

Press release

Cradle to Cradle NGO releases position paper: Making consumer electronics circular

Berlin, 26 August 2025 – Cradle to Cradle NGO has published a [position paper](#) today to mark its partnership with IFA Berlin 2025. In light of dwindling resources and rising demand, the consumer and home electronics industry must reinvent itself. The transformation to circularity based on the Cradle to Cradle (C2C) approach opens up key opportunities to strengthen the industry as an engine of economic growth and to tap into the innovation potential of tomorrow.

The paper shows what materially healthy and circular electronic products can look like today and how the industry can gradually achieve a strategic transition.

Challenges of linear production

Materials in linearly produced devices are permanently bonded together, sometimes harmful to health in their manufacture or use, difficult to trace and only partially recyclable. Furthermore, transparency in global supply chains and uniform social and environmental standards are not yet universal. As a result, valuable raw materials such as gold, cobalt and palladium are often lost, and geopolitical dependencies arise. In addition, linear product design prevents materials from remaining in circulation. This not only leads to growing amounts of waste, but also to increasing environmental pollution.

Circular economy according to Cradle to Cradle

In Germany alone, around 900,000 tonnes of electronic waste are generated every year. Waste is a man-made concept, according to the position paper. In a C2C economy, it does not exist. Following nature's example, nothing is lost. This principle can also be applied to the electronics industry. Products and processes are designed from the outset so that all components can be returned to either biological or technical cycles. This means that devices are first dismantled into their constituent parts. These are then recycled, reprocessed or repaired and thus form the basis for new products.

C2C devices are initially designed as raw material stores for a defined usage scenario. In this scenario, the materials used are healthy for humans and the environment, and are sourced and processed in a fair and transparent manner. Modular design, digital product passports, material pooling and the use of renewable energies also enable innovative business models. One example is product-as-a-service models, in which ownership of the product and its raw materials remains with the manufacturer.

'With this paper, we want to inspire a rethinking of how consumer electronics are designed so that they become part of the solution. Forward-looking innovations do not arise from the optimization of linear processes, but from genuine rethinking – as the worsening raw materials situation shows. We need to design products from the outset so that they are still valuable tomorrow and thus leave a positive footprint,' Nora Sophie Griefahn, Executive Director of Cradle to Cradle NGO.

'C2C consumer electronics are no longer a vision of the future but are practically feasible. Examples across the industry show that the solutions are already known and companies are taking the first steps towards C2C. Now it's about supporting them along the way so that the huge environmental and economic potential can be realized and become the new normal,' says Tim Janßen, Executive Director of Cradle to Cradle NGO.

'IFA has always been a platform for the technologies of tomorrow. Through our partnership with Cradle to Cradle NGO, we want to show that innovation and sustainability go hand in hand. The position paper clearly shows how the industry can implement circular economy in practice – and thus lay the foundation for a sustainable consumer electronics industry,' says Leif Lindner, CEO, IFA Management GmbH.

About the positioning paper

The paper describes specific best-practice examples – from the use of recycled solder to freezers insulated with volcanic stone and smartphones with a return system. These examples are accompanied by a call to scale up such approaches now. In the future, resource management, health, digitalization, and social aspects should no longer be considered separately but planned and implemented jointly and systematically. Digital product passports, healthy materials within their intended purpose, transparent supply chains, fair working conditions, and sustainable business models must become the norm.

The goal is to fundamentally improve our business practices, not just make them less harmful. This will enable the Home & Consumer Tech industry to develop powerful, entertaining and responsibly produced devices in the future – with positive effects on the environment, the economy and society.

The paper was written as part of a partnership between Cradle to Cradle NGO and IFA Berlin, which aims to promote the transition to genuine circularity, circular resource use, and positive impact. It is based in part on the experiences and publicly available information of manufacturers of consumer electronics and household appliances. Prior to the paper's publication, a roundtable discussion was held with representatives from EPEA – Part of Drees & Sommer, Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute, Canon Germany, LIEBHERR Hausgeräte, ZUMTOBEL Group, Tridonic GmbH & Co KG, Siemens AG, MediaMarkt Saturn Retail Group, and WIK Group.

About IFA Berlin

IFA Berlin is the world's leading event for home and consumer technologies and celebrates over a century of innovation. Since 1924, IFA Berlin has been the leading global platform where technology leaders, innovators and industry experts come together to showcase groundbreaking products and shape the future of consumer electronics. The event takes place every year in September in Berlin.

Further information on IFA Berlin 2025: www.ifa-berlin.com

About Cradle to Cradle NGO

The donation-funded, non-profit Cradle to Cradle NGO has been committed to a future-proof circular economy since 2012. Through educational work, networking and hands-on projects, it brings the Cradle to Cradle approach into business, politics and society. Its goal is a society in which products and processes are designed from the outset to be healthy and fair, with their materials kept in continuous circulation. This is achieved through formats such as the recurring C2C Congress, the C2C LAB in Berlin and the Labor Tempelhof concert project with Die Ärzte, which received the German Sustainability Award's special prize in 2024.

Further information on Cradle to Cradle NGO: <https://c2c.ngo/en/>

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