



Brussels Regional Programme for a Circular Economy

The Brussels-Capital Region covers an area of 161.38 sq km with a population of more than one million inhabitants. The circular economy is proving to be an innovative and sustainable way to address not only environmental but also social and economic challenges.



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Approach

The Brussels Regional Programme for Circular Economy (BRPCE) is an integrated strategy involving 111 measures aimed at delivering circular patterns at the city level. The main objectives of the BRPCE are:

- to transform environmental objectives into economic opportunities
- to anchor economic activities within Brussels' borders, maximising resource circularity and boosting entrepreneurship
- to create new employment opportunities

The different measures are divided in four areas – cross-functional, sector-based, territorial and governance – and a set of specific targets and indicators have been developed for each of the planned measures.

The BRPCE is a bottom-up initiative involving several public and private stakeholders through an innovative co-creation process, along with three regional ministries, 15

public administrations, regional advisory committees and almost 60 stakeholders between NGOs and private businesses. After several seminars, working groups and public meetings, the BRPCE was adopted in March 2016. Currently 74 measures have already started, while 37 have begun the first discussions for developing action plans.

The BRPCE is a living strategy. A revision mechanism will take place every 18 months, to challenge the results, amend some measures and involve more public and private stakeholders.

Challenges

The Brussels-Capital Region is facing environmental, social and economic challenges similar to those of other European urban regions. On the one hand, the region is highly dependent on material flows from outside the region. It functions

mainly as a linear economy, producing large amounts of waste, and it must fight pollution and cut greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, despite the city's role as an important and dynamic economic centre, the unemployment rate of Brussels' inhabitants is particularly high. It is a major regional objective to create economic activity while working on its environmental goals.

Many European cities have recognised that their current policy instruments such as waste management plans are entry points for affecting change. Now they are clearly expressing a need to develop a broader and more coherent vision – an inclusive approach – that covers all key resources and supports action while fixing priorities and setting measurable targets. The BRPCE offers a direct answer to this.

Impact

Below are some of the first results of BRPCE's implementation.

- The call for projects 'Be circular' launched with the aim to guide and support companies towards the development of circular business models.
- The Urban Renovation Contract was launched as a financing programme with a budget of €110 million to stimulate pilot projects that employ circular economy at the local level.

- 'Village Finance' a Brussels support organisation that provides grants for sustainable entrepreneurship was established.
- Two different pilot projects, MODULL 2.0 and BRIC, launched to develop educational modules for workers in the construction sector and train them on circular economy practices.
- The Greenbizz incubator was established to provide companies and start-ups with an area of 8,000 sq metres that includes facilities and services to develop their circular sustainable projects.
- The research study Brussels Circular Economy Transition (BUCETRA) was financed by Innoviris to analyse the economic and environmental potential of the waste streams for a transition towards a circular materials management in Brussels Capital Region.
- A platform was created to identify, prioritise and resolve technical and administrative barriers that block the transition to a circular economy. In this platform, the private sector plays a key role is played.

Lessons

In Brussels' experience, some ingredients are key to developing an efficient circular economy strategy at the city level:

- the establishment of a co-creation process – bottom-up approach – aimed at creating a resource efficient vision for

the city is key. In Brussels, this was achieved through preliminary seminars, bilateral meetings with public and private stakeholders and by fully integrating those stakeholders in the practical implementation and evaluation of the process and actions through ad-hoc steering groups.

- ensuring a combination of both transversal and sectoral measures, as well as territorial and governance procedures. An integrated approach can only be possible if different stakeholders are involved in the implementation of the measures. Indeed, the 111 Brussels measures are being implemented by about 60 pilots. More than that, each pilot typically involves 2 or 3 stakeholders, both public and private as well as the construction federation, for the practical implementation and follow-up of the measure.
- promoting new forms of regional collaborative and social economies can be a way to encourage mindset changes not only among stakeholders but also in the wider civil society. In Brussels, this has been done through a specific call for social and collaborative innovative projects.



"The Brussels Regional Programme for Circular Economy aims at making Brussels a more circular city that meets the needs of its citizens. An example is the work that BRPCE has done in the construction sector. By considering the Brussels' building environment as an open-pit mine of material resources, the BRPCE is creating an integrated value chain for construction materials that will generate new jobs and stimulate another economic model."

Céline Fremault, Brussels minister for the environment