

02

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Presseinformation

Circular economy in the construction industry

How digital solutions are transforming the construction industry

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- **Market in transition: between a mountain of waste and an opportunity for the future**
- **Digital innovations are the key to the circular economy**
- **digitalBAU 2026: Exhibitors are focusing on the circular economy**

The construction sector is undergoing a profound shift. Driven by stricter environmental regulations and the need to conserve resources, the circular economy is steadily becoming more important in the construction industry. digitalBAU (March 24 to 26, 2026 in Cologne) will focus on digital technologies for circular construction as one of four key topics at the event.

The facts underscore the urgency of the digital transformation: According to the [German Federal Environment Agency](#), around 61% of all the waste generated in Germany in 2022 was mineral construction waste. A large proportion of this waste is sent for low-value recycling, amounting to an impressive 208 million tons, and must be reduced.

An important starting point for that is the circular economy. Cornelia Lutz, Senior Director Exhibitions and responsible for digitalBAU 2026, also emphasizes that: “The digital circular economy isn’t an option, it’s an urgent necessity. digitalBAU 2026 offers an ideal platform to showcase the potential of digital transformation for more sustainable and more resource-efficient construction, and to promote the necessary networking between the players involved.”

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Press release | 15. October 2025 | 2/2

A market in transition: between a mountain of waste and an opportunity for the future

Despite the growing understanding of resource-efficient construction and rising recycling rates, a recent [report by the N-Bau platform](#) shows that only 14 percent of material resources in Northwest Europe come from recycled sources, and only one percent of construction elements is reused. Conversely, the [World Economic Forum](#) forecasts savings potential of up to 75 percent in the next 25 years for the built environment's carbon emissions.

Digital innovations are the key to the circular economy

The digital transformation plays a decisive role in implementing the circular economy, with building information modeling (BIM) now established as a central tool. BIM-based circular design tools enable the subsequent dismantling and targeted reuse of materials to be taken into account as early as the initial planning phases for buildings. This will not only improve material efficiency but also minimize the amount of waste.

Digital material passports that are linked to 6D BIM models are a key component in this context. They contain detailed information on the origin, composition, and recyclability of all components used. That enables materials and components to be systematically returned to new value chains at the end of their predicted useful life. The focus here is not solely on recycling but above all on virtually carbon-neutral reuse.

digitalBAU 2026: Exhibitors are focusing on the circular economy

A large number of companies are presenting concrete solutions and current product developments with the focus on the circular economy. These include software tools for the simplified and database-supported creation of material passports. In addition, highly specialized technology companies are presenting their digital platforms for recording and tracing components, and for better networking of all those involved in the building life cycle.

Press release | 15. October 2025 | 3/3

The digitalBAU 2026 supporting program is also focusing intensively on the key topic of “Circular economy in the construction industry”. A particular highlight is the [German Construction Award 2026](#). The award ceremony will be held on the first day of the trade fair (Tuesday, March 24, 2026). The special category “Circular construction” recognizes outstanding and holistic construction projects.

You can find more information about digitalBAU at: www.digital-bau.com

About digitalBAU

digitalBAU is the trade fair for digital products and solutions for the construction industry and represents the entire value chain related to the digital planning, construction and operation of buildings. The trade fair is primarily aimed at planners, architects, engineers, construction companies and tradespeople. It is a part of the BAU exhibition network and is held in partnership with the German National Association for Construction Software (BVBS). digitalBAU 2024 was host to around 280 exhibitors and more than 10,000 visitors. The next digitalBAU will be held from March 24 to 26, 2026 in Cologne.

Messe München

As one of the world's leading trade fair organizers, Messe München presents the world of tomorrow at its around 90 international trade fairs. These include twelve of the world's leading trade fairs such as bauma, BAU, IFAT, and electronica. Its portfolio comprises trade fairs for capital and consumer goods, as well as for new technologies. Together with its 1,300 employees in the group and the affiliated companies, it organizes trade fairs in China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Turkey, Singapore, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Thailand, and the U.S. With an international network of affiliated companies and foreign representatives, Messe München is active worldwide. The more than 150 events held annually attract around 50,000 exhibitors and around three million visitors in Germany and abroad. This makes Messe München an important economic driver, triggering purchasing power effects in the billions.

digitalBAU partner:

German Association for Software and Digitalization in the Construction Industry (BVBS)

Planning, construction, operation – the right software helps to work in a structured manner, avoid errors and comply with deadlines and budgets over the entire life cycle of a building. Since the foundation of the association in September 1993, the members – leading software and IT companies – have pursued their mutual goal of enhancing the performance and innovative strength of the construction industry through the use of construction software. The association now represents more than 90 companies (as of November 2018) with more than 250,000 users throughout the construction sector. The members of BVBS e.V. are software providers and IT service providers and represent the fields of architecture, technical planning, civil engineering, construction, manufacturing and IT services.