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| ***Partner search Urbact project - Circularity in the building sector, the key to a circular economy*** *The city of Utrecht is searching for partners to develop a URBACT project proposal* ***on circularity in the building sector.****The project idea is to develop a vision, an approach and instruments that help cities to identify and tackle, in a structured manner, bottlenecks in the transition towards a circular economy. We search for a methodology that allows the circular dimension to be widely integrated in the planning processes related to the large construction tasks in the city so that this transition will be accelerated on the short term.* *The deadline for the submission of the Phase 1 applications is 17 April 2019.* ***We kindly request interested partners to contact us on 8 March 2019, at the latest.******City contact details****Haye Folkertsma,* *Coordinator European Affairs, city of Utrecht* *h.folkertsma@utrecht.nl* |

1. **Introduction: *Cities are key to going circular[[1]](#footnote-1)***

The White Paper on circular economy of the World Economic Forum (2018) shows that in the past 40 years alone, the global use of materials has almost tripled, from 26.7 billion tonnes in 1970 to 84.4 billion tonnes in 2015. It is expected to be doubled again by 2050. More than 80% of global GDP is generated in cities, which therefore makes them ideal testing grounds for circular economy models. Densely populated cities operate in a resource-constrained environment where implementing circular practices can result in immediately visible benefits. Further, the pragmatism and physical proximity in cities makes it easier to implement policy changes than at a state or national level, where bureaucratic structures and legislative timelines can hamper institutionalizing novel circular concepts. Therefore, cities can be more agile and adaptive when implementing pilot initiatives, allowing them to stimulate change faster.”

1. **Construction and demolition a priority sector**

In 2015, the European Commission adopted an action plan to help accelerate Europe's transition towards a circular economy. It identifies five priority sectors to speed up the transition along their value chain: plastics, food waste, critical raw materials, construction and demolition, biomass and bio-based materials.

In terms of volume the construction sector is at present one of the largest sources of waste in Europe. Much of the material can be prevented, reused (with high quality) and possibly be recycled. In the action plan the European Commission is proposing a series of measures to recover valuable resources and to implement appropriate waste management in the construction sector and to simplify the assessment of the environmental performance of buildings.

The city of Utrecht distinguishes three areas of attention within the context of the circular economy: construction and demolition, waste management and sustainable procurement. The focus for the Urbact project will be on the transition within the sector construction and demolition.

1. **The challenge of the city of Utrecht**

In 2050, Utrecht wants to be 100% circular. In a renewable city we make optimal use of raw materials and materials, renewable energy sources and human capital, in a way that is good for inhabitants and their environment. As a municipality we want to stimulate, connect, facilitate and embrace new circular initiatives. Not an easy task, but one that that could lead to a fundamental change in the existing way of working and be a great contribution to the emergence of the circular economy.

Very specifically, the city of Utrecht is currently working on approximately 600 spatial planning projects. Thus, in this context, in the period up to 2030, about 45,000 new homes will be built within the boundaries of the city. In addition, another 8,000 houses will be renovated during that period. It is also intended that, in the period up to 2020 40,000 homes will be sustainable renovated and be taken off the natural gas system. Then, in the period up to 2050, another 20,000 to 35,000 new homes will be built in the city. And finally, it is intended to ensure that in the period 2030-2050 another 80,000 homes will be sustainable renovated and taking off the natural gas system.

**4. Proposed framework for an Urbact project on circular economy**

The city aims to develop a vision, an approach and instruments that help cities to identify and tackle, in a structured manner, bottlenecks in the transition towards a circular economy. We search for a methodology that allows the circular dimension to be widely integrated in the planning processes related to the large construction tasks in the city so that this transition will be accelerated on the short term.

This policy instrument will be jointly developed with all stakeholders in the city. It should be a tool to share information with stakeholders and a tool that challenges its users to come up with new ideas.

1. **First impression of the partnership**

The city of Utrecht searches medium and large sized cities that:

* Are faced with a comparable challenge: a large construction task within the city boundaries the coming years;
* Work on an urban vision, strategy, instruments and/or experiments related to the transition of cities towards a circular economy;
* Consider the construction sector as a key sector in becoming a circular city;
* Are in need of 'practice' and experiences to develop a continuous learning curve. The focus is not limited to eye catching pilots, but to the wide stream of construction activities that should/could become part of the city’s circular economy.
1. White Paper – Circular Economy in Cities – Evolving the model for a sustainable urban future, World Economic Forum, 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)