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## Brussels circular economy programme



# Regional programme defines and drives action for change

Brussels has developed a coherent vision and multi-stakeholder programme to guide and accelerate its transition to a circular economy model. Through 111 measures it aims to turn environmental objectives into economic opportunities that will optimise resources, create new jobs and add value for local people.

Brussels has put the environment at the heart of its 10-year vision for revitalising the economy. Not only has it identified this as the area with the greatest potential for generating new economic activity - and the jobs needed to reduce its high unemployment rate. It was also convinced that as a city highly motivated to position itself as a sustainability innovator and highly dependent on material flows from outside the region, moving to a circular economy model was vital - and should underpin its strategy.

When it came to designing a programme to support this strategy, Brussels had some valuable experience to call on. For the previous six years its employment-environment alliance had mobilised diverse stakeholders to develop industries related to the environment. This confirmed the effectiveness of uniting the public, private and non-profit sectors behind shared objectives. It also gave the city the confidence to develop a broader and more holistic approach for its new programme, setting priorities and measurable targets for activities covering all key resources.



Combining both bottom up and top down approaches within the programme has been a major success factor, with government decision makers having the vision and local and sectoral actors knowing what's needed and how to make it happen on the ground.



**Catherine Vanderstichelen, head of department  
Economy in Transition, Brussels Capital region**

### Agreed actions

The resulting Brussels Regional Programme for a Circular Economy (BRPCE) has three overarching objectives: To transform environmental objectives into economic opportunities to anchor economic activities within Brussels' boundaries and to create new employment opportunities. These guide the work of a large group of stakeholders which includes three ministries - an unprecedented number for a bottom-up initiative of this size - together with 15 different administrations, regional advisory panels and 60 public and private stakeholders.

cities in action

November 2017

where: Brussels, Belgium  
what: Cooperation  
when: 2016 - 2019

Using an innovative co-creation process involving seminars and working groups, collaborators generated, prioritised and developed 111 measures. These are being piloted by the 60 stakeholders, whose work is funded by the programme's annual €12.8m budget. Measures are grouped into four strategic areas. Cross-functional measures are concerned with creating a favourable regulatory framework. Sector-based measures target construction, resources and waste logistics, trade and food sectors. Territorial measures integrate the circular economy at the local level. And governance measures support the programme by strengthening coordination between authorities.

By involving multiple public and private stakeholders in the origination, operation and reporting of circular economy measures you get more action and you can go faster and further than if you have to count only on the agencies concerned.

**Patricia Foscolo - manager green technologies, Impulse Brussels**

### First results

Measures already underway include Greenbizz, a green incubator giving start ups the facilities and services they need to develop circular-based projects. MODOLL 2.0 and BRIC are both concerned with preparing Brussels' construction workers for the future through education modules demonstrating circular concepts. Brussels' urban planning, renewal and heritage authorities have integrated circular economy principles into their urban renovation contracts. Research project BRUCETRA is exploring how waste streams can best be managed to support the transition to a circular economy.

An intermediate evaluation at the beginning of 2017 showed that a total of 74 measures have started and actions plans for 37 more were being created. One of the programme's biggest projects, Be Circular - Be Brussels, was revealed to be one of the most successful. The first call for this €1.7m project, which helps companies move their core business towards sustainability, received an unexpectedly high number of proposals (85).



### Continual evolution

One factor is seen as pivotal to the success of BRPCE: the incorporation of both bottom up and top down approaches. This makes things happen, as measures are developed together and have guaranteed governmental support and budget from the start, but has also given the programme one of its greatest challenges - working efficiently in a multi-administration, co-creative way. The learning here has been that establishing the right structures and mindset takes time but investment in this work upfront pays dividends later on.

The BRPCE is designed as a 'living strategy' and incorporates a mechanism to challenge results, revise measures and involve more sectors and stakeholders every 18 months. There will be another formal evaluation in 2018 to see what progress is being made towards targets set for 2019. These include the launch of 50 new businesses that have integrated circularity into their development process; ensuring 50% of public tenders incorporate circular economy and resource efficiency criteria; and training 20,000 employees to think in a circular way.

