



Non-Haz City Building Award: Future Policies for the Baltic Sea Region

Call for Nominations

Deadline: 15th of October 2024

BACKGROUND

Celebrating Laws and Policies for non-Hazardous Buildings

The NonHazCity Building Award is the first policy prize recognizing best policies in construction in the Baltic Sea Region at national, regional or local level. It aims to highlight policies protecting people and the environment from hazardous chemicals in buildings, integrating circularity, toxic-free & climate neutrality. The aim of the award is to inspire citizens, decision-makers and business and to showcase innovative solutions. The World Future Council co-ordinates and bestows the award.

Tackling the challenge of chemicals in the construction sector impacting our environment and health

Around 40,000–60,000 chemicals are in commerce worldwide. Many hazardous chemicals are found in the construction sector. Particularly problematic are chemicals that end up in our environment, in buildings, contributing to air and water pollution and accumulating in

our bodies including heavy metals and phthalates. These can cause irreversible harm to the health of humans, fauna, flora, marine life and to the planet. There are enormous costs associated with unsound management of chemicals and waste. The World Health Organization estimated the burden of disease from exposure to selected chemicals at 1.6 million lives in 2016. Costs from neurobehavioral deficits caused by certain exposure to chemicals were estimated to be more than 170 billion USD per year in the European Union alone.

Despite significant actions already taken for decades, the [Global Chemicals Outlook II](#) indicates that the global goal to minimize adverse impacts of chemicals and waste will not be achieved by 2030. Whilst solutions exist, more ambitious worldwide actions by all stakeholders are urgently required. The size of the global chemical industry exceeded 5 trillion USD in 2017 and it is projected to double by 2030 (UNEP 2019).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development incorporates chemicals and waste as key factors for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While chemicals and waste are cross-cutting issues across the 2030 Agenda, they are also clearly embedded into SDG 3 on good health and well-being, SDG 12 related to responsible consumption and production and SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation.

Sustainable construction will contribute to SDG 11 which is about sustainable cities and communities, while helping the construction sector to improve its performance in terms of chemical emissions thereby protecting life below water (SDG 14). It is intertwined with SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy since in northern Europe at least one third of our energy-consumption is related to the housing sector, making it very relevant also for SDG 13 which is about climate action. Since the construction sector is today still the biggest source of waste mass-wise it is relevant for SDG 12 which is about responsible consumption and production, SDG 12 holds several key-targets such as target 12.4 about achieving the sound chemicals management of chemicals and wastes throughout their lifecycle to minimize adverse effects on human-health and the environment. Because SDG 12 is a prerequisite, it should be reached by 2030.

While there are innovative and scalable solutions in the construction sector, these are competing with traditional options which have previously been chosen. The central role of government entities is reflected in target 12.7. about sustainable public procurement and must be applied to construction projects.

In moving forward, it is absolutely critical that the sound management of chemicals and waste is strengthened in the construction sector through inclusive, effective, inspiring and innovative laws and policies to protect future generations and contribute to the 2030 Agenda.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

- Policies, laws and legal frameworks that help create a tox-free, circular and climate neutral building environment encompassing existing and new buildings, refurbishments and extensions.

Laws, policies, frameworks, standards, guidelines and action plans for buildings can be **subnational, regional or local** in nature and should:

- deliver **identifiable improvements (Gold Award)**;
- **show policy progress (Silver Award)**
- be **replicable under similar circumstances**

Non-toxic: Is there full knowledge about chemicals/composition of construction materials, is smart procurement used or other policies/standards protecting humans and environment from toxic substances?

Circularity – Is there a policy incentivising a smart use of existing structures as much as possible, flexibility for a long lifetime, creating the feedstock material for future circularity?

Climate change: Construction material: Is carbon positive material from the region used?

PROCESS

Step 1. Call for Nomination

To facilitate the nomination process, nominations can be made easily using this [form](#). Questions can be addressed to Mecki Naschke, mecki.naschke@worldfuturecouncil.org. Anyone may nominate up to three acts, laws, policies, national action plans, programmes, decrees or ordinances of a state, region or municipality.

Step 2. The Selection Process

The research team from the World Future Council will evaluate the nominated policies and prepare a report for the jury with candidates. A regional jury of experts will select the winner(s).

Step 3. The Award Ceremony

The winner(s) of the Non Haz City Building Award will be celebrated at a high-level award ceremony in 2025 in **Riga** hosted by Riga City Council. The award ceremony will be convened by the WFC in partnership with the City Council of Tallin and Riga and Baltic Environment Forum (Germany, Estonia and Latvia).

Additional Benefits of Participating:

- The winning policies will be showcased with a film

- Shortlisted policies will be published to the media, including a brochure, and shared with all partners of the Non Haz City Project
- Policies serve as inspiration to other communities, regions and countries

COORDINATING PARTNER

The **World Future Council** brings the interests of future generations to the centre of law and policy making. The Council addresses challenges to our common future and identifies and promotes effective legislative and policy solutions among decision makers.

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SUPPORTING PARTNERS



The **NonHazCity 3** project focuses on the building sector and involves architects, construction companies, consultants, municipalities, and private individuals in the project. The project addresses the link between circular economy, climate neutrality and smart procurement in building materials. More than 20 partner entities from eight different countries across the Baltic Sea Region are learning from collaboration with each other to raise awareness of hazardous substances in construction material. The project is led jointly by **Riga City Council** and the NGO **Baltic Environmental Forum BEF**.



This project is financially supported by the **EU's Interreg Baltic Sea Region** programme.

