial to prevent pollution by ensuring that hazardous substances such as mercury, coolants, refrigerants and PCBs are disposed of correctly. Over 91 per cent of the environmental benefit is accounted for by the proper disposal of PCBs, which is commonly found in the capacitors of older electrical or electronic appliances and does not break down easily. In the life cycle assessment, this benefit is quantified in terms of the number environmental impact points (UBP) that were saved by the SENS take-back system. In total, this figure amounts to 150,000 billion. This corresponds to the annual environmental footprint of about 7.5 million Swiss citizens.

Making environmental benefits tangible

Our digital life cycle assessment gives a clear picture of what we have achieved together in eRecycling and what we can do better in the future. You can use it to learn more about the benefits of eRecycling in a fun way and help to do something good for our environment. Together, we have already achieved a great deal over the last thirty years. Now let's equip ourselves for the next thirty.

Overview

Key objective To record the environmental benefit of the SENS take-back system

Measures Calculation of the life cycle assessment figures and providing a visualisation of them for both experts and the general public on a dynamic microsite

Reach The life cycle assessment has not yet been published as of the date of this Annual Report. The objective is to have a wide reach among the expert audience and the press.

Summary With this dynamic yet simple representation of the life cycle assessment, we hope to increase awareness of the benefits of eRecycling. The figures from the last thirty years of eRecycling are impressive and will help spur us on for the next thirty.

INNOVATION – Trends and technology

Society is changing fast. What's trendy one day is old news the next. The result of this is that the demands of the public are constantly increasing. How is SENS eRecycling working to meet these demands? Let us give you some insights into our work.

The post project Swiss Post picks it up!

A simple way to dispose of electronic toys from the comfort of your own home? On the occasion of International E-Waste Day on 14 October 2019, Swiss Post and SENS eRecycling piloted a visionary idea. In the Seefeld and Schwamendingen districts of Zurich, people were able to dispose of defective electrical or electronic appliances in a recycling bag that they put in their own household parcel box. Swiss Post would then transfer them to a recycling point. The target of 180 returned bags was reached with ease.

For 30 years now, people in Switzerland have been able to take their defective devices to one of over 600 collection points for free, or bring them back to the retailer for recycling. It is a proven system. But wouldn't it be handy if you could dispose of defective electrical or electronic appliances right from your own home? Expectations in terms of convenience are constantly increasing, including in the area of recycling. The project called "Swiss Post picks it up!" was launched in two districts of the city of Zurich to help address this. For two months, residents were provided with a home collection service, making recycling much more convenient. In the pilot area, which included around 23,000 households, families in particular were asked to recycle their broken electronic toys.

Why electronic toys? It was decided that the target group would be families. Since every family tends to have some broken electronic toy cars or drones in the basement, it was decided that the focus would be on electronic toys. In order to promote the project, households were sent a letter with a recycling bag and an information flyer enclosed. All they had to do was put broken electronic toys in the bag and then put the bag in their own household parcel box. Swiss Post would then pick up the bag when delivering the mail and bring it to a recycling point. In order to further promote the project, information was posted on social media and on our website during the pilot period. The pilot project was also featured in a report in the Swiss Recycling Magazine.

A total of 207 kilograms of material was returned – a complete success. The material was of very high quality, with only 1 per cent impurities. Thanks to meticulous recording of the material that was returned, we were able to carry out a valuable analysis. The material that was collected also revealed exciting differences between the collection areas of Schwamendingen and Seefeld in terms of the quality of the devices sent to be recycled. The pilot project was expanded to a larger area in 2020 in order to gain more comprehensive and in-depth insights.

Figures

- 23,000 letters by post sent with an information flyer and recycling bag enclosed
- Around 780 items returned
- 207 kilograms of electronic appliances collected
- 72 per cent electrical with ARF, 8 per cent electrical without ARF, 19 per cent toys, 1 per cent impurities

Overview

- Key objective** To test a new take-back route for electronic waste and to increase convenience for consumers in the disposal of electronic waste
- Measures** Development of a postal take-back system, a pilot project in two districts of Zurich, and communication on social media, on the website and in a specialist magazine to further promote the project
- Reach** Letter sent to 23,000 households, thereby reaching around 48,300 people, report on Radio Energy and various queries about the project from schools and residents in the pilot districts
- Summary** The target of 180 returned bags was reached with ease. The percentage of impurities was only one per cent. In 2020, the project was expanded to a larger area in the city of Zurich and in Berne.

Resource triologue

An important driver for the future of waste and resource management in Switzerland

Eleven major stakeholders from the political and business spheres and from authorities and society in general have taken part in a dialogue to address the future challenges of waste and resource management. This resulted in the distillation of eleven guiding principles. As initiator and board member of Swiss Recycling, Andreas Röthlisberger, President of our Board of Trustees was able to actively participate in the resource triologue.

Switzerland is an intensive user of resources. Because it is also a country with few raw materials, recovery of secondary raw materials is extremely important. Thankfully, we are able to obtain these materials in an economically sustainable way from various types of waste. In the past, according to the Swiss waste model of 1986 (“avoid, reduce, reuse, dispose”), the focus has always been on waste as waste, but now, waste is increasingly being seen and treated as resources. Therefore, the resource triologue aims to pave the way for a resource-based model for 2030, which will make an important contribution to establishing a sustainable circular economy in Switzerland.

As a result, solutions that can be adopted by the majority of people have been sought in the interests of society, the economy and the environment. In our highly developed country, we need solutions that help minimise the use of energy and materials in the manufacture of products and in the provision of services, that extend the service life of products, and help avoid or utilise waste wherever possible. The resource triologue was created on the initiative of Swiss Recycling and the Association of Plant Managers and Operation Companies of Swiss Waste Treatment Installations (VBSA) in cooperation with the Canton of Aargau, whose Director of Construction Stephan Attiger agreed to host and chair it. It was supported by eleven stakeholders from the economic and political spheres and society.

Eleven guiding principles

The project was launched in 2014. The participants had a wide range of different interests and expectations. It took three years. With much patience, the seemingly unsolvable puzzle was solved: finding a common path for a sustainable resource management. Thanks to excellent moderation, the participants were able to come to a consensus and agree on eleven guiding principles despite their many differences. These are the eleven guiding principles on Swiss resource and waste management 2030:

- Principle 1: Business and society act autonomously and of their own free will.
- Principle 2: Fair competition between the market participants is sought when recycling waste.
- Principle 3: Waste generation is avoided whenever possible.
- Principle 4: Raw materials circulate optimally in cycles.
- Principle 5: Producers, consumers and other parties are responsible for the environmental impact of products throughout the entire life cycle.
- Principle 6: Primary and secondary raw materials in Switzerland are managed sustainably.
- Principle 7: Measures to prevent or recycle waste are prioritised with respect to their ecological and economic efficiency and effectiveness.
- Principle 8: Transparency in the financial and material flows forms the basis for optimisation of the disposal systems.
- Principle 9: High standards are maintained for the recycling and treatment of waste.
- Principle 10: The design and further development of the disposal systems aim to optimise costs, environmental benefits and customer friendliness.
- Principle 11: Thanks to innovation and cutting-edge technologies, Swiss resource and waste management is having a huge impact around the world.

Now we need to put our words into action. It is up to those involved in the project to make the guiding principles an integral part of their organisations, to take them forward and launch their own projects.

Three questions for Andreas Röthlisberger

Andreas Röthlisberger is the founder and President of the SENS Foundation. As a board member of Swiss Recycling, he was also heavily involved in the creation of the resource triologue.

You initiated the resource triologue. What motivated you to do this?

Thirty years ago, SENS was the first organisation to implement manufacturer responsibility (for manufacturers, importers and retailers), ensuring that products that have become waste are disposed of in the best possible way and that they can be reintroduced into the cycle in compliance with the relevant environmental regulations.

The methodology of the “Energy Triologue”, in which Aargau played a leading role, inspired me to start a similar process for waste resources. The term circular economy is on everyone’s lips. What we need to do is bring the key players together: the manufacturers and importers, the retailers, the federal and cantonal authorities and the entire recycling sector, including the NGOs. Swiss Recycling and the VBSA were on board. When the Director of Construction of the Canton of Aargau, Stephan Attiger, agreed to host and chair the triologue, that marked the start of the project.

Eleven stakeholders from the political and business spheres and from authorities and society in general are involved in the resource triologue, all with different needs and expectations. What did working together look like and what were the challenges?

Expectations were high, and the challenges were correspondingly great. Because we used the triologue methodology, according to which the aim is always to understand the statements of all others and accept them, even if you cannot agree, and because we used a good mix of workshops in smaller groups and plenary sessions, it was always possible to reach a consensus between all participants at each stage. External moderation was also a key factor in the triologue’s success. In the end, the highlight of the experience for all those involved was the fact that they were able to reach a consensus again and again, right up to the end.

They participants talk about responsibility and the fact that business and society act of their own free will. Why do you think this approach will be more successful than a governmental solution?

Today, in Europe and around the world, it is acknowledged that producer responsibility is the cornerstone of any circular economy. With SENS, Switzerland was the first country to implement this principle – and it did so voluntarily. The reason the concept works so well is that it is based on a natural law: “I reap what I sow.” No one is in a better position to ensure that components, secondary raw materials or energy can be recovered from the product they put on the market than the business providing it. They are responsible. Whether they actually perform the process themselves or contract others to do it for them is irrelevant. However, the consumer also has to take responsibility. Consumer responsibility is the counterpart to producer responsibility. If the consumer is in a position to be able to buy complex products such as an IT system or other electronic appliances, they are also in a position to be able to bring those items to the right place for recycling at the end of their life cycle. Logically, they should also be aware that they not only have to pay for the consumption of the product, but also for its recycling.

Governmental solutions relieve the economy of its responsibility, reducing that responsibility to financing. This is not an option because we cannot speak of a circular economy in Switzerland if we undermine the most important basis for that economy, namely producer responsibility.

The resource triologue

The triologue was launched in 2014 by the Canton of Aargau, the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and the trade association economiesuisse on the initiative of Swiss Recycling and the VBSA. What makes the resource triologue so unique is its consensus-oriented approach and the method behind the process. In order to ensure a level playing field, the triologue was moderated by an external party. The resource triologue addresses the question of what Swiss waste and resource management will look like as part of the circular economy in 2030. Eleven stakeholders were involved:

- Federal Office for the Environment (Bundesamt für Umwelt – FOEN)
- chemsuisse
- economiesuisse
- Association of the Swiss Aggregate and Concrete Industry (Fachverband der Schweizerischen Kies- und Betonindustrie – FSKB)
- The Industrial Union for Retail Switzerland (IG Detailhandel Schweiz)
- Swiss Conference of Heads of Swiss Environmental Protection Agencies (Konferenz der Vorsteher der Umweltschutzämter der Schweiz – KVU)
- Organisation for Communal Infrastructure (Organisation Kommunale Infrastruktur – OKI)
- Construction Materials Recycling Switzerland (arv Baustoffrecycling Schweiz – ARV)
- The Swiss Foundation for Practical Environmental Protection Pusch/WWF Switzerland/Cosedec
- Swiss Recycling
- Association of Plant Managers and Operation Companies of Swiss Waste Treatment Installations (Verband der Betriebsleiter und Betreiber Schweizerischer Abfallbehandlungsanlagen – VBSA)