

EVENT SUMMARY – THURSDAY JANUARY 15th 2026

RECYCLING: INSIGHTS FROM CROSS-INDUSTRY EXPERTISE



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On Thursday 15 January 2026, the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode (FHCM), with the support of DEFI, brought together the Members of the Commission for Innovation and Sustainability in a plenary session on recycling. The session addressed the challenges of scaling up recycling initiatives and making recycled materials desirable. Drawing on expertise from design, perfume and cosmetics, jewellery, tableware, toys and architecture, participants engaged in cross-sector dialogue and shared their experience. The event was introduced by Pascal Morand, Executive President of the FHCM, and Clarisse Reille, Managing Director of DEFI, and moderated by Karine Vergniol.

As a preamble, Clarisse Reille referred to the prospective modelling study of an optimized textile extended producer responsibility (EPR) sector by 2035, coordinated by Isabelle Lefort and with strong involvement from brands but also sorting, collection and recycling stakeholders. She recalled the three key messages of the study: the imperative of a solid and structured recycling industry on the territory to achieve ambitious collection targets; the necessity of open-loop textile recycling; and finally, the strength of collective action.

Introduction: Context and challenges of recycling

Manuel Burnand, General Director, FEDERREC (Fédération du Recyclage, du Réemploi et de l'Économie Circulaire)

Manuel Burnand highlighted the complex challenges facing recycling in the context of European deindustrialization, shrinking margins, and factory closures. Through materials, recycling inherits the legacy of the past and must contend with varying lifecycles (100 years for buildings, 20 years for cars, just a few weeks for packaging...) as well as persistent organic pollutants that limit recycling possibilities. The sector needs to continue investing in R&D to move beyond basic recycling toward granular technologies that can "pierce through materials to decode them" and separate multiple grades of the same material. These industrial considerations must be part of a thorough overhaul of EPR frameworks that also recognizes the vital role of local areas.

Making large-scale recycling possible: Sharing experience

Juliette Beaulieu, Head of Recycling Development at CITEO

Laurence Chevillon, General Director of the Union Française de la Bijouterie, Joaillerie, Orfèvrerie, des Pierres et des Perles

Thierry Villotte, President of the Confédération des Arts de la Table

Scaling up recycling depends on cooperation among all stakeholders and a well-structured European industrial fabric. For jewelry and fine jewelry, Laurence Chevillon explained the unique nature of gold: due to its intrinsic value, it is never considered or treated as waste. Gold has been recycled since the dawn of civilization, and today 25% of annual production comes from recycled gold. This terminology is governed by the Responsible Jewellery Council, a collective initiative that has established four categories of recycled gold ensuring full traceability. For CITEO, Juliette Beaulieu recalled the polluter-pays principle, which currently translates into 3.7 million tons of recycled packaging, though material-specific barriers still need to be overcome. One example is the successful polystyrene yogurt pot, which illustrates the need for both stakeholder commitment and regulatory frameworks to encourage the incorporation of recycled materials into new products. Thierry Villotte also addressed the regulatory issue through the problem of drinking glasses, currently excluded from recycling streams even though consumers are already sorting them. Thus, commitment from the entire ecosystem (citizens, producers, manufacturers) emerges as the primary success factor for recycling, all of which must be supported by political will.

Insight: Creating from waste

Étienne de Swardt, Founder of État Libre d'Orange

Upcycling is an innovative approach applicable across all sectors. This is exactly what Étienne de Swardt demonstrated through the story of the perfume "Les Fleurs du Déchet – I Am Trash," launched in 2017 and created from rose petals and wood chips that had already undergone a first extraction for Givaudan. This fragrance illustrates how material constraints can become catalysts for creative innovation, establishing a new industry standard that has since developed structured processes for valorizing its waste. The waste materials are cleaned and filtered again to enable a new extraction, with Givaudan ensuring the integrity of the olfactory quality. This experience shows that a powerful poetic exercise can create harmony between environmental storytelling and economic viability.

How to make recycled materials desirable?

Isabelle Debut, Global Key Account Manager at Vitra

Vincent Delavenne, Vice President Packaging Capabilities at Coty

Pierre Veron, Founder of Le Jouet Simple

Making recycled materials desirable requires embedding this approach from the product design stage. Vincent Delavenne from Coty outlined the complexity of integrating recycled materials in the fragrance industry. Beyond the necessary availability and processability of materials, they must reconcile technical, regulatory, and aesthetic constraints. The principle of material separability should be prioritized to create a viable supply chain. This relies on life cycle analysis and collaboration between designers, engineers, and marketing teams. It is with this approach that Le Jouet Simple, represented by Pierre Veron, committed to meeting strict specifications: single-material construction, component separability, and a deposit system for toys to recover materials for recycling. The toys are made from a single recycled and recyclable material, with anything that disrupts recycling removed at the design stage. Isabelle Debut from Vitra also emphasized the interplay between sustainability and desirability. The aesthetic constraints associated with incorporating recycled materials can be overcome by embracing them as an integral part of the materials' story. Recycled materials can become the desirable norm, provided volumes allow competitive pricing and regulatory requirements provide the necessary incentive.

Insight: Architecture and rehabilitation

Christine Leconte, Director of the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville

Today, architecture faces planetary boundaries (climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion) and must therefore impose its own limits (limiting urban sprawl, restricting the use of natural resources, mitigating construction industry impacts) to ensure "the habitability of the world" for all. Rehabilitation requires a paradigm shift: starting from what exists rather than from a standard program, even for projects that aren't exceptional. The diagnostic phase becomes a fundamental step prior to any project and allows for the on-site reuse of elements. Architecture students today arrive with an awareness of planetary challenges and a desire to "help the planet." Teaching has evolved to refocus on materiality and the specific properties of each material, ensuring a form of care for our comfort. Constraints and limitations emerge as drivers of creativity, with rehabilitation bringing together expertise around a shared project.

In conclusion, the discussions highlighted the necessary conditions for scaling up recycling: technological advances to refine the reading and separation of materials, the structuring of a viable European industrial supply chain, and evolution of the regulatory framework to encourage the integration of recycled materials into new products. Beyond these structural challenges, the presentations demonstrated the importance of embedding this approach from the design stage, viewing material constraints not as obstacles but as starting points for innovation and creativity. The diversity of sectors represented – from design to toys, perfumery, jewellery, and architecture – made it possible to identify common issues while highlighting the need to adapt solutions to the specificities of each industry.