

World Green Building Council calls on EU policymakers to take decisive action on the built environment

1 year ago



World Green Building Council (WorldGBC), in collaboration with 24 of its European Green Building Council members, have today launched a set of new sustainable building policy recommendations – [the European Manifesto for a sustainable built environment](#).

Designed for EU policymakers to implement more robust initiatives and incentives to secure sustainable buildings across the continent, the recommendations come on the back of mounting pressure from the building and construction sector to prioritise sustainable buildings policy ahead of June's European Elections. By prioritising sustainable built environment policies, a number of key issues across the EU could be resolved, including energy security.

The building sector makes up [40% of Europe's energy demand, 80% of which is from fossil fuels](#), but accelerating the energy efficient renovation of buildings would decrease reliance on fossil fuels while decreasing energy bills for millions of Europeans. Sustainable built environment policies can also aid the unemployment crisis that the EU is currently experiencing – with every €1 million invested in the green renovation of buildings, [an average of 18 local, long-term jobs are created](#) in the EU.

Laura Pallares, Head of Europe, WorldGBC, said: "It is vital policymakers take these recommendations on board. With the upcoming elections, regardless of who is ultimately elected, sustainable built environment policies, which are crucial to achieving the goals of the EU Green Deal, must remain firmly at the front of the agenda."

The new set of recommendations call on EU politicians to commit to working together with the building sector on developing and implementing an EU policy framework that embraces the social, environmental, and economic benefits of sustainable buildings.

Spanning eight pillars, the recommendations comprise carbon, circular economy, health, water, finance, resilience, biodiversity and just transition, and include:

- Prioritise deep renovation of existing buildings and eliminate both operational and embodied carbon emissions across the life cycle of all buildings by ensuring that all EU Taxonomy-eligible buildings are zero emissions in operation by 2035 at the latest.
- Create a circular economy in the built environment by phasing out waste and optimising the use and re-use of resources and materials: Introduce a progressive landfill ban in the Waste Framework Directive on non-hazardous construction and demolition waste and by-products.
- Develop healthy, equitable and resilient buildings and cities that deliver improvement in public health and employment: Implement the Social Climate Fund earlier than the planned date of 2026 to channel funds towards low-income households to carry out energy renovation work that improves indoor air quality.

Audrey Nugent, Global Advocacy & Campaigns Director, WorldGBC, commented: “The message is clear from our network: the election of a new European Parliament and Commission marks a golden opportunity for politicians to embrace the potential of the buildings sector to address many of the issues affecting EU citizens, whilst putting Europe firmly on track to achieve its climate goals.

“Over the past five years we have seen real progress from the European Commission on sustainable building policy. In 2022 as part of our BuildingLife project which aims to deliver on the EU Green Deal’s sustainable building commitment, we developed a [Whole Life Carbon Roadmap](#) and have seen many of its recommendations included in the update of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD). We want to see the new Commission continue this fruitful collaboration to make lasting progress.”

Cristina Gamboa, CEO, WorldGBC added: “We’ve known for years the potential our buildings across Europe can bring to improve lives, but parties must act now to ensure this is addressed by holistic policy measures in EU legislation. The World Green Building Council and our national Green Building Councils are prepared to support policymakers to deliver action for an energy efficient, regenerative and just transition in the built environment.”

The recommendations will now be discussed with regional policymakers across the continent to ensure that a sustainable built environment remains a top priority ahead of the elections in June.