

## Better Knowledge



Re-use  
of Buildings  
and Spaces

### Action 10 - Manage the re-use of buildings and spaces in a circular economy

*The urban regeneration process passes through changes in society and the industrial area, being able to respond effectively to changes and the emerging needs of a city, with tailored solutions.*

#### Scope and working method by the Partnership

As available land is often scarce in the cities and their spatial expansion, known as urban sprawl, burdensome and costly, re-using existing buildings emerge as an alternative. Promoting re-use practices will help to ensure more sustainable urbanization, with multiple benefits not only for managing authorities, but with also all citizens. The partnership on Circular economy and the partnership on Sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions decided to work together on this action because the re-use of abandoned or underused buildings and spaces emerged as relevant topic for both partnerships. They agreed in making joint efforts to develop a shared handbook, adding together the different perspectives.

#### Drivers and Barriers proposed as outcome of the action

Cities are increasingly moving to actions aimed at reconsidering settlement models and preferring solutions based on re-use, recycling and development of innovative and creative communities. In fact, there is a need for involving multiple departments in a municipality under a same strategic umbrella. The challenge is the re-use and the transformation of existing buildings (and spaces), in particular those unused ones (“Rethinking the city”), with the logic to:

- create new economic and social opportunities, without consuming new land (following the paradigm of the no net land take);
- improve the environmental performance of buildings and infrastructures in their entire life cycle;
- propose new urban scenarios.

The proposed handbook can be a tool to lay the foundations for establishing an overall strategy that looks at a new model of urban re-use management of the city and that increasingly looks to be circular. The book intends to serve as a stimulus and incentive for strategic planning at urban level, especially carried out by public authorities, but also supported by the regional and national level.

Among the solutions proposed by the handbook, there is the Urban Agency for Re-use. It aims at facilitating local public administrations in the definition and the application of strategies of building re-use at city level. Any city can establish its own agency for the promotion of re-use of buildings and spaces, through an integrated approach and using new model of governance in order to manage and plan the various re-use strategies. One of the tool the Urban Agency for Re-use can use to analyse the propensity of a building to be re-used and/or be changed in destination is the proposed Reusability Index. With a multi-disciplinary approach, the index includes technical, environmental, economic and social indicators.

With a widespread review and analysis of good practices of urban re-use, each city could obtain from the handbook inspirational suggestions about the different solutions that can be applied, taking into account its specific urban environments. The approach could be bottom-up or, vice versa, top-down, adopting different models of governance for the management of specific situations, as well as participatory methods.



### Potential impact of the Action

- Social – Participatory processes and listening to citizens must contribute to regeneration.
- Financial – the generation of new jobs, the development of innovative business models and the promotion of new cultural and social opportunities.
- Environmental – there is an important potential to reduce the use of new land, favouring a transition to the circular economy, aiming at reducing the environmental impacts in relation to greenhouse gas emissions and climate mitigation effects with adaptive reuse of old buildings.

### How will this help the new Circular Economy Action Plan of the European Commission?

The application of the circular approach within an urban area involves municipalities, production activities, relevant stakeholders and citizens, in order to create opportunities lowering the depletion of new resources.

### Recommendations from the Partnership to the EU Commission

The following recommendations are addressed to DG REGIO:

- Providing financial resources: buildings cannot be regenerated without financial investment, reason why it is very important to guarantee resources towards regeneration of large areas in the public interest.
- Partnerships and networks creation: Different levels of the administration (local, regional, national) as well as private and social stakeholders need to create long lasting operational pacts to work together.
- Allowing administrative flexibility: to enable city in the adaptation of regulation in order to allow more flexibility to adapt to changing needs, thus increasing the building's long-term life cycle and propensity of re-use.

### Connection to the SDGs and contributions to Better Governance



SDG11 (“Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”), call as well at urban regeneration and reuse of buildings. In addition, SDG 15 (Life on land) is implicated for land saving.

