

INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE FACTSHEETS ON POLICY INSTRUMENTS THAT PROMOTE ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS FOR GREEN AND CIRCULAR BUSINESSES

# Brussels Regional Program for Circular Economy

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## BEST PRACTICE FACTSHEET

The Brussels Regional Program for a Circular Economy 2016 – 2020 (BRPCE or PREC for Programme Régional en Economie Circulaire) is a multi-stakeholder program to guide and accelerate the city’s transition to a circular economy model. BRPCE was adopted on 10 March 2016 by the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR).

Through 111 measures it aims to turn environmental objectives into economic opportunities that will optimise the use of resources, create new jobs and added value for local people.

## OBJECTIVES



Through the Regional Program in Circular Economy, the Brussels government intends to promote a circular economy at the local level, in line with citizens’ needs (housing, supplies, work, travel, entertainment, etc.). The general objectives of the BRPCE are:

- 1 To transform environmental objectives into economic opportunities.
- 2 To strengthen the local economy in Brussels by producing locally whenever possible, reducing transports of goods, optimising land use and creating added value for Brussels inhabitants
- 3 To create employment.

Companies in the region are at the heart of the scheme. The BRPCE aims to help them reduce their costs, develop, innovate, engage and initiate their transition to a low-carbon economic model, creating local jobs while contributing to improving the quality of life of the people of Brussels. With the program, the Region also aims to position itself as a particularly innovative European region, as a frontrunner in public policy supporting the development of the circular economy through a voluntary approach to efficient management of resources<sup>1</sup>.

## IMPORTANT POLITICAL GOALS



**Increasing local production**



**Reducing transport of goods**



**Optimizing use of local resources especially land**



**Creating value and improving quality of life through job creation**

FIGURE 1 From UN Environment Programme (2018). Brussels Capital Region: Circular Economy Transition. Gil, S., Miller, K., Muñoz, E. World Council on City Data, United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi, Kenya, pg.7

<sup>1</sup> Euro Cities: [Brussels Circular Economy Program](#)

## BACKGROUND



The circular economy is, as defined by the BRPCE, an economic system of exchange and production which, at every stage of the life cycle of products, is intended to increase the efficiency of resource use and decrease the impact on the environment while increasing the well-being of people. In its 2025 strategy adopted on 16 June 2015, the Brussels Government set out the goal to revitalise the Brussels economy with a 10-year vision. The environment is identified as area that brings jobs through the development of the BRPCE. After several seminars, working groups and public meetings, the BRPCE program was adopted by the Government on 10 March 2016.

## IMPLEMENTATION



BRPCE is designed as a multi-stakeholder program and is coordinated by Ministers and regional administrative bodies: [Hub.brussels](#) – the Brussels Enterprise Agency; [Brussels Environment](#) – the Brussels administrative body for the Environment and Energy; [Bruxelles-Propreté Agency](#) – the Brussels waste agency; and [Innoviris](#) – The Brussels administrative body for the promotion and support of innovation. A strategic committee (regional ministers and authorities), coordination

committees and strengthened cooperation between authorities ensure the successful operation of the program and its implementation.

The program includes a large group of stakeholders including 15 different local authorities, regional advisory panels and 60 public and private stakeholders.

Using an innovative co-creation process involving seminars and working groups, 111 measures were prioritised and developed. These are being piloted by the 60 stakeholders, whose work is funded by the program's annual €2.8 million budget. The 111 measures are divided into four strategic areas.

- 1 Cross-functional measures: the aim is to establish a favourable policy framework, provide direct and indirect support, training courses for jobseekers in this sector, foster innovation, and develop sustainable public procurement. Within this framework, financial support actions include: a joint call for projects of 1 million Euros targeting circular businesses and new business models; and the creation of a circular economy fund of €500,000 hosted by [finance.brussels](#) to finance companies that adopt the logic and models of the economy circular.
- 2 Sector-based measures in construction, waste management, retail and food, which are the most challenging sectors in Brussels and

impactful in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and job creation potential. Some measures in the construction sector include the creation of [Baticrea](#), the Brussels-Capital Construction Confederation, [Ecobuild.brussels](#) and the [Greenbizz](#) incubator.

- 3 Territorial measures which integrate the circular economy at the local level. These include developing integrated production activities, diversified by neighbourhood; neighbourhood functional planning to strengthen and develop economic spaces in the urban context.
- 4 Governance measures to strengthen coordination between administrations. The governance priority action consisted in the creation of a Steering Committee with a view to ensure strategic monitoring and recurring evaluation of the program.

The program offers several financial instruments to support circular businesses<sup>2</sup>: subsidies, grants, tax allowances depending on the size of the business. The program also set the objective of making economic operators aware of the circular economy through trainings, sharing best practices, and awareness-raising events. Training within BRPCE is represented by 16 measures and involved 9 training

institutions. It includes internship offers, contests, e-learning lessons and other tools, targeting in particular the training of higher education teachers and trainers; the training of business leaders and senior managers; as well as the training of future managers and employees.

Some of the program initiatives include:

- 1 [Research Brussels Circular Economy Transition](#): study of the economic and environmental potential of waste streams for circular materials management, financed by Innoviris;
- 2 A [platform](#) that was created to identify, prioritise and resolve technical and administrative barriers that block the transition to a circular economy;
- 3 “[Be Circular](#)” program: a call for projects to guide and support companies towards the development of circular business models with annual budget of €1.5 million.
- 4 “[Village Finance](#)”: provides scholarships of €5,000 to the self-employed (primarily) and to very small businesses that meet the criteria of the circular economy. The scholarships are granted thanks to the support of Brussels Environment.

<sup>2</sup> [Be Circular, Be Brussels](#)

## RESULTS



To monitor the development and progress towards circular economy in the Brussels Capital Region, the BRPCE has developed an indicator framework with circular economy indicators distributed across three categories: resource flows, quality of life (focused primarily on jobs) and accelerators (policy levers to achieve a circular economy). The accelerator indicators are those that can influence both quality of life and environmental impact<sup>3</sup>. The program also has a monitoring dashboard consisting of two phases. The first phase concerns the performance indicators which provide a quantitative evaluation, focusing on the efficiency of the execution of the activities. The second phase concerns impact indicators, which aim to measure the impact of the activities carried out and the quality of the results obtained.

In 2016 and 2017, a total of 281 applications for funding were received and processed in the framework of seven BRPCE measures. Of these applications, 139 projects were selected and financially supported for a total amount of financial assistance of 8.3 million euros.

According to the update report of February 2019<sup>4</sup>, following the program's mid-term evaluation, the average implementation rate for the 111 measures is 45%; 1,432 people were trained and made aware of the circular economy principles and the program events and seminars, 78 in total, reached 1,229 participants. Regarding the multi-stakeholder collaboration, 196 people from 91 organizations are taking part in the program dynamics and a total of 49 new collaborations have been launched since 2016. A total of 222 entrepreneurs have been supported during the years 2016-2017 on the basis of 13 measures implemented by eight administrations.

A total of 74 projects were submitted for the 2019 edition of Be Circular and 26 projects were selected, representing a total amount of 1,959,611 Euros in subsidies. In total, 122 projects were selected in the years 2016-2019<sup>5</sup>. It is estimated that more than 200 jobs were created by the Be Circular call for projects alone.

A first set of measures already underway include Greenbizz, a green incubator providing start-ups with an area of 8000 m2 of facilities and services they need to develop circular projects. MODOLL 2.0 and BRIC were launched to develop training modules for workers in the construction sector. Brussels' urban planning, renewal and heritage authorities have integrated circular economy principles into their urban

renovation contracts. The research project BRUCETRA is exploring how waste streams can best be managed to support the transition to a circular economy.

At the European level, the program has won the Eurocities Prize in 2017 in the innovation category and the first prize of the Regional Innovation Award in 2016

### SUPPORTED COMPANIES

**construction 109**  
**food 33**  
**3R 21**  
**textile 24**  
**service 11**  
**logistic 7**  
**environment 1**  
**education 1**  
**energy 10**  
**water 1**  
**design 3**  
**cosmetic 1**

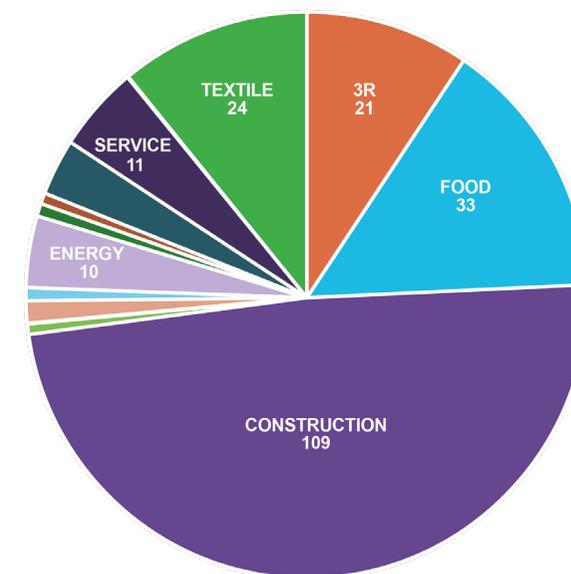


FIGURE 2 From Be circular be.brussels (2018). Programme Régional en Économie Circulaire Evaluation mi-parcours (2016-2017), pg.9.

<sup>3</sup> Brussels Capital Region: [Circular Economy Transition](#)  
<sup>4</sup> Be Circular Be.Brussels: [Actualisation Du Programme](#)

<sup>5</sup> Source: [Portugal.gov](#)

## SUCCESS FACTORS



One factor is seen as pivotal to the success of BRPCE: the combination of both bottom-up and top-down approaches. The advantage is that measures are being implemented and have guaranteed governmental support and budget from the start. At the same time, it is a challenge to work efficiently in a multi-administration, co-creative way. Establishing the right structures and mindset takes time, but investment in this work upfront pays off in the end.

*“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)

Moreover, the combination of both transversal and sectoral measures, as well as territorial and governance procedures is very important. This integrated approach is possible thanks to the multi-stakeholder nature of the program (the 111 measures are being implemented through approximately 60 pilot programs which involves two or three stakeholders per program, both public and private as well as the construction federation).

The collaborative framework of BRPCE promotes new forms of regional collaborative and social economies that can play an important role in mindset change towards circular economy not only among the program stakeholders but also in the wider community. Another success factor is the programme evaluation carried out every 18 months which allows a constant adaptation of measures and monitoring of results.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN



### Multi-stakeholder engagement

The implementation and success of circular economy approaches by businesses requires the mobilization and support of many actors since the start. Transversal workshops, co-creation sessions and recurring events (like the annual meetings) help to activate new collaborations between different actors, reflect on the achievements and build new initiatives.

### Continuous evaluation

It is important to regularly measure and monitor the impact of each initiative, after having defined proper

impact indicators and key performance indicators (KPIs). The BRPCE has been designed as a ‘living strategy’ and incorporates a mechanism to challenge results, revise measures and involve more sectors and stakeholders.

### Circular economy cluster

To boost the development of regional supply and to drive innovation, it is important to create space for the agents to exchange ideas and rely on a supportive network. An example is [circlemade](#), the Brussels circular economy innovation network, consisting of cutting-edge companies and public and expert institutions, which uses its expertise to monitor, inform, support and drive innovation.

### Support & Trainings

In order to facilitate the adoption of circular strategies, it is necessary to provide economic actors with a relevant support, but also tools, mentoring and trainings.

## MORE INFO

[Be circular be.brussels \(2016\). Programme Régional en économie circulaire 2016 – 2020 Mobiliser les ressources et minimiser les richesses perdues: Pour une économie régionale innovante.](#)

[Be circular be.brussels \(2018\). Programme Régional en Économie Circulaire Evaluation mi-parcours \(20162017\).](#)

[Be circular be.brussels.](#)

[Circlemade.brussels.](#)

[Circular Economy.brussels.](#)

[Gil, S., Miller, K., Muñoz, E., 2018. UN Environment Programme. Brussels Capital Region: Circular Economy Transition, Nairobi, Kenya.](#)

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