

SWITCH-Asia Project: A Catalyst for New Regulation on Construction Demolition Waste (CDW) Management in Mongolia

Mongolia has a new [regulation](#) consisting of the Waste Law, the Construction Law and applicable laws. The regulation, enacted on 27 February 2020, improves the management and structure of construction and demolition waste, minimise its negative impacts on the environment and human health, prevent potential hazards and risks. It strengthens Mongolia's circular economy through the promotion of sustainable production and consumption practices to improve waste management.

The construction industry in Mongolia is booming due to the country's increasing urbanization and economic growth. This has resulted in the production of massive amounts of **Construction and Demolition Waste (CDW)**. Over 90 percent of construction waste can be recycled and reused. The existence of large amounts of CDW and its high potential for reuse and recycling have attracted the attention of many countries around the world.

CDW accounts for 20-25 percent of the overall solid waste produced in Mongolia. In Ulaanbaatar (UB) and other cities, construction waste is often dumped illegally and a huge part of the construction and demolition work is done by small and medium-sized contractors and subcontractors whose current unsustainable approaches have negative impacts on both human health and the environment. Significant challenges persist when promoting resource-efficiency and cleaner production in Mongolia's construction sector. CDW Recycling SMEs lack knowledge and technical skills to confront negative environmental impacts and no specific regulations or certifications exist for a proper demolition of an End of Life (EoL) building, recycling and reuse of CDW.

The recycling sector is growing exponentially, with around 40 recycling factories processing waste materials (including metal, plastic and glass), two recycling plants being developed to process construction waste (such as concrete and bricks to be converted into aggregate for roads and construction blocks), and several building materials producers recycling expanded polystyrene and iron materials; however, lack of Research and Development (R&D), innovations, quality control procedures and standards are an obstacle to the expansion of the recycling sector in Mongolia.

To address these current challenges, the SWITCH-Asia project, [Improving Resource-Efficiency and Cleaner Production in the Mongolian Construction Sector Through Materials Recovery](#), implemented by Caritas Czech Republic and its partners, since 2016, has been promoting sustainable production and consumption in the construction sector, through supporting SMEs to switch to more resource-efficient practices. While the project is expected to reach its completion in July 2020, *"it has already achieved most of its results and even went beyond our expectations"*, affirms Jana Žilková, Project Manager and Head of Mission of Caritas Czech Republic in Mongolia. More than 400 representatives from the construction sector have been trained on more efficient CDW management and thousands have been reached through the project's awareness raising campaign on CDW. A new curriculum for CDW management has been developed and will be taught at the Mongolia University of Science and Technology (MUST), and several studies have been published and are available [online](#). In the attempt to increase the local production of affordable construction products made from C&D waste and at the same time reduce the carbon footprint of the construction sector, the MUST Research team has also developed its first CDW-based product in Mongolia and is currently working on the approval of standards for this product.

The main driving force for SMEs and stakeholders to recover and use materials from CDW is ultimately the market demand for recycled products. As the CDW recycling sector in Mongolia continues to grow, larger amounts of CDW recycled materials will become available. However, large amounts of recycled materials can only be sold if the general public, construction companies and authorities gain confidence in the quality of products made from recycled waste and if this confidence is translated into a regulatory framework.

The recent **“Procedure on cleaning, collecting, segregating, transporting, recycling, recovering, disposing and landfilling”** approved by the Ministry of Construction and Urban Development, of which the SWITCH-Asia Project was a strong advocate, is an important step towards the right direction.

As Jana Žilková further explains, the construction and demolition sectors, as well as waste management in Mongolia will greatly benefit from this procedure: CDW will be separated and its amount will decrease, new methods and technologies to reduce and recycle CDW will be introduced and knowledge of staff in the construction and demolition sectors will improve. CDW will be properly classified and separated into several groups, including recyclable waste such as plastic, paper, wood, etc. Furthermore, the procedure will improve the transportation of CDW and encourage companies and individuals to reuse and recycle. Last but not least, the procedure will clearly indicate who is responsible for CDW and what will happen when CDW is dumped and not handled in accordance with respective laws.

Environmental protection is one of the main four areas that the EU is addressing in Mongolia.

Specifically, the issue of waste management will continue to be the EU's focus. The project ‘Improving Resource-Efficiency and Cleaner Production in the Mongolian Construction Sector through Materials Recovery’ is a good example of upstream policy level intervention to gain more political leverage and downstream capacity building, awareness raising and research and development activities. Now ensuring sustainability of the project's legacy is the most important action, says Pierre-Yves Lucas, Cooperation Section Team Leader of the European Union Delegation to Mongolia.