



Erasmus+

# POLICY PAPER



**CREST**

# TABLE OF CONTENT



## CREST

CREATIVE REPURPOSING OF EDUCATIONAL SPACES FOR  
INNOVATIVE STUDENT-CENTRED ENVIRONMENTS

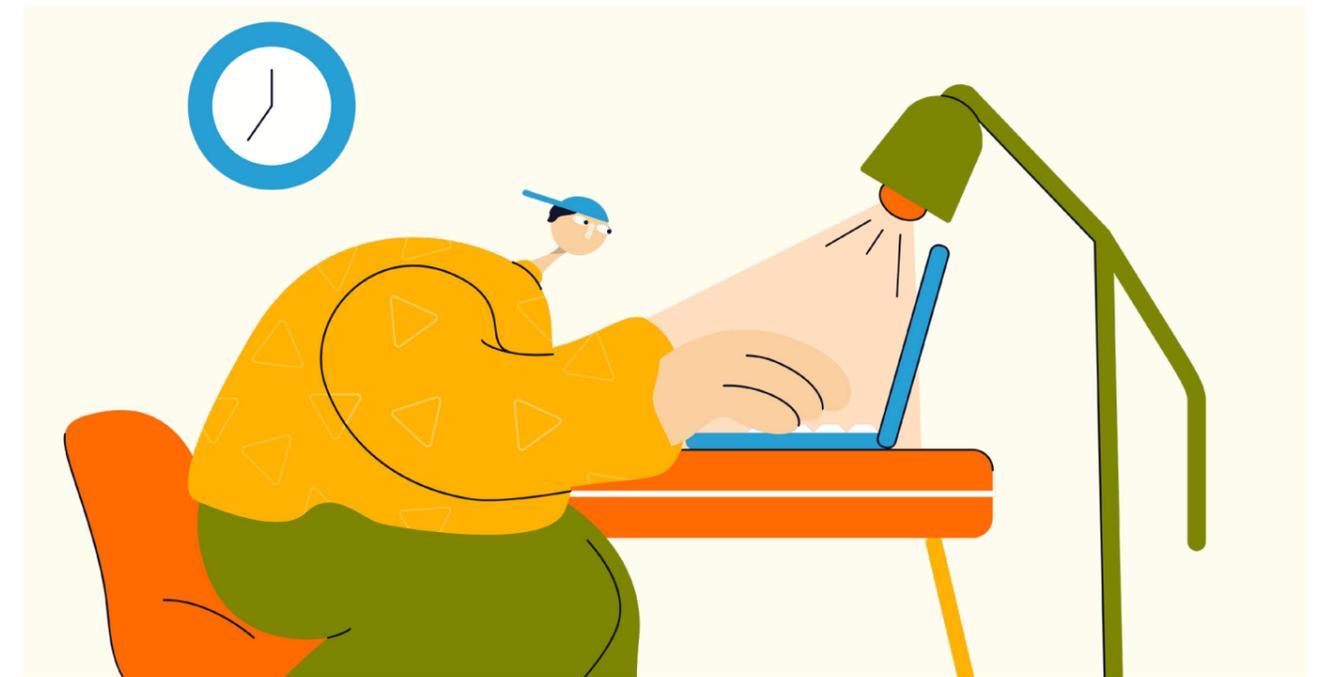
04	ABOUT
07	POLICY CONTEXT
10	RECOMMENDATIONS
16	THE PROCESSES
18	ANNEX
21	SOURCES

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MUNICIPALITIES,  
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND NGOS TO  
SUPPORT THE REPURPOSING OF PUBLIC  
BUILDINGS INTO CIVIC SPACES

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

### “CREST – Creative Repurposing of Educational Spaces for Innovative Student-centred Environments”

Student-centred learning and learning ergonomics are becoming important aspects of all types of educational institutions. By acknowledging the central pedagogical and didactic position of educational institutions in separate countries, the project partners wish to acknowledge their roles in the ‘making’ of citizens through higher education and cultural awareness. The process of making graduates and citizens is an experimental continuum, allowing universities to provide conditions for associational activities as well as performing the role of cultural custodians by maintaining and revitalising cultural inheritances of the political community, but also giving it direction. It is important to realise that higher education institutions should not aim to undertake such activities on their own; rather they should seek assistance from local and regional experts in the field of pedagogics,



While student-centred learning is somewhat difficult to define in terms of its methodology and explicit content, which is to be included, it is undoubtedly the key to adapting to a more diverse student population and changing needs in terms of how education is conveyed. In order to accommodate these ambitions, a re-examination of traditional pedagogy, didactics and scholarship, including ways of how and where the learning and teaching processes take place, is needed.



The project is implemented by 6 partners from 5 countries: Slovenia (University of Ljubljana), Lithuania (MB HOMO EMINENS, VDU), Croatia (Culture Hub), Poland (UBC) and Belgium (OTB).

## POLICY CONTEXT

EU policies underline the need for a more accessible higher education sector with a wider diversity of students: people with disabilities and older students are under-represented, and migrants are much less likely to attain a degree.<sup>1</sup> This fact encourages a shift towards a more student-centred teaching and learning environment, an environment that embraces flexible learning pathways and emphasises students' learning abilities, needs, learning styles and backgrounds.

In 2020 The European Commission published a mapping of student-centred learning and teaching practices.<sup>2</sup> The report highlights the importance of spaces that encourage active learning as one of the key elements of student-centred ecosystems. Such spaces should take into account adjustable lighting, temperature, ventilation, and modular furniture.

The European University Association defines active learning as “a broad range of pedagogical processes that emphasise the importance of student ownership and activation”<sup>3</sup>. In active learning, the focus is put on stimulating the learner's critical thinking skills and inviting students to create and share their learning in spaces which are democratic, flexible, and fluid.

This idea of flexibility is also present in the vision of adaptive reuse of existing buildings. The construction sector is responsible for over 35% of the EU's total waste generation and 5-12% of total national GHG emissions.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the current renovation rate observed in the EU amounts to 1% annually.<sup>5</sup>



## POLICY CONTEXT

From the UN Sustainable Development Goals <sup>6</sup> to the European Circular Economy Action Plan, the focus is on material and energy efficiency, which could save 80% of those GHG emissions <sup>7</sup>. As a result, renovating older facilities could minimise construction waste, reduce spending, and create green and local jobs.

Last year, the New European Bauhaus initiative was launched by the European Commission as an environmental, economic, and cultural project to help deliver the European Green Deal. The initiative is meant to become a collaborative platform aiming at redesigning the built environment while, at the same time, highlighting the importance of the circular approach through the reuse of materials.

The report *The Future of Cities* which was published by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the science and knowledge service of the European Commission (EC), and supported by the Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) outlines key challenges of the European cities. One of them is how to better involve and connect people living in towns and cities with urban development,

planning and managing of public buildings. The report also states that almost half of all buildings in Europe are over 70 years old and suggests that to increase sustainability and high quality of life, it is necessary to upgrade or retrofit buildings. Universities are an important part of cities and towns across Europe and enhancing the cooperation between them in terms of peer learning and the exchange of good practices is necessary for holistic and cross-sectoral cooperation. Also, the structure and management of universities and their relations with students are, in terms of creating inclusive and participatory processes, very similar to those of local authorities.

Policy recommendations will provide university leaders, local authorities (municipality and city/towns leaderships) and policymakers with concrete proposals on how to develop a framework for planning and implementation of inclusive and participatory processes which support the meaningful role of various stakeholders in procedures that lead up to repurposing of buildings and spaces. This will strengthen the role and impact of stakeholders in procedures that lead up to repurposing.



# RECOMMENDATIONS MUNICIPALITIES

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## **1.1. MUNICIPALITIES FOSTERING INNOVATIONS!**

Municipalities should develop and put in place proven policy mechanisms and innovative participatory tools and budgeting in order to streamline the process of repurposing buildings into community centres to strengthen social, cultural and economic capital. The use of new technologies for citizen engagement in urban planning, such as planning apps, participatory urban visualisation, augmented reality, participatory design fiction, but also urban mentoring could be considered. This should be done by taking into account previous experience (good practices) and in compliance with the collaboration opportunities between municipalities on regional, national and international levels in order to ensure sustainability and successful implementation.

## **1.2. MUNICIPALITIES FACILITATING CITIZENS' IDEAS!**

When repurposing abandoned buildings, municipalities should continuously include/make available opportunities to all potential beneficiaries, such as HEIs and other educational institutions, civil sector organisations, the business sector and final beneficiaries - the residents, through all stages of the process. By involving a broader set of stakeholder groups in the design, planning and/or decision-making, the participatory process will help strengthen their ownership and support for the policy, which will, in turn, promote more effective implementation.

## **1.3. MUNICIPALITIES OFFERING SPACES FOR EDUCATION!**

Municipalities should create and make widely available various support mechanisms (Open source databases, training programmes, work-based learning schemes, Community of practitioners events, financial incentives etc.) for students of relevant studies to create joint initiatives. It would allow students a better understanding of urban planning problems and city development processes and better insights into municipal functions. On the other hand, Municipalities would gain more possibilities for the recruitment of students for mutual benefits.

## **1.4. MUNICIPALITIES LEARNING FROM RESEARCH AND EXPERTISE!**

Municipalities take advantage of the most recent knowledge of urban policies, solutions and networks that universities provide, develop joint innovative projects, public space adaptations, environment, etc. and offer diverse opportunities for future professors and other employees, in order to learn, design, develop and improve city services.

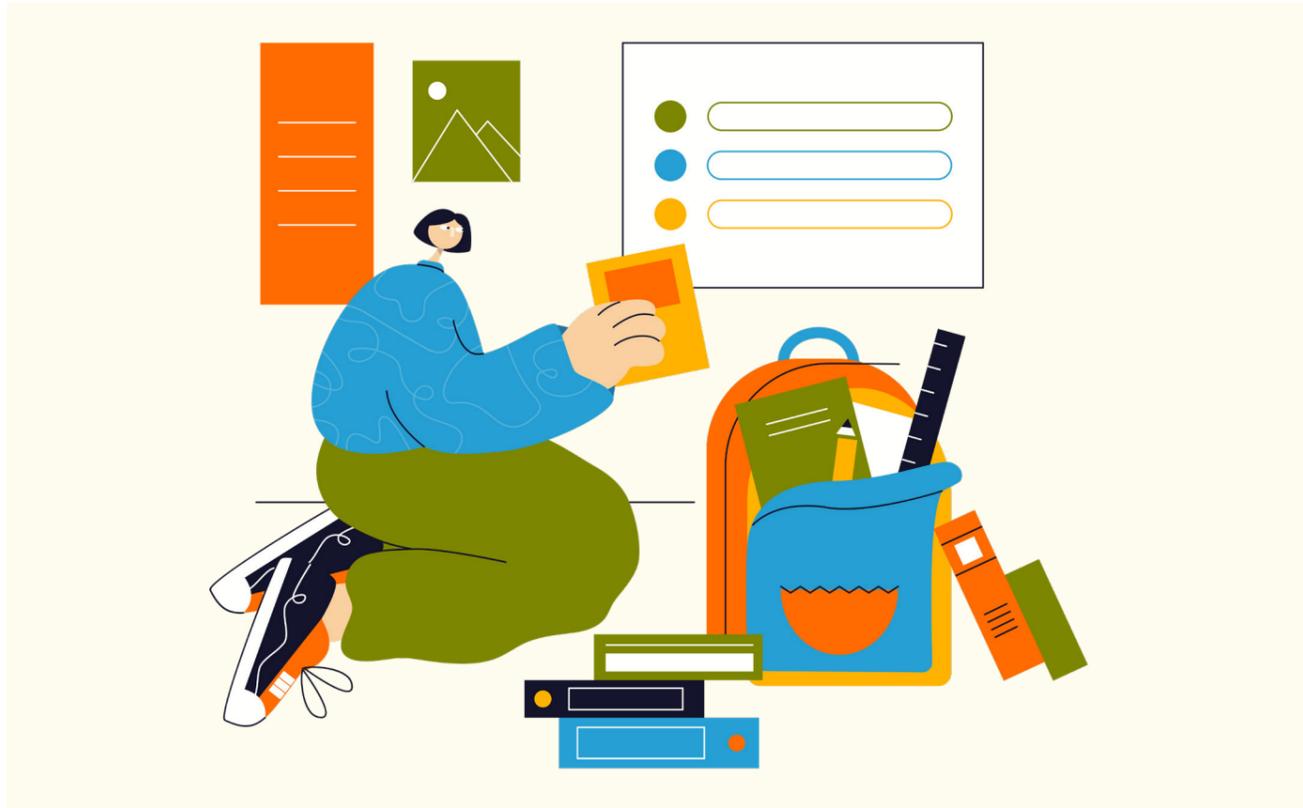
## **1.5. MUNICIPALITIES PROMOTING AND BRANDING CITIES!**

Municipalities should include HEI, NGOs and business stakeholders in designing and running initiatives dedicated to the branding of cities, by promoting e.g. ITC solutions, participatory models, and innovative educational programmes in order to brand the city as an innovative destination and attract investments, nomads, new talents, etc.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FORMAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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### 2.1. STUDENT-CENTEREDNESS AS A PRIORITY

Formal educational institutions should consider student-centred learning environments and learning ergonomics as priorities. To achieve this they can use the CREST Manual for repurposing educational buildings and spaces as a valuable resource to initiate the co-creation processes and address the real needs. Finally, formal educational institutions should collaborate among themselves to exchange knowledge and experiences and teach students modes of participation and active citizenship.

### 2.2. COMMUNITY SENSING AND IMPROVING EVALUATION PROCESSES

Formal educational institutions should continuously invest in an exchange of information with their students and staff in order to sustain a constant feed of information for the improvement of services provided. In order to understand the users' needs better, good quality evaluation processes need to be put in place and continuously adapted.

### 2.3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATION FROM THE START

Formal educational institutions should prioritise cross-sectoral collaboration and stakeholder engagement from the very start of designing student-centred learning environments. They should seek assistance from local and regional experts in the field of pedagogics, urban methodology and cultural activities as well as engaging students from the beginning of their university studies, in order to fully realise the principles of student-centred education spaces design and ensure their ease of use and adaptability to future challenges in learning.

### 2.4. ENCOURAGING A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH AND USING ALREADY AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO FOSTER CHANGE

Formal educational institutions should provide opportunities for students to take ownership of available spaces for repurposing within educational buildings. This should be done in a structured way, by providing space but also the framework and ensuring monitoring. Implementing the processes outlined in the CREST Manual can be initiated even without financial resources available. This can positively impact students' autonomy, collaboration and community building; however, in order for the spaces to become sustainable, resources and financial mechanisms should be earmarked by the educational institutions explicitly for these purposes, without setting additional conditions. The bottom-up approach can ultimately impact systematic changes within institutions.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

ACTIVE IN THE FIELDS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, ADVOCACY,  
NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND OTHER FIELDS

### 3.1. BRIDGE AND FACILITATE

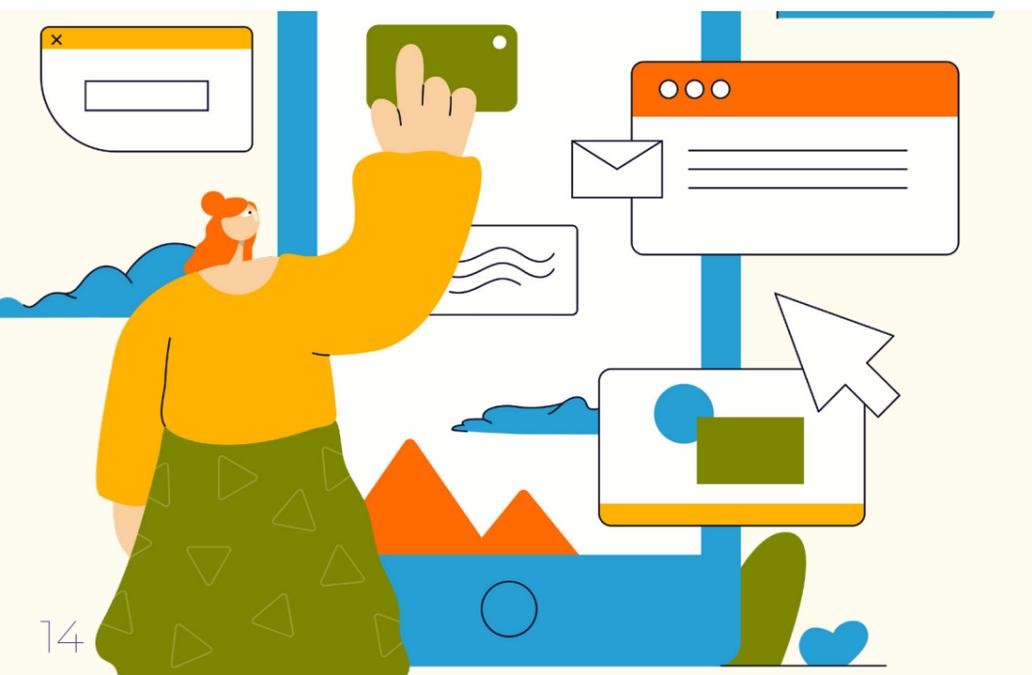
Use your expertise, innovation capacities, inclusive educational methodologies and outreach capacity to act as a bridge between educational institutions, students, local communities and policymakers. Facilitate their dialogue and collaboration in repurposing and regeneration initiatives.

### 3.2. ADVOCATE

Help to map the needs and expectations of the interest groups, including vulnerable societal groups. Advocate for their interests and needs and include them in participatory processes.

### 3.3. IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES

Identify opportunities for repurposing and regeneration; inform and involve relevant stakeholders in pursuing these opportunities.



### 3.4. PROMOTE PARTICIPATION

Promote and enhance creative, inclusive and participatory approaches in repurposing or development of public spaces, ensuring the needs of the students, local communities and other relevant stakeholders are met and the opportunities to participate are ensured in all the stages.

### 3.5. PROVIDE SPACES

According to your possibilities, provide informal spaces that accommodate the needs of different groups of individuals (e.g. young people). Organise them in a user-centred way.



## THE PROCESS

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Policy recommendations are built on the results and lessons learnt while producing intellectual outputs 1) Mapping the existing participatory practice and models of repurposing educational buildings and spaces, 2) Model for repurposing of educational buildings and spaces for HE institutions and 3) Manual for the implementation of the model. These findings will be transferred to the framework of public policy-making and public governance in the field of spatial planning and repurposing of public spaces and buildings. This will provide university leaders, local authorities (municipality and city/towns leaderships) and policymakers with concrete proposals on how to develop a framework for planning and implementation of inclusive and participatory processes which support the meaningful role of various stakeholders in procedures that lead up to repurposing of buildings and spaces. This will strengthen the role and impact of stakeholders on procedures that lead up to repurposing.

Out of the Box International coordinated activities for the preparation of recommendations and prepared the final document. The development of the final document was done in 4 stages.

-In the first stage a desk research of models that enhance public participation in public governance was conducted and a list was prepared that was added to the policy recommendations as an appendix. This was done by the Union of Baltic Cities.

-In the second stage an analysis of the pilot projects' implementation (implemented in the framework of O2) and a SWOT analysis of the participatory process from the perspective of municipality/city authorities were done. This was done by Out of the Box International, Culture Hub Croatia and Xwhy.

-In the third stage the policy recommendations were structured while taking into account the findings from stages one and two. This was done by Out of the Box International, the Union of Baltic Cities and the University of Ljubljana.

-In the fourth and final stage a detailed review of the recommendations by members of the Union of Baltic Cities was done and included in the recommendations accordingly. This was carried out by Out of the Box International and the Union of Baltic Cities.

# ANNEX

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## RESEARCH

[Enhancing the education mission of European universities: A proactive response to change](#); European Forum for Enhanced Collaboration in Teaching (EFFECT). Ten European Principles for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching: principle #2 places students and teachers as co-creators in all aspects of the learning experience, and principle #9 highlights the importance of sustainable resources and structures.

[Universal Design for Learning A Best Practice Guideline](#); Universal Design – Licence to Learn. There is not one single universally designed route for all learners, the focus should be put on treating diversity with flexibility.

[Leading the Transition from Classrooms to Learning Spaces](#); EDU-CAUSE. Design considerations should go well beyond heating and lighting, the most important design considerations should be (1) designing spaces around people and multiple types of learning activities, (2) accommodating information technology, and (3) making spaces flexible and functional.

## DATA

[National barriers for a shift towards student-centred learning](#), as identified by European Students' Union (ESU) and Education International (EI):

## GOOD PRACTICES

(Focus on partner countries, but EU also)

**International Classroom at the University of Amsterdam:** since 2012, the University of Amsterdam has been developing new innovative classrooms in consultation with lecturers and students, “converting” education to more active learning.

**New learning spaces at Ulster University:** new classrooms are still being reconfigured into active learning spaces and social learning spaces. The university also focuses on curriculum design and developing the digital capabilities of its staff.

**A dual-function room at Loughborough University:** the concept is based on traditional Kabuki Japanese-style theatre where the audience is seated in groups in the centre and the performance takes place around the audience allowing them to feel more engaged. As a result, students feel more like participants rather than observers.

**Delft University of Technology** - The Why Factory, the Netherlands, <https://thewhyfactory.com/>

**University of Helsinki - Think Corner, Helsinki, Finland**  
<https://puuinfo.fi/arkkitehtuuri/public-buildings/think-corner-university-of-helsinki/?lang=en>

**The University of Europe for Applied Sciences (UE), Germany**  
<https://www.ue-germany.com/study-with-us/ue-student-resources/equipment>

**University College of Northern Jutland, Hjørring, Denmark**  
<https://rosanbosch.com/en/project/ucn-%E2%80%93-university-college-northern-jutland>

**University of Tallinn, Estonia** <http://www.virtualtour.tlu.ee/>

**IE University, Segovia, Spain - IE Creativity Center**

# ANNEX

## RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

[The Zero Carbon and Circular Economy Challenge in the Built Environment](#): policy options for the EU and its member states. Adaptive building design would require less resource input when being changed. Some examples of adaptive solutions are modular concepts, easy-to-change façades and plug-and-play technical installations.

[New Dimensions for Circularity on Campus—Framework for the Application of Circular Principles in Campus Development](#). A framework for practical applications is lacking in campus development and there is a need for a better system that involves the various levels of scale of the area.

[Designing educational buildings and classrooms for learning](#). Evidence about the relationship between learning space and learning outcomes reveals that many aspects of physical learning environments may contribute to improved learning outcomes.

[Successful design of student-centred learning and instruction \(SCLI\) ecosystems in the European Higher Education Area](#). Some of the indicators of the presence of SCLI at the institutional level are learning technology infrastructure to support SCLI, student-centred libraries, and redesign of spaces for active learning.

[Student-centred learning environments in higher education: From conceptualization to design](#). Educators, administrators and policy-makers alike, should acknowledge that enhancing quality, and especially the quality of teaching and learning, requires a solid understanding of what and how students nowadays (need to) learn. Ga

A desk research of models that enhance public participation in public governance was conducted by UBC. The document is attached.

1 Source: ET 2020 Working Group on Modernisation of Higher Education; PLA on “Inclusion in Higher Education - Promoting Life Changing Opportunities for People of Under-Represented Groups”; (24.03.2022) <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/expert-groups-register/screen/meetings/consult?lang=en&meetingId=19179&fromExpert-Groups=true>

2 Source: Mapping and analysis of student centred learning and teaching practices, European Commission; (24.03.2022) <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/67668>

3 Source: Promoting active learning in universities, EUA; (06.04.2022) <https://eua.eu/downloads/publications/eua%20tpg%20report%205-%20promoting%20active%20learning%20in%20universities.pdf>

4 Source: Emissions of greenhouse gases from the construction and real estate sector, (01.04.2022) <https://www.boverket.se/sv/byggande/hallbart-byggande-och-forvaltning/miljoindikatorer---aktuell-status/vaxthusgaser/>

5 Source: Impact assessment for the Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings, European Commission (06.04.2022) [https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/1\\_en\\_impact\\_assessment\\_part1\\_v3.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/energy/sites/ener/files/documents/1_en_impact_assessment_part1_v3.pdf)

6 Source: UN Sustainable Development Goals <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> (20.12.2022)

7 Source: The European Commission Circular economy action plan (20.12.2022) [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/circular-economy-action-plan_en)



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