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EFCA calls for a stronger circularity framework for Europe's built environment

"By introducing circular approaches from the planning and design, consulting engineers have a huge impact on the use, performance, and resilience of the built environment. There is an urgent need for better regulation, digital tools and common standards to fully realise the potential of circularity in the infrastructure sector and contribute to Europe's strategic autonomy and competitiveness," says Inés Ferguson, President of EFCA, as the Federation publishes its latest position paper.

Infrastructure and housing account for around half of global material extraction. EFCA therefore argues that circularity is essential not only for Europe's environmental objectives, but also for its resource security, resilience and competitiveness. A successful transition requires circularity to be embedded across the full lifecycle of the built environment, from planning and design through to construction, operation, renovation and deconstruction.

The paper highlights persistent barriers to implementation, including fragmented regulation, limited market demand, insufficient data and procurement practices that prioritise lowest upfront cost over long-term value. EFCA calls for a clear mitigation hierarchy that prioritises reduction, reuse, repair, refurbishment and life extension before recycling or replacement.

"Circularity in the built environment is not just about recycling. The biggest gains come from a hierarchy that prioritises extending asset life, reducing material demand, and reusing materials before recycling. Consulting engineers are crucial to putting these principles into practice," adds Elina Kalliala, Chair of EFCA's European Green Deal Committee.

Consulting engineers are key to translating circular economy policy objectives into practical solutions, integrating circular principles into design, asset management and project delivery. With the right regulatory framework, market incentives and digital tools, circularity can become a driver of resilience, competitiveness and long-term resource security across Europe.

[Download EFCA's full position paper](#)

Press contact: [Sue Arundale](#), Director General

EDITOR'S NOTE: EFCA has member associations in 27 countries and is the sole European federation representing the business interests of professional engineering consultancy and related services, a sector that employs more than one million staff in Europe.