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CE STORY | UNLOCKING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN CONSTRUCTION

BuildCircularUp: CE for the Construction Sectors in Bulgaria, Malta and Cyprus

> **Cleantech Bulgarie, Mariyana Hamanova** - April 2019

BuildCircularUp aims to harness the huge potential for circular economy which the construction sector holds. Through capacity building, best practice exchange and a circularity self-assessment tool, BuildCircularUp will lay the foundation of the sector's transition to the circular economy in three countries currently facing a construction boom – Bulgaria, Malta and Cyprus.

The current linear economic model is unsustainable in the long run: from the pressure we exert on raw materials to the huge amounts of waste and pollution which we generate. An alternative to the current system is the circular economy, in which the value of materials is retained across multiple life cycles, waste is minimized, and products are designed to last as long as possible.

The construction sector accounts for nearly a third of all generated waste in the European Union1. In countries like Bulgaria, Malta and Cyprus, which are facing a construction boom, less than half of this waste is recycled (between 26% and 45%). In order to retain the value of construction waste and stimulate its reuse, as well as to catalyse innovation in design and across value chains, the circular economy needs to be communicated and promoted to key actors in the sector.

By working closely with the Bulgarian Construction Chamber and other key actors in the project **BuildCircularUp,** Cleantech Bulgaria has identified that the sector acknowledges multiple benefits from transitioning to CE, including economic benefits and the creation of new partnerships (fig 1.).

While actors in the construction sector have shown interest in the circular economy, **more often than not, they do not know where to start:** what changes to initiate, which good practices to implement, whom to establish circular partnerships with.

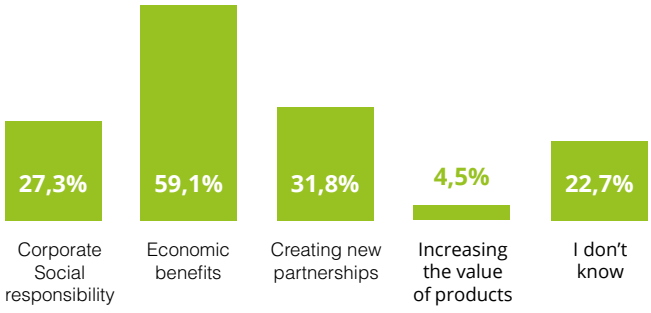
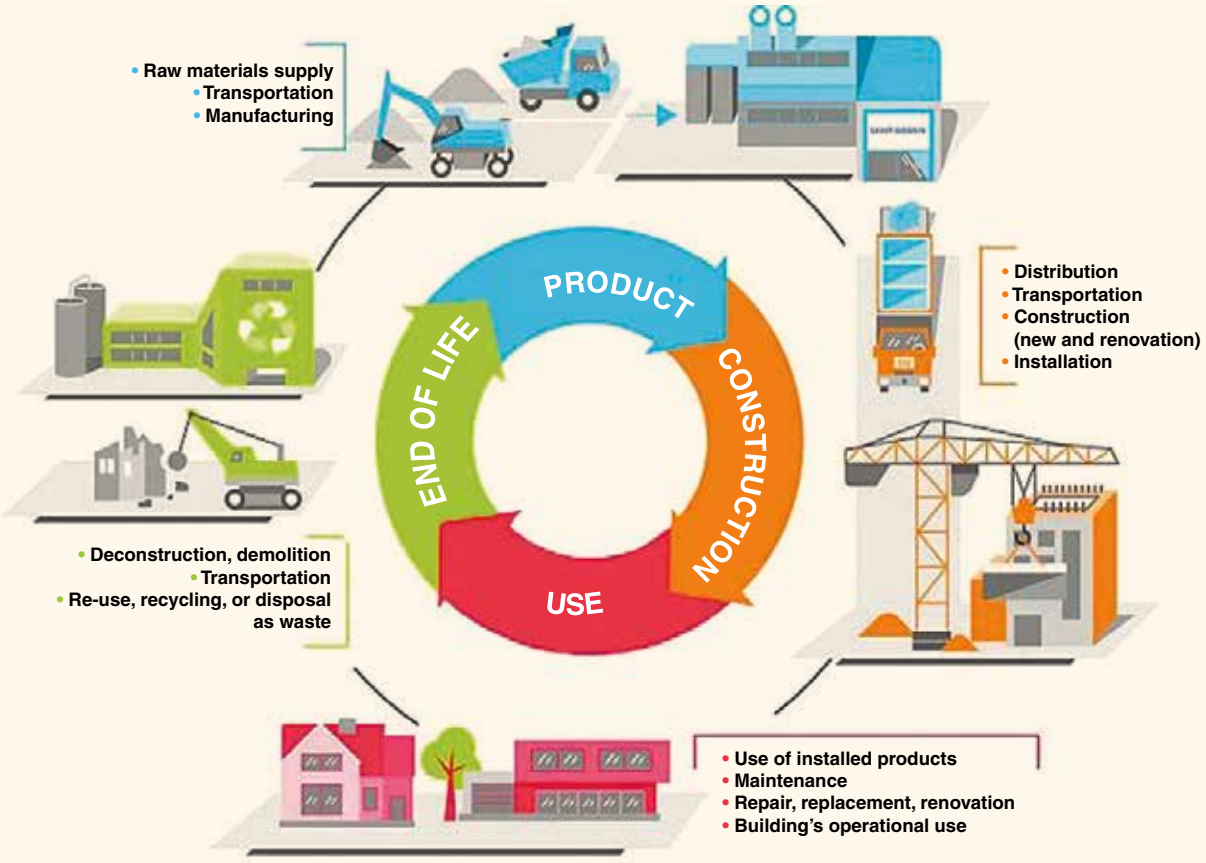


Figure 1: As a result of a survey of stakeholders in the construction sector, the following benefits from implementing CE practices were indicated by respondents.



During research and continuous exchange with representatives of the sector, the needs and barriers that the construction sector is facing have been analysed. The knowledge is currently being used in the development of a **self-assessment tool** which can be used by actors across the value chain to determine their level of circularity, as well as the next steps they can undertake in their transition to CE.

This will **increase the level of knowledge about circularity within the sector,** stimulating the transition. A series of capacity building workshops will be created in order to promote and demonstrate the circular self-assessment tool and, importantly, **to stimulate the formation of circular partnerships** across the value chain.

Furthermore, a **Circular Construction Hub** is in the process of formation – a network for best practice exchange, knowledge pooling, partnership, tailored expert advice. It will lay the groundwork for the transformation of the construction sector in three South-Eastern European countries, which will be further on expanded by collaborating with circular economy leaders, such as Denmark. In this way, the project will promote **circular growth and innovation,** which will be fed back into the self-assessment tool through a benchmarking system, adapting it to the disruptively growing change in construction.

Important facts:
35% of all waste in the EU is generated by the construction sector. Only 26% is being recycled in Bulgaria and Malta and 43% in Cyprus. As the three countries are currently facing a construction boom, there is huge potential for shifting to circularity.

CONTACTS

Mariyana Hamanova
Executive Director Cleantech Bulgaria
mariyana@cleantech.bg
http://cleantech.bg

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