PAPER AND THE ENVIRONMENT
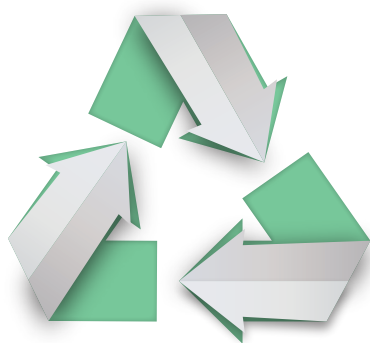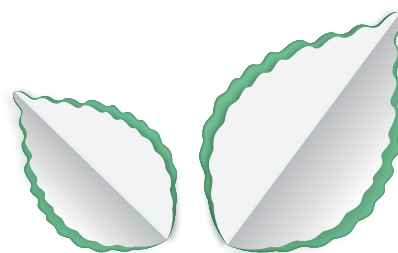
Paper has been an essential communications medium for 2,000 years. Even in today's digital world, paper continues to be the preferred format for readers of books, magazines and newspapers.

Yet the myths around paper still exist. A 2025 survey by Two Sides[1] revealed 56% of European consumers believe European forests are shrinking, when in fact they have been growing by an area equivalent to 1,500 football pitches every day.[2] There is also a widespread misconception that digital communication has no environmental impact.

PAPER LOVES TREES

Paper is a uniquely renewable and sustainable product. The main raw material, trees, are grown and harvested in a carefully controlled and sustainable way - so successfully that European forests, which provide 90% of the wood fibre used by the European pulp and paper industry[3], have grown by an area the size of Switzerland in just 15 years![2]
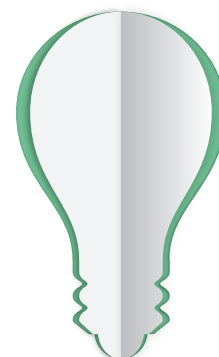
THE PAPER REVOLUTION

In 2024, the European recycling rate for paper was 75%.[4] In 2021, the signatories of the European Declaration on Paper Recycling declared their commitment to reach a 76% paper recycling rate by 2030.[5]

Paper is recycled on average 4 times in Europe.[5] Paper cannot be recycled indefinitely due to natural losses through the recycling process. Therefore fresh fibre from sustainably managed forests is needed to keep the renewable cycle going.

PAPER POWER

The European pulp and paper industry is the biggest single user and producer of renewable energy in Europe. 66% of European pulp and paper mills' energy consumption comes from renewable sources.[4]

European forests act as a major carbon sink. Between 2010 and 2020, the average annual sequestration of carbon in forest biomass reached 155 million tonnes in the European region.[6]
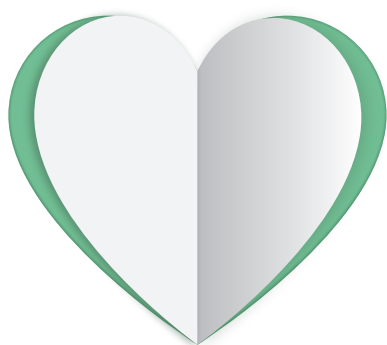
DIGITAL HAS IMPACTS

The ICT industry accounted for 4-6% of global electricity use in 2020, which is more than 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions. With increasing demand, the ICT industry is expected to increase its global electricity use over the next decade.[7]

The electronic waste problem is also colossal and growing. In 2022, the industry was responsible for a record breaking 62 million metric tonnes of e-waste across the world.[8] That's equivalent to the weight of 620 cruise ships.*

Raw materials from digital equipment, servers and power generators are often finite, precious and non-renewable, as well as being notoriously difficult to recycle.

PAPER IS PREFERRED

In today's digital world, the power of print on paper is becoming more apparent than ever. Consumers throughout Europe love reading in print, with many understanding the importance of "switching off".

33% of respondents to a 2025 Two Sides[1] survey feel they are suffering from a "digital overload" and 50% agreed that they spent 'too long' on digital devices.

Furthermore, when it comes to bills and statements, 76% of respondents believe they should have the right to choose how they receive communications (printed or electronically) from financial organisations and service providers.[1]

Discover the story of paper at **www.lovepaper.org**

SOURCES

1. Two Sides Trend Tracker, European Findings, 2025
2. Two Sides Analysis of FAO data 2005 - 2020
3. Cepi, Forest Resources, accessed September 2023
4. Cepi, Key Statistics, 2024
5. European Paper Recycling Council, Monitoring Report, 2024
6. Forest Europe, State of Europe's Forest, 2020
7. UK Parliament, Energy consumption of ICT, 2022
8. Global Transboundary E-waste Flows Monitor, 2024

* Based on a typical new, large cruise ship weighing around 100,000 metric tons.

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