The building and construction sector is responsible for almost 40% of global energy-related carbon emissions and generates 35% of all waste in Europe. Given its immense ecological footprint and impact on human wellbeing, the built environment is a key leverage point in achieving the goals put forward in the Paris Agreement as well as many other sustainability objectives. The principles of the circular economy can help to reduce this impact. To meet this target, all new buildings and 20% of the existing building stock would need to be zero-carbon-ready as soon as 2030.

The Circular Buildings Coalition is an initiative of Metabolic, Circle Economy, World Green Building Council, World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the Ellen McArthur Foundation in collaboration with Arup. The coalition is funded by the Laudes Foundation. The Circular Buildings Coalition aims to achieve three goals:

1. Accelerating the circular economy in the built environment in Europe - creating an economy that prioritises both decarbonisation and efficient resource use, while leaving no-one behind.

2. Enabling pathways towards net zero carbon buildings - by accelerating collaboration and innovation towards buildings that reduce both their operational and whole-life carbon footprint.

3. Realising a built environment that supports the regeneration of resources and natural systems - an environment that produces sustainable, climate-proof buildings and living places.

Together we are leading the way towards a circular built environment.

This initiative is funded by:

Laudes ——— Foundation

Metabolic

“The circular economy is a new economic model for addressing human needs and fairly distributing resources without undermining the functioning of the biosphere or crossing any planetary boundaries.”

“We don’t just want [...] materials to be theoretically possible to recover – it has to happen on a time-scale that is relevant to people.”


Circle Economy

“We believe the built environment should be a ‘living’ system in which building materials and products are optimally used and reused—a system that operates within the boundaries of our planet, preserves the (business) value of its resources, and ensures the wellbeing of its inhabitants.”

https://www.circle-economy.com/programmes/built-environment
The organisations that are part of the coalition share the vision that at least three key systemic challenges complicate the acceleration towards circularity in the built environment in Europe:

- Clear financial barriers standing in the way of the development of the circular building industry. Current financing mechanisms are insufficient, misaligned and/or inappropriate.
- Lack of proven ownership models that align the interests of investors, building users, and developers with long-term climate and circularity goals;
- Stagnant market dynamics exist, making the emergence of secondary and renewable materials very complex.

The transition of the Built Environment

Systemic changes are required to address these three challenges. This coalition proposes that to accelerate the transition towards circularity in the built environment,

we need a financial sector that is aligned with wider industry ambitions, and ... 

- that supports businesses to unleash their creativity and innovative capacity to solve what seems to be unsolvable.
- in which Built Environment investors use circular economy principles to inform new investment models that unlock additional value, by eliminating structural waste and mobilising the latent longer-term value of assets.
- that values and funds net zero carbon and efficient buildings, making it difficult to obtain funding for high-carbon inefficient and equitable buildings.
- in which actors use their influence, policies, 

Ellen McArthur Foundation

“By applying the principles of the circular economy to the way we design buildings, infrastructure and other elements of the built environment, we can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while creating urban areas that are more liveable, productive and convenient.”

https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/topics/built-environment/overview

World Business Council for Sustainable Development

“There needs to be an acceleration of the transformation towards a net zero carbon, circular, healthy, inclusive and resilient built environment. This transformation to succeed will have to involve the full building value chain, from materials and equipment suppliers, architects, construction companies, utility and service companies to developers, investors, owners and users and urban planners.”


World Green Building Council

“We believe it is time for a peace treaty with nature. We envision a future where the built environment not only does less harm, but actively regenerates our planet, climate, and human health, and offers the highest wellbeing and quality of life to all.”

practices and support the development of valuation methodologies and financial products towards ensuring climate-positive practices, equity and inclusion.

Furthermore, the industry needs ownership models ...
... that incentivize the consideration of whole-life value and long-term business models in design decisions on all construction projects.
... that align incentives of all actors in the value chain to reduce environmental impacts.
... that support access to services as an alternative to full ownership in buildings.

It also needs markets ...
... that incentivize the building industry to adopt bold, climate-positive standards and implement sourcing and construction practices that are low-carbon and equitable.
... that facilitate cross-boundary secondary material flows matching demand with supply on a European level.
... that are built on adequate physical and digital infrastructure in its supply chains.

Finally, the industry needs national and European Policy ...
... that effectively regulates the built environment by creating demand for low whole life carbon products and increased resource efficiency.
... and policymakers who understand the urgency of creating a policy environment that facilitates the implementation of a circular economy.

The organisations in this coalition aim to contribute to achieving these goals by cultivating alliances, building a common understanding on the challenges and opportunities and by amplifying solutions and developing real models that can be implemented today.

Got a circular buildings solution? Get in touch on: circularbuildingscoalition.org