

COMET MODULE

FULIBATTER – FUTURE LITHIUM-ION-BATTERY RECYCLING FOR RECOVERY OF CRITICAL RAW MATERIALS

Main location: Linz (Upper Austria)

Other locations: Leoben (Styria)

Thematic area: Material & Production

(according to www.ffg.at/comet/netzwerk)



Thematic focuses

- Waste management and waste technological approaches for lithium-ion-battery (LIB) recycling
- Pyrometallurgical processing of LIBs and black matter
- Bio-hydrometallurgical treatment of LIB residues

Planned realisation and outcomes

The focus of FuLiBatter is to recover critical raw materials from the active material (also called black mass) of lithium-ion batteries (LIB) of different application areas (automotive, stationary and portable storage media) to closed-loop material cycles.

Current recycling processes mainly focus on mechanical processing to separate cases, cables, and other coarse components. The largest mass fraction of LIB after reprocessing, the fine-grained active material (making up to 70% by weight of the battery mass), contains critical elements, like lithium, phosphorus, cobalt, silicon and graphite. Additionally, economically important metals such as copper, nickel, and manganese are present in varying concentrations, depending on the battery type. Currently, many of these elements are not selectively recovered and end up in waste gas or the slag fraction after pyrometallurgical treatment, or they may be dissolved in wastewater after hydrometallurgical processes.

The amendment to the EU Battery Regulation will mandate higher recycling efficiencies (65% in 2025 and 70% in 2030) and recovery rates for lithium (50% by December 31, 2027, and 80% by 2031), as well as for cobalt, nickel, and copper (90% by December 31, 2027, and 95% by 2031).

In the first subproject, froth flotation will be used to separate the graphite in high quality and at the same time improve the recyclability of the metal oxides. Characterization of the separated graphite will provide information on its quality and usability in battery cell production or in other applications (carburizing agent in the steel sector or secondary raw material in refractories production).

In a second subproject, on the one hand the thermal deactivation of LIB cells will be investigated through CFD simulations. On the other hand, a reducing pyrometallurgical process will be developed to separate a metal alloy containing cobalt, nickel and copper, and to recover the valuable materials lithium and phosphorus via the gas phase. The resulting metal alloy will be assessed for its potential use as an alloying additive for special steel production.

In the third development line (3rd subproject), the concept of biohydrometallurgy will be applied. Microorganisms will be used to extract metals from the matrix (bioleaching) coupled with selective element recovery. Bioelectrochemical systems (BES) offer a sustainable method for recovering metals from leachates with lower energy requirements compared to conventional electrolysis cells.

COMET FACTSHEET

Selected company partners (max. 10):

1. AUDI AG
2. BRAIN Biotech AG
3. EBNER Industrieofenbau GmbH
4. RHI Magnesita GmbH
5. Saubermacher Dienstleistungs AG
6. TUEV SUED Landesgesellschaft Oesterreich GmbH
7. voestalpine High Performance Metals GmbH
8. VTU Group GmbH

Selected scientific partners (max. 5):

1. acib GmbH (Austrian Centre of Industrial Biotechnology)
2. Universitaet fuer Bodenkultur (Department fuer Agrarbiotechnologie IFA Tulln)
3. Coventry University
4. Montanuniversitaet Leoben
5. UVR-FIA GmbH

Selected international¹ partners (max. 5):

1. AUDI AG
2. Coventry University
3. UVR-FIA GmbH

Duration:	01.07.2022 - 30.06.2026 (4 years)
Staff employment:	8 FTE, thereof 7 scientists
Management:	Dr. Elizaveta Cheremisina, Senior Project Manager
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Status 10.10.2023

The COMET Module is funded within COMET – Competence Centers for Excellent Technologies – by BMK, BMAW as well as the co-financing federal provinces Upper Austria and Styria. The COMET programme is managed by FFG.
www.ffg.at/comet

¹ Partners with headquarters outside Austria