

BELGIUM



Circular Economy 2-pager, 29th December 2022

POLICY LANDSCAPE

EU LEVEL

In 2015, the European Commission (EC) adopted the **Circular Economy Action Plan**, which included comprehensive measures addressing waste management. Continuing on this path, the EC adopted the **New Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP)** in 2020, which constitutes one of the main building blocks of the European Green Deal, aiming to facilitate circularity in Europe's new agenda for sustainable growth.

CURRENT MAIN EU TARGETS INCLUDE:

- Min. 65% of municipal waste to be recycled by 2035
- Min. 70% of all packaging waste to be recycled by 2030
- Ban on single-use plastic products taking effect from June 2021

NATIONAL LEVEL

Belgium first adopted the national CE strategy in 2014, and in 2021 the **Federal action plan circular economy 2021-2024** was published. Within the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)**, the federal government has launched the "Belgium Builds Back Circular" project to accelerate the transition to a circular economy.

REGIONAL LEVEL

Flemish region

Circular Flanders was launched in 2017 by OVAM to ensure Flanders' transition to the circular economy by 2050. The current Flemish Government **confirmed this objective** in 2020. To transform Flanders into a circular trendsetter in Europe by 2030, they aim to separate the material footprint from economic growth and reduce that footprint by 30%.

Walloon Region

CE is one of the major political priorities, as is reflected in the political **Regional Policy Declaration for Wallonia (2019-2024)**. Furthermore, in February 2021, the Walloon Government adopted **Circular Wallonia**, including ten ambitions and 60 specific measures to facilitate the circular transition of Walloon economic players.

Brussels-Capital Region

The **CE strategy**, adopted in 2016, sets a 10-year framework to move Brussels' economy towards a circular model. The strategy is focused on three objectives: transform environmental goals into economic opportunities, anchor the Brussels economy, where possible, to local produce and minimise transportation.

FACTS & FIGURES

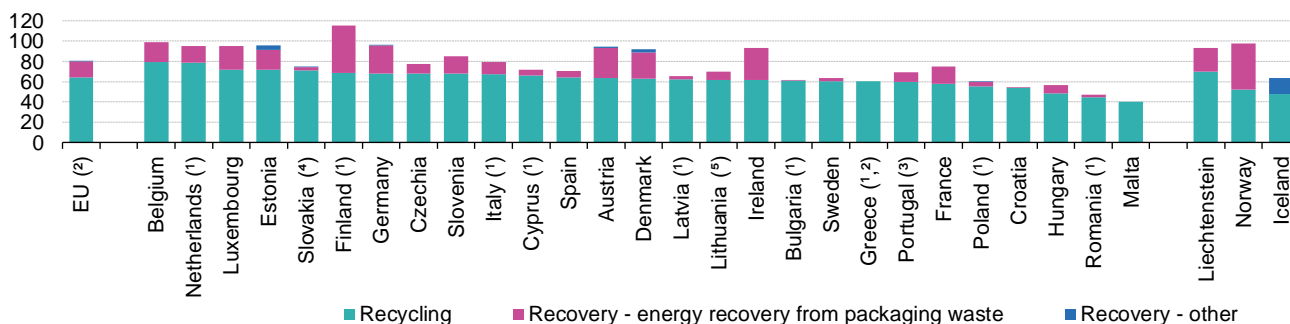
ECONOMIC INDICATORS

- Population (2022): 11,65mln
- Nominal GDP (2021): €502,2 billion*: 23/53
- Purchasing power (2021): €49,793*
- Import from the NL (2021) €70,2 billion*
- Economic growth (2022): 2,4%
- Ease of doing business rank (2019): 46/190
- Corruption index (2021): 23/198
- Unemployment rate (2021): 6,4%
- Currency: €
- Time difference NL: +0.00 hrs

CE INDICATORS

- Global innovation index (2021): 22/132
- Municipal waste recycling rate (2020): 52,0%
- Packaging waste recycling rate (2020): 79,2%, #1 in Europe
- Circular material use rate (2019): 23,5%
- CO2 emissions per capita (2019) 8.1 tons

Recovery of packaging waste, 2020 (%), source: Eurostat



SELECTED PRIORITY AREAS

PLASTICS & (CHEMICAL) RECYCLING

The level of knowledge in the field of circular plastics in Belgium - and in particular in Flanders - is largely comparable to that in the Netherlands. The overlap in terms of policy and programmes, such as the promotion of ecodesign, circular business models and higher use of recycled plastics in products, offers opportunities for more in-depth cooperation.

Belgium is a leader in Europe in the field of packaging recycling. The plans to encourage more (local) recycling of more (types of) plastic residual flow is supported by an investment injection of 700 million euros in new (PMD) sorting centres and recycling machines in Flanders and Wallonia.

Major players in the (petro)chemical sector with interest in chemical recycling can be found close to each other in Belgium around Antwerp/Ghent. This offers opportunities for Dutch companies that develop innovative technologies for chemical recycling. Furthermore, the regions of Flanders, North –Rhine-Westphalia and the Netherlands have agreed on trilateral cooperation, which represents a game changer in sustainability and circularity.

CIRCULAR CONSTRUCTION

The importance of circular construction in Belgium seems self-evident because many factors steer in that direction: rising energy and raw material prices, policy, laws and regulations, more sustainable consumers, global crises, etc.

Circular building

Belgium is still in the early stages of circular building in comparison to the Netherlands: the focus is mainly on pilot projects, cases, and raising awareness. Brussels and the Flemish cities of Leuven, Mechelen, Antwerp and Ghent have developed policies on the transition to a sustainable and circular construction economy. Overarching initiatives, such as **Circular Flanders**, and their Working Agenda on Circular Building, contribute to this development.

Sustainable building, on the other hand, is already well-known in Belgium. Wallonia has a long tradition of using local natural building materials and methods, which is now reinterpreted and innovated for a breakthrough in bio-ecological building. Furthermore, following the high share of self-build in total housing production in Belgium (45% vs 11% in NL), initiatives have been developed to support this group in making their homes more sustainable.

Within the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)** framework, more than 1 billion euros is made available for the renovation of buildings. This includes, in particular public buildings, social infrastructure and residential housing, and more generally, the buildings worst performing in energy efficiency. In addition, the NRRP makes 25 million euros available for circular building and manufacturing in Flanders to stimulate research and innovation.

Opportunities for Dutch companies in Belgium are in the fields of innovation with secondary material (concrete), flexible and modular design, and digital solutions (material passports, zero-energy and healthy buildings and bio-based materials).

Circular infrastructure

In Flanders, especially the Antwerp area, large infrastructural projects have started that typically have a significant environmental footprint. Large parts of existing infrastructure also require renovation, and there is a growing need for more safe, durable and economically viable infrastructure. Circular business models that increase modularity and new lifetime-oriented consortium between infrastructure companies and their customers might offer inspiration.

LINKS & REPORTS

- Circular Flanders
- Circular Wallonia
- Circulair ondernemen in België – Marktkansen in de gebouwde omgeving & plastics
- Circular Economy for Plastics-Belgium 2020
- The Belgian plastics industry and the circular economy
- Kansenrapport Duurzame & Circulaire bouw in België
- Belgium's recovery and resilience plan

CE Platforms & Business networks

Circular Flanders
Circular Wallonia
Be Circular (Circular Economy Brussels)
Nederlandse Kamer van Koophandel voor België en Luxemburg

Embassies & Related Organisations

Dutch Embassy in Brussels
Dutch Consulate General in Antwerp
Belgian Embassy in the Netherlands
Flanders Investment & Trade
Invest in Wallonia