

CONTENT

In March 2020, the Commission committed itself to come forward with a sustainable built environment strategy, in the new circular economy action plan and in the new industrial strategy for Europe.

The built environment, which corresponds to everything people live in and around, such as housing, transport infrastructure, services networks or public spaces, requires vast amounts of resources. It accounts for around half of all extracted material. In particular, the construction sector is responsible for over a third of the EU's total waste generation. Furthermore, greenhouse gas emissions (GHGe) resulting from material extraction, manufacturing of construction products, construction and renovation of buildings amount to around 5-12% of total national GHGe.

In this context, the stated aim of the strategy will be to increase material efficiency and to reduce climate impacts of the built environment, particularly promoting circularity principles throughout the life cycle of buildings. The strategy is expected to ensure coherence across policy areas related, for example, to climate, energy, management of construction and demolition waste, digitalisation or skills. The Commission has already pointed out that it would:

- revise the Construction Product Regulation, taking this opportunity to improve the sustainability performance of construction products, possibly introducing recycled content requirements for certain construction products;
- promote circular economy principles for buildings design and the development of digital logbooks for buildings;
- use Level(s), which is the European framework for sustainable buildings, to integrate life cycle assessment in public procurement and the EU sustainable finance framework;
- consider a revision of EU waste legislation, focusing on material recovery targets for construction and demolition waste, and its material-specific fractions (the concerned waste streams are still to be defined);
- promote soil-related initiatives, aiming to reduce soil sealing, rehabilitate abandoned or contaminated brownfields and increase the safe, sustainable and circular use of excavated soils, as confirmed in the EU biodiversity strategy for 2030 released in May 2020.

Thierry Breton, EU Commissioner for Internal Market, explained in December 2020 that some actions that were originally supposed to be included in the sustainable built environment strategy had been frontloaded to the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the 'Renovation Wave for Europe'. However, he stressed that the Commission still intended to put forward a holistic approach for the built environment in 2021 or 2022.

References:

- European Commission, [The European Green Deal](#), COM(2019)640
- European Commission, [A New Circular Economy Action Plan for a Cleaner and More Competitive Europe](#), COM(2020)98 and [Annex](#)
- European Commission, [A New Industrial Strategy for Europe](#), COM(2020)102
- European Commission, [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives](#), COM(2020)380
- European Commission, [A Renovation Wave for Europe - greening our buildings, creating jobs, improving lives](#), COM(2020)662
- Thierry Breton, [Answer given on behalf of the European Commission to Parliamentary Question for written answer E-003497/2020 on Construction Waste, tabled by Roberta Metsola](#), 2 December 2020

Author: Guillaume Ragonnaud, Members' Research Service, legislative-train@europarl.europa.eu

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