INDUSTRY REPORT 2026

Reuse: How ready is the construction industry?



BYGGVARU® BEDÖMNINGEN

Contents

Foreword	03
This is Byggvarubedömningen	04
Background	07
Case study: Stockholm Public Library	09
Member survey	12
Case study: The Återbruket block	16
Questions to the public	20
Byggvarubedömningen – 20 years	26
Summary & Outlook	28

Katrin Dahlström:

Today's logbooks lay the foundation for tomorrow's circularity

The industry is facing a transition. Everything points towards a future in which reuse is no longer the exception, but part of the norm. But to get there, we need to know exactly what construction products that we use in our buildings today.

When Byggvarubedömningen was born around the turn of the millennium, the construction sector was struggling with major challenges. Health risks, costly remediation of PCBs and asbestos, and a generally low level of knowledge were part of everyday reality. The industry needed more knowledge about non-toxic and sustainable construction, and Sweden's largest property owners joined forces to launch a common standard for environmental assessments. Byggvarubedömningen is now celebrating its 20th anniversary.

After twenty years of documenting, the content of materials and buildings has now given us a completely new key role, as our data has become a foundation for knowing what can be reused. One excellent example is the municipal housing company Framtiden Fastigheter in Gothenburg, which is currently developing the Återbruket block in Backa, where as much as 50 percent of the material is reused from, among other places, former IKEA and SCA buildings. But as Nina Jacobsson Stålheim, Head of Ecological Development at Framtiden, wisely points out: reuse also presents a major challenge. You can read the full article on pages 16–19.



"Twenty years of documenting the content of materials and buildings has now given us a completely new key role, as our data has become a foundation for knowing what can be reused."

It is in projects of this kind that Byggvarubedömningen's database and logbooks can show their full potential. With declarations and logbooks stretching back decades, reuse would have been both cheaper and safer.

In this year's industry report you will find, among other things, a feature on the redevelopment of Stockholm Public Library, a look back at the beginning of Byggvarubedömningen 20 years ago, and the results of our survey asking member companies for their views on large-scale reuse.

Enjoy the report!

Katrin Dahlström
CEO, Byggvarubedömningen

This is Byggvarubedömningen

Byggvarubedömningen is a non-profit economic association that provides information and assesses building products based on different sustainability aspects. Our vision is to contribute to the development of a non-toxic and healthy built environment that takes responsibility for both current and future generations.

Since day one, the focus for Byggvarubedömningen has been to make it easier for actors in the construction industry to make sustainable and non-toxic material choices. Quite simply, we make complex information easy to understand and accessible to Sweden's contractors, property companies, municipalities, regions and others. Our qualitative assessments of building products give the industry the opportunity to make sustainable choices.

Our assessments

All products we assess are presented on our online platform. They are divided into three levels: **Recommended** (green), **Accepted** (yellow) and **To be avoided** (red). A product assessed as To be avoided is not prohibited, but non-assessed products should be avoided because they provide no information about their content and will therefore be more difficult to reuse. In this way, even those who are not experts in these often complex areas can make smart and sustainable material choices. Our Logbook tool is the place where project actors can collaborate on material choices and list what has been built into each specific construction project. The data in the logbooks makes it possible to trace harmful substances in the future. This is one way for us and our users to take responsibility for current and future generations, while making future reuse easier.

Byggvarubedömningen is continuously growing and helping the construction and property industry to become more sustainable. The number of members, assessments and logbooks continues to increase, and together we make sustainable construction easier. As we grow, more of the profit remains within the organisation and can be reinvested in developing both our operations and the industry.

Our assessment symbols



Recommended



Accepted

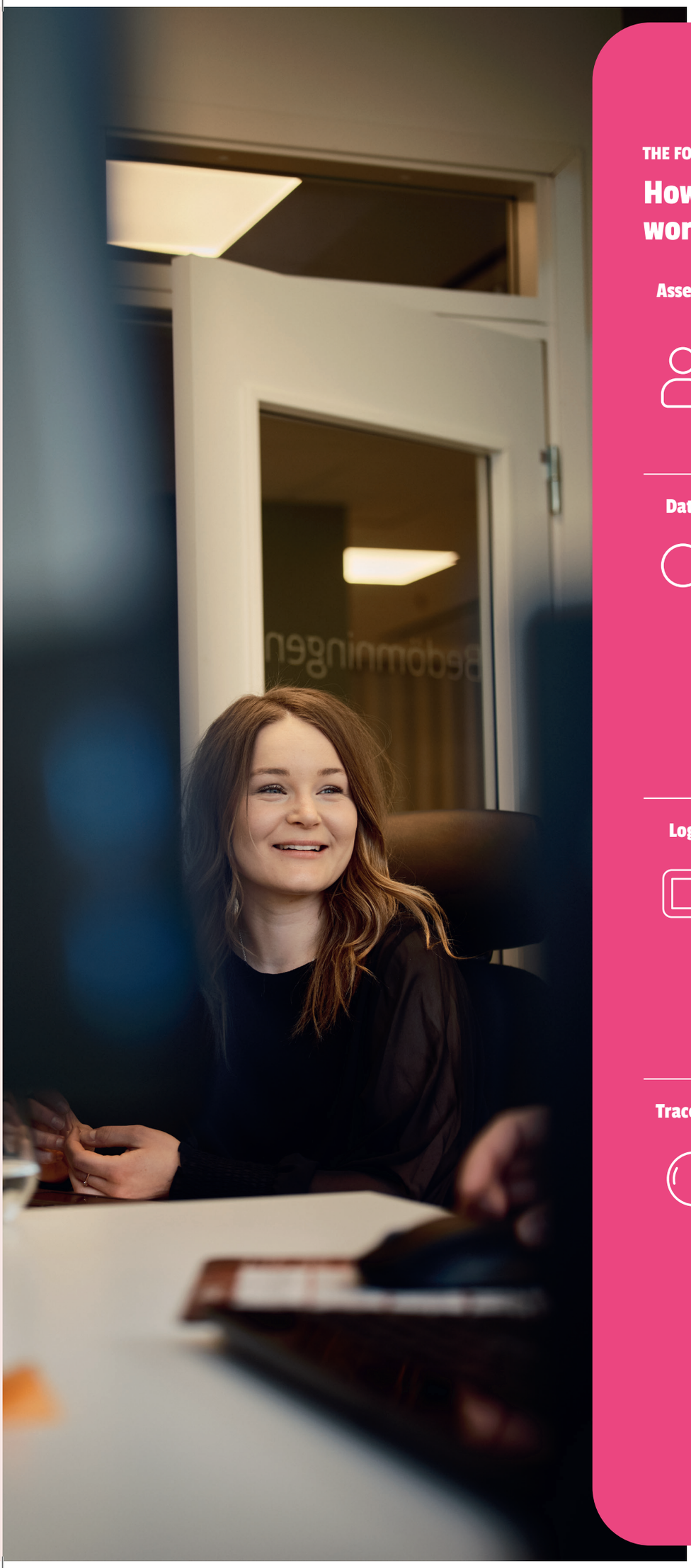


To be avoided

We go further than legislation requires

There are EU regulations on hazardous substances in articles, but one problem is that articles are not classified in the same way as chemical products. This makes it difficult for non-specialists to determine which products are actually non-toxic. To enable consistent and comparable assessments of all building products, both chemical products and articles, we therefore assess them using the same principles.

For our owners and members, legislation is not always enough. Our purpose is to go beyond legal requirements and work proactively. What is assessed today



THE FOUR PILLARS

How Byggvarubedömningen works – step by step

Assessment

The material supplier submits the documentation we need based on our criteria for chemical content and life cycle aspects. It is also voluntary to assess products according to our social criteria for Sustainable Supply Chains.

Database

Products are published and searchable in our database, where it is clearly shown what assessment each product has received for chemical content, life cycle aspects and overall assessment. Users can search by product name, material supplier, content of a specific substance, substances or classifications to avoid, and products that meet a particular building certification.

Logbook

In the Logbook, users list their construction projects and the products used in them, covering both renovation and new projects. The Logbook allows users to review products used during construction and meet the client's requirements. Several actors in a project can collaborate on material choices.

Traceability

In addition to supporting building certifications such as Miljöbyggnad, BREEAM and the Nordic Swan Ecolabel, the purpose of the Logbook is to record what has been built into buildings – and where. This makes it possible both to recycle products and materials correctly during renovation or demolition and to identify substances affected by future regulation.

may be what is at risk of being prohibited tomorrow. We were created by the industry to take responsibility where no one else did.

Regulations underlying our assessment of building products

We have criteria for chemical content and life cycle aspects that form the basis of our assessments. The chemical content criteria are based on the Swedish Chemicals Agency's PRIO criteria for hazardous properties. PRIO is a tool that helps companies identify and replace hazardous substances in articles or chemical products, in all industries. The criteria are divided into phase-out criteria for substances with serious properties that need to be phased out and prioritised risk-reduction criteria for hazardous properties that should be risk-assessed if they are to be used. PRIO has a database of substances that meet these properties and is intended for all industries, not only construction. The concentration limits in Byggvarubedömningen's criteria are based on the EU's CLP Regulation, which governs classification and labelling, and REACH, which governs the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemical substances.

The life cycle criteria cover areas throughout the whole life cycle that we and our members consider important, and are based on sources including legislation, industry standards and data from environmental product declarations (EPDs).

Byggvarubedömningen is more than a tool. We are the collective industry acting together in the interests of our grandchildren, great-grandchildren and generations beyond.

What do we mean by 'reuse'?

Reuse means using functional and healthy building products again. It should not be confused with recycling, where products are broken down into waste and then used as input in the production of new products.

Our members

Our membership currently consists of around 80 companies and organisations, including architectural firms, municipalities, regions, property-owning and property-managing companies, government agencies, contractors and actors in the civil engineering industry. All share the same ambition: to contribute to a more sustainable construction and property industry and to engage in Byggvarubedömningen's work.

Today’s material choices – tomorrow’s reuse



Moa Åberg, Business Developer at Byggvarubedömningen.

With today’s climate challenges constantly in mind, we are exploring every avenue to create a sustainable planet, and reuse is one of the construction industry’s most promising opportunities. As EU requirements related to circularity become more common and private individuals place higher demands on green and non-toxic products, construction companies are also giving the issue greater priority. Moa Åberg, Business Developer at Byggvarubedömningen, sees reuse as a natural part of the future of construction.



Crucial to the future of reuse

– In addition to the EU requirements that have arrived and will continue to arrive, I would say that much of the development began when construction companies realised how much waste their projects generated and what an unnecessary expense it represented. Their ambition is of course always to order the right amount of material, but in a large project with a deadline to meet, it can be necessary to play it safe and order a little extra. Somewhere around there, a demand for a market for reused building products started to grow, she says.

– Demand has to exist for supply to grow. Today we see reuse hubs being established, where everything from bricks to windows in good condition can be found. Development is rapid, and the market will continue to grow as demand increases. This creates good conditions for reuse on a larger scale, says Moa Åberg.

Byggvarubedömningen's role

– Our mandate is to provide guidance on which materials are sustainable and free from harmful substances. When our member companies build in safe materials today, they also create better conditions for tomorrow's reuse. Therefore our work is an important part of the transition towards a more circular construction sector, where more materials can be reused safely and efficiently in the future.

Long-term gains outweigh short-term costs

– Reuse is still a relatively young field with considerable potential for development. As the market grows, supply will increase, processes will become more efficient and costs more competitive, says Moa Åberg.

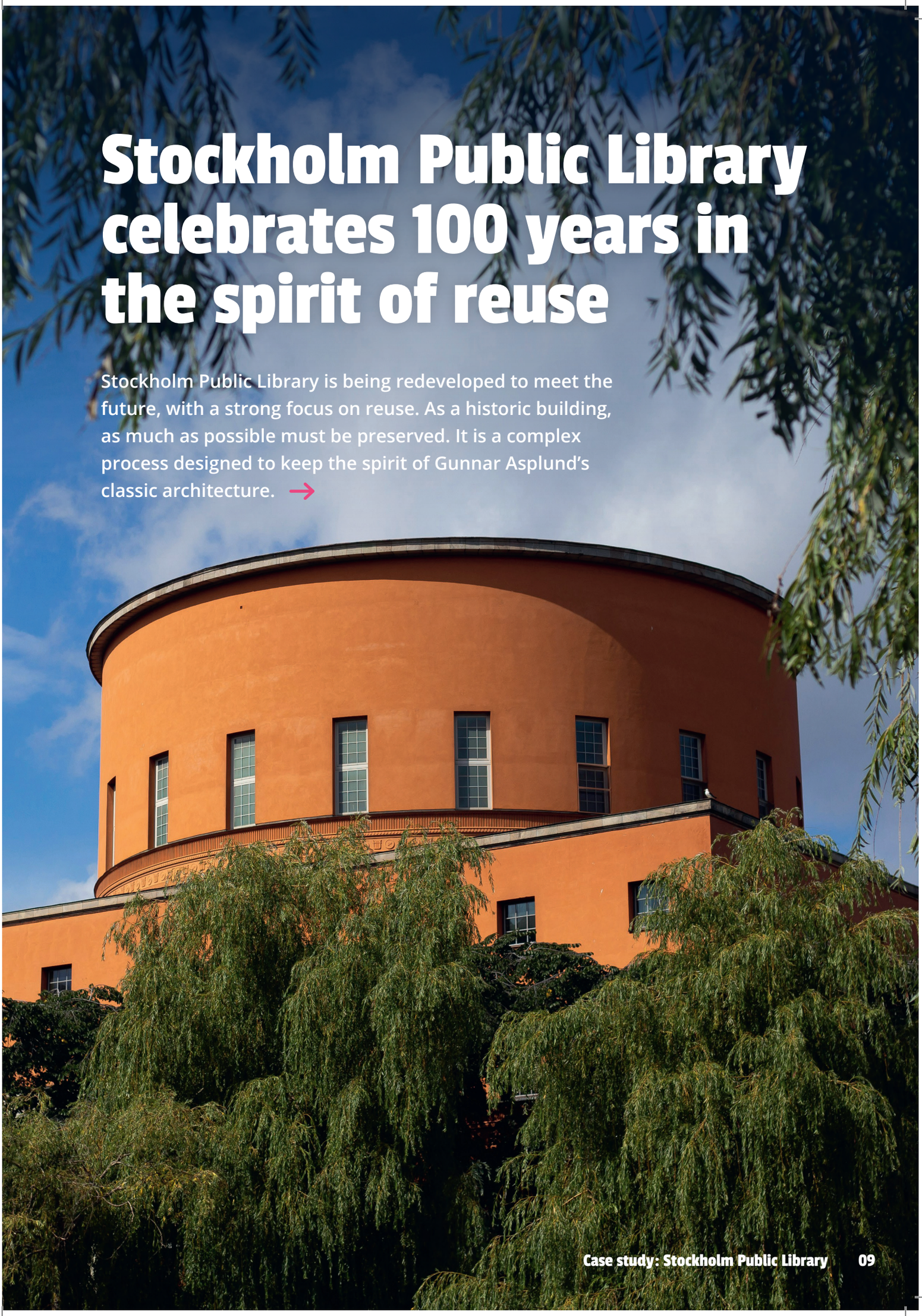
– At the same time, it is not only about cost. Construction companies also need to meet their customers' expectations regarding sustainability and resource efficiency. Reuse is becoming an increasingly important part of attractive, future-proof construction projects. That is why I see major long-term value in integrating reuse into operations already today.

Can reuse also lead to more playful architecture than we are used to seeing in today's new-build projects?

– Absolutely. Reuse means choosing from what is available: if red brick is what is available, then red brick it is, so to speak. This will place different demands on architects and may potentially lead to a visual change in future properties. It is an exciting time to watch reuse grow, and from my perspective I see economic, sustainability and perhaps even architectural benefits. ■

Stockholm Public Library celebrates 100 years in the spirit of reuse

Stockholm Public Library is being redeveloped to meet the future, with a strong focus on reuse. As a historic building, as much as possible must be preserved. It is a complex process designed to keep the spirit of Gunnar Asplund's classic architecture. →



There are several reasons to work with reuse: environmental considerations, aesthetics or legal requirements. As Stockholm Public Library is refurbished ahead of its 100th anniversary in 2028, all three apply.

– The Public Library is a historic building, which means that we have to use as much of the original material as possible, from structural elements to furniture. The task is to refine what is already there so that it can last for another 100 years, says **Pontus Sträng**, Construction Manager at Ebab.

Nasim Rafieiyan, Environmental Coordinator at Ebab, manages the project's environmental requirements. This includes everything from waste management to contact with Byggvarubedömningen.

– We are not working towards a fixed percentage; the goal is simply to reuse as much as possible. An early reuse inventory gave us a clear picture of the conditions, but we have to adapt along the way if materials turn out to be in worse condition than expected, she says.

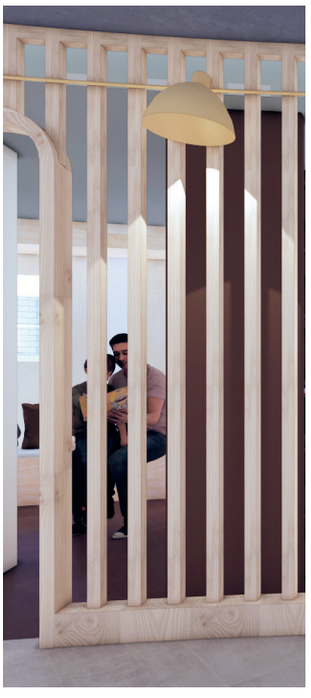
Thorough preparation and design are particularly important because every small change to the plan must be approved by the County Administrative Board.

– All changes have to be approved. We cannot even make an unplanned opening in a wall without approval, so in that sense it is a unique project. But we have a conservation specialist on site who helps



The new fairy-tale and themed rooms are getting an upgrade. This includes the reuse of elm wood from the main entrance. (The images are renderings.)





us communicate with the County Administrative Board, which makes the process run smoothly despite everything, says Pontus Sträng.

Dismantling is as important as installation

Reuse is not simply a matter of keeping a brick wall. Planning is essential, but creative solutions are often needed during construction. When diseased elm trees outside the main entrance had to be felled, the project team came up with the idea of preserving their history within the building.

– Instead of throwing the trees away, we turned them into timber that will now become new slatted walls in the children's section. In this way we can both reuse the material and quite literally build the history of the building into its walls, says Nasim Rafieiyan.

The same approach can be seen in the lighting. Existing light fittings are retained but converted to modern LED technology, preserving the soul of the building while reducing energy consumption.

Not simply ripping everything out and buying new requires a different mindset.

– Of course it is easier to start from scratch, but in this type of project you have to think carefully, dismantle things gently and label everything meticulously. It requires close cooperation between all the contractors involved, which often makes the projects more enjoyable and brings the team closer together. Personally, I think it is an incredibly rewarding way to work, says Pontus Sträng.

The library is due to be completed in time for its 100th anniversary in 2028 – ready for a new century, with the history of Stockholm Public Library intact. ■



Three examples of reuse at Stockholm Public Library



Building components of cultural-historical value

Fixed building components with a strong cultural-historical connection have been treated with particular care and are often subject to conservation requirements and decisions by the County Administrative Board.



Light fittings

The project's ambition to reuse as much as possible made preserving old light fittings an obvious choice. The fittings are then adapted to modern LED technology, providing a more sustainable solution while still respecting the history of the library.



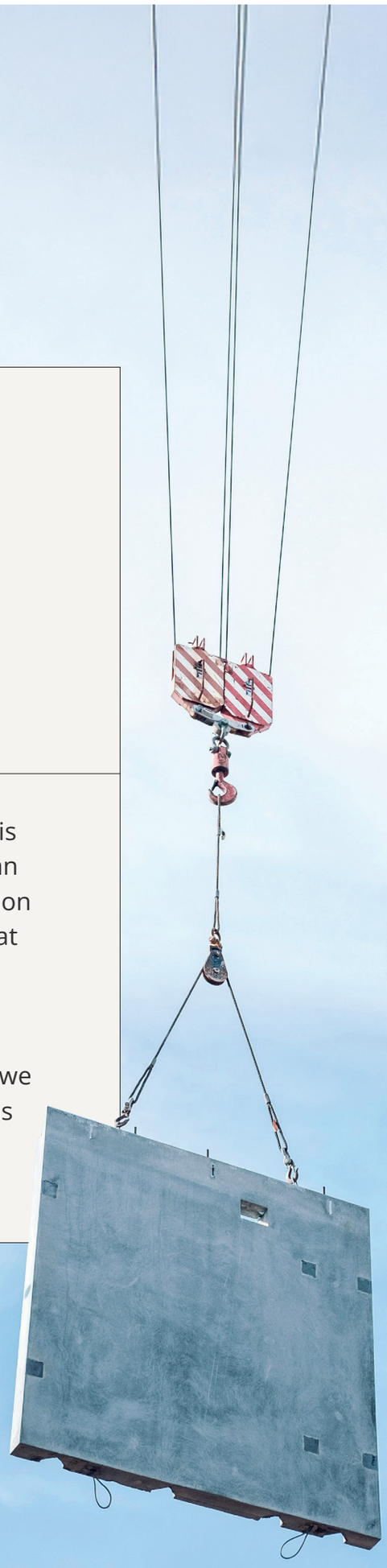
Suspended ceilings

Suspended ceilings are well suited to reuse and have therefore been reused wherever the technical conditions have allowed them to be dismantled and reinstalled.

We asked our members about reuse

Although large-scale reuse is gaining ground, this is still only the beginning of what may become an entirely new business area within the construction industry. We asked our member companies what they reuse today, what is not suitable for reuse and what they see as the greatest challenges to making reuse a larger and more natural part of the industry in the future. The many responses we received further reinforce the picture of reuse as an important issue in the construction industry.

You find all of our members on page 6.



Which building products or materials do you reuse today?

"Easy" and standardised products dominate reuse

- Doors
- Suspended ceilings/ceiling tiles
- Glass partitions
- Kitchenette/kitchen fittings
- Sanitary ware and taps
- Lighting fixtures

Finishes and interior products are reused more often than structural components

Common:

- Flooring such as carpet and parquet
- Internal walls and brick
- Cupboards, furniture and fittings

Less common, but occurring:

- Concrete, steel and floor structures
- Paving stones and façade materials

Reuse mainly takes place within companies' own projects – an internal loop

- Materials are moved between a company's own properties or projects
- Internal storage occurs
- Reuse 'in-house' is the norm

Specification requirements and the condition of the material are decisive

Products are reused only if they:

- Are in good condition
- Meet fire, acoustic and functional requirements

Preservation can be more important than reuse

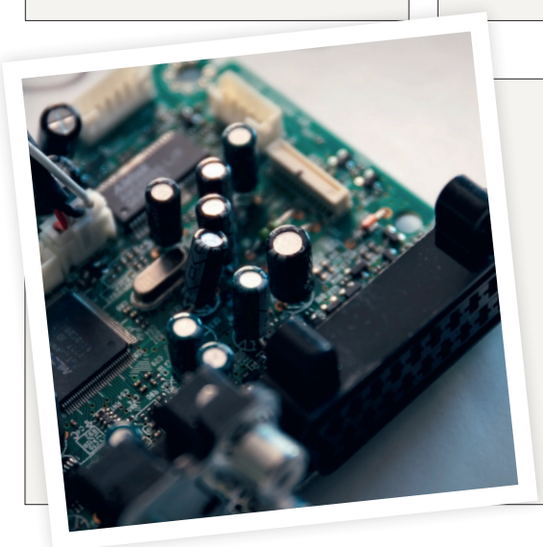
Several respondents say they:

- Avoid demolition
- Move walls instead of tearing them down
- Leave materials in place

Building-services components are beginning to be reused

For example:

- Ventilation components
- Chilled beams
- Light fittings



Summary

The most common form of reuse today involves simpler, standardised building components used within companies' own projects. The industry has not come as far with more complex materials, and many companies are still at an early stage in developing a structured way of working with reuse. At the same time, many initiatives are under way, both among member companies and among material suppliers.



What building products or materials do you not currently reuse?

Technical systems are reused to a limited extent

- Sprinklers, control systems and similar products are rarely reused
- Technology has a short service life while technical requirements become stricter over time

Large and heavy building components are often avoided

- For example floor structures, steel beams and frames
- These require extensive logistics and storage, with increasing costs

Materials in poor condition or with no demand are rejected

- Worn products, particularly from older properties
- Customers may not want "outdated" or aesthetically unattractive products

Products that are difficult to dismantle are rarely reused

For example:

- Plasterboard walls
- Glued flooring
- Wall systems with insulation
- Materials that may pose health or hygiene risks are avoided
- Materials containing hazardous substances are rejected

Summary

Materials that are not reused are primarily technically complex, difficult to dismantle, unable to meet regulatory requirements, or simply lack demand.

The greatest challenges to increased reuse, according to our member companies

Economics

- Difficult to make profitable
- Buying new is cheaper
- Business models and cost structures are unclear and complicated

Supply and market

- Supply is too limited and finding the right material is difficult
- It is difficult to find the right quantity exactly when it is needed
- There is a shortage of efficient marketplaces

Logistics and time

- Requires storage, transport and intermediate storage
- Takes more time than traditional purchasing
- Difficult to fit into project time schedules

Processes and organisation

- Standardised working methods are lacking
- Responsibilities are unclear and internal coordination is weak
- New procedures and new working methods are required

Regulation, requirements and risk

- Warranties, liability and risk assessment are often barriers
- Building permits, requirements and procurement processes make reuse more difficult
- Taxes/VAT and legal issues create obstacles



Summary

The challenge is that reuse is currently more expensive, more complex and less well adapted to today's construction processes than buying new products.

The neighbourhood demonstrating the potential of large-scale reuse

The Återbruket block in Backa, Gothenburg, is exactly what its name suggests: a development shaped by reuse. The buildings will contain materials from, among other places, the SCA building in Mölndal and the former IKEA store in Kållered. In total, 50 percent of the material used will be reused.

– That is an insanely high proportion compared with an ordinary construction project, says Nina Jacobsson Stålheim, Framtiden Fastigheter.



Framtiden owns 76 000 apartments, meaning that no less than 25 percent of Gothenburg residents live in homes owned by the municipal housing group. It is therefore a major player on Sweden's west coast with real potential to make an impact. **Nina Jacobsson Stålheim** is Head of Ecological Development at Framtiden and one of the country's pioneers in large-scale reuse.

– We started working more actively with reuse shortly before 2020. That was when the value of logging products in Byggvarubedömningen's system became very clear. It makes it easier for us to see what we should reuse and what really should not be circulated. Avoiding the hassle and additional cost of carrying out our own tests and investigations is extremely important to us. With the emergence of reuse, Byggvarubedömningen has gained a completely new value and function that perhaps was not apparent at the beginning, she says.

Reuse comes naturally in western Sweden

A few quick searches make it clear that large-scale reuse is a hot topic on Sweden's west coast. Why?

– It began rather informally with a group of enthusiasts and IVL in Gothenburg who started engaging with the issue. As the topic grew, a business network was created around it, and since then reuse has become a natural part of the industry here. The fact that a few people had their feet in the soil, so to speak, and were thinking along these lines early on probably gave the Gothenburg region a head start, says Nina Jacobsson Stålheim.



The exterior, viewed from the street, reveals a modern structure in tones that harmonise with nature.





A lush courtyard with benches and greenery that can be overlooked from the access galleries.



The Återbruket block takes form.





Pilot projects have become trailblazing projects

One of the major challenges of reuse is easy to overlook: you cannot simply take something out of one property and put it into another. Materials may need sampling, quality assurance and upgrading before they are ready for use in the next project.

– It is a major undertaking. That is why we are working hard and trying to influence established suppliers to develop ways of working specifically with reused products. There is an opportunity for an entirely new business segment and a chance to create a good business for those who can make large-scale reuse simpler and more accessible. At the same time, we should be aware that reused and new materials will always complement one another, but reuse can take a significantly larger market share than it does today, says Nina Jacobsson Stålheim.

The Återbruket block is now taking shape in Backa. Nina Jacobsson Stålheim describes it as a trailblazing project.

– The era of pilot projects is over. Now it is about leading the way and showing what can be achieved with reused materials – clearing a path for others to follow. More people have to see the benefits if we are to drive new market solutions and achieve our shared climate goals.

A great deal of large-scale reuse is about making reused material look new. At the Återbruket block, the team chose another perspective: to tell a story about Gothenburg by using signature colours from the old buildings that supplied the materials.

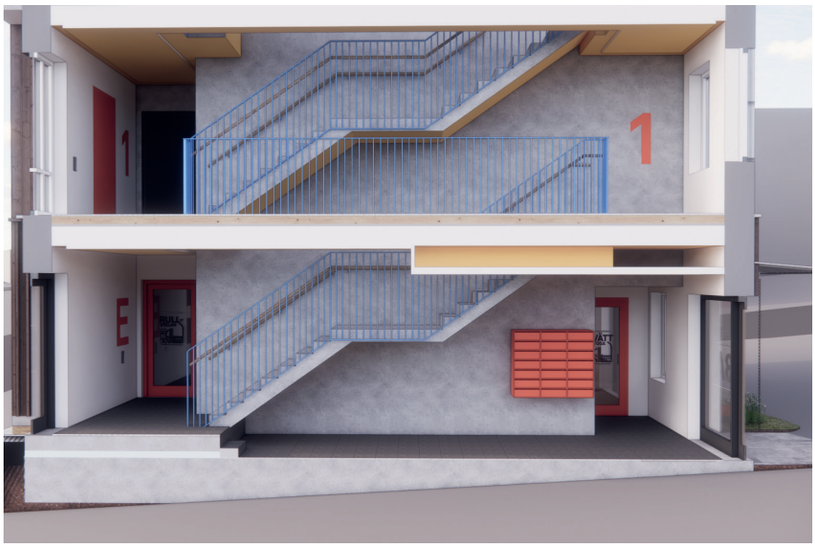
– We have reused parts of the SCA building in Mölndal and the former IKEA store in Kållered. Instead of hiding that fact, we have used the blue, yellow and red colours in the stairwells – the same colours that characterised the old buildings, now given new life in Återbruket.

“The era of pilot projects is over. Now it is about leading the way and showing what can be achieved with reused materials – clearing a path for others to follow.”

Although the idea and ambition behind reuse are positive, critical voices have been raised, particularly regarding economics. How can a large-scale reuse project be financially viable?

– ‘You will never make the numbers work!’ was a common objection, and perhaps a reasonable one at the time. But after using reused hollow-core slabs, which are normally installed in office buildings, and looking at what drove up costs in other reuse projects, the cost of this project is not far from that of new





The colour choices are a homage to the old IKEA store in Kållered and the SCA building in Mölndal, from which materials have been reclaimed.

production. At the same time, the infrastructure for reused material is not yet in place. So of course we can also see enormous economic potential in large-scale reuse once better systems have developed over time, says Nina Jacobsson Stålheim.

– That is how it is with new ideas and solutions. It can be difficult to picture them, to see the economics and how reuse can contribute to a better business and more attractive homes. The proportion of reused material we are using is vastly higher than in an ordinary construction project. The important thing about this project is to demonstrate what is possible and get the industry moving. In the long term, exactly where the reused material is built in is less important – what matters is *that* it is built in, concludes Nina Jacobsson Stålheim. ■

Three questions for Nina Jacobsson Stålheim

What have you learned from the project?

– First of all, we can conclude that the market is not quite there yet. A lot of time has been spent finding the materials we needed. We have had to source bits and pieces from different places and put out many fires, which of course drives up both cost and time. The next step is to create a system and supply that make reuse projects easier and cheaper.

How do you see the future of large-scale reuse?

– I think things will move very quickly from now on. Acceptance, understanding and the business benefits are beginning to become visible. By 2030, I would expect there to be nothing unusual about using reused, quality-tested products in the systems that actors specify for buildings – products that tenants do not object to. It is also important to remember that you do not have to do everything. The Återbruket block is a cutting-edge project intended to show what is possible, but in future the amount of reuse will vary from project to project depending on availability at the time. Overall, much more material will be reused, but it matters less in which individual project.

Do you see particular potential in any product?

– Windows are one example. Windows are often discarded because the frames or sashes are worn, even though the glass is often of high quality. And in a window, the glass is the resource-intensive part. So it is up to us and other actors to turn that into a viable market. We have, for example, pitched the idea to the Swedish Glass Industry Association, where we saw interest and found that people were already preparing to develop such a business. I think quite a lot could happen there within a relatively short amount of time.



Nina Jacobsson Stålheim, Head of Ecological Development at Framtiden Fastigheter.

Survey

What does the public say?

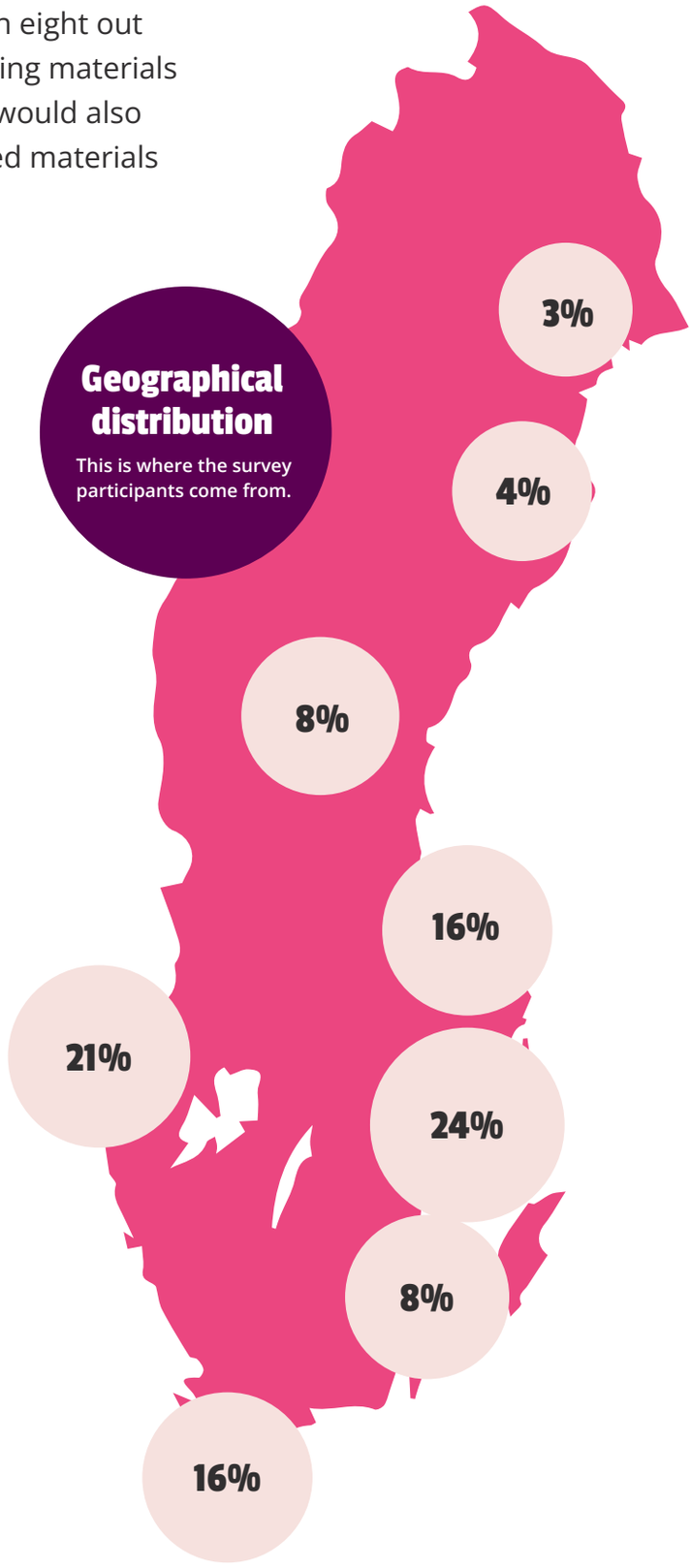
Swedes are fundamentally positive about reuse, as our public survey shows. More than eight out of ten are positive about reused building materials being used in new homes, and many would also consider living in a home where reused materials have been used.

The survey also shows that this support comes with clear expectations. As many as 87 percent report some degree of concern about hazardous substances, damp and mould, and the quality and long-term durability of materials.

There is therefore broad understanding that reuse must take place under controlled conditions. Expectations of the construction and property industry are high when it comes to ensuring safety, traceability and quality. At the same time, one in three respondents say they were completely or partly unaware that older building products can contain substances that are now prohibited because of risks to health and the environment.

Women are consistently more positive about reuse than men. Men are more likely to take a neutral or cautious position, while women are more likely to be very positive about reused building materials and about living in homes where reused materials have been used. As many as 57 percent of women are very positive about living in a newly built home where some of the material is reused, compared with 48 percent of men.

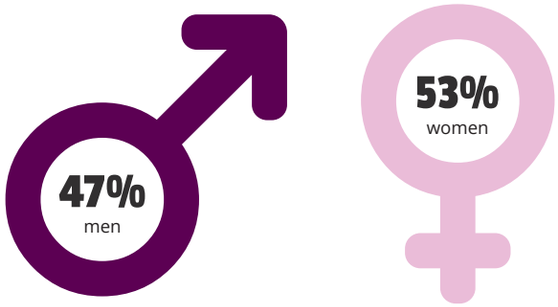
Byggvarubedömningen continues to have an important role to play by contributing knowledge, transparency and the right tools to create safe conditions for large-scale reuse in the future.



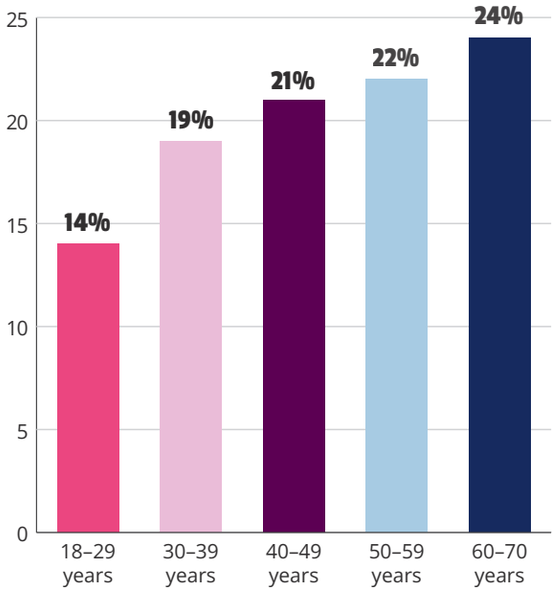
The survey in brief

Data collection: Norstat
Type of survey: quantitative digital survey
Number of participants: 505
Data collection period: 7–17 May 2026

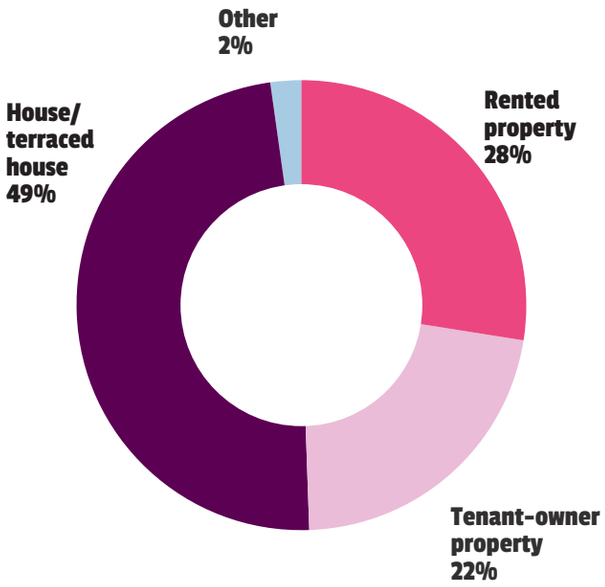
Gender



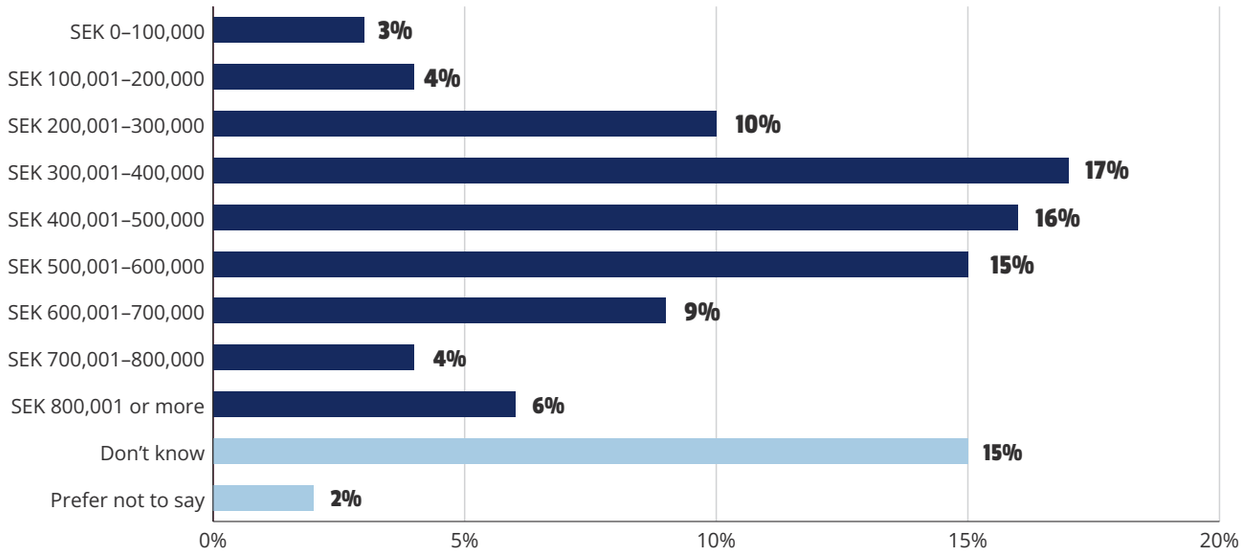
Age



Housing



Personal income

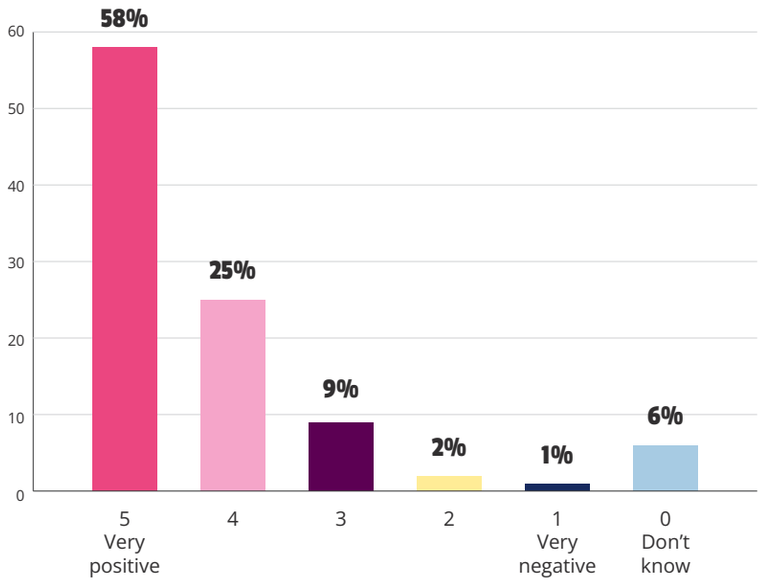


QUESTION 1

What is your view on reusing building materials in new homes?

The public is generally positive about reusing building materials in new homes. A clear majority are very positive, and together with those who say they are positive, the total exceeds eight out of ten. Very few – just under three percent – are negative. Nine percent find it difficult to take a position, while six percent answer that they don't know.

More men than women choose the middle, a more neutral response: 13 percent compared with six percent.

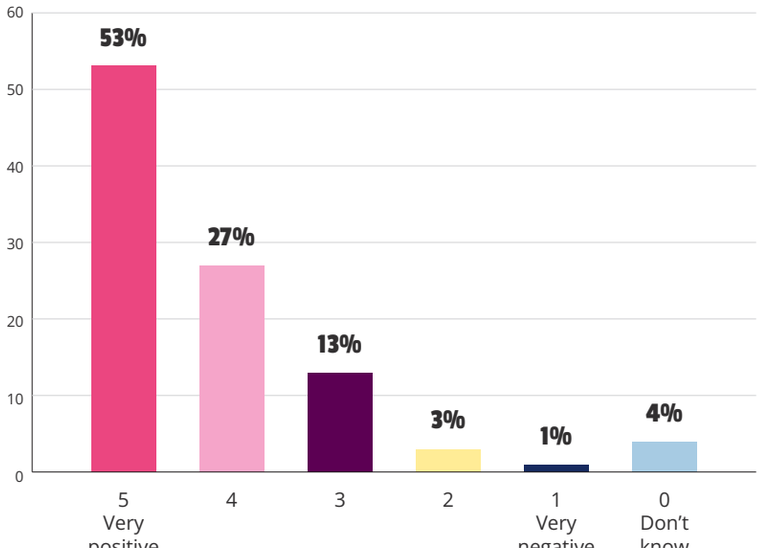


QUESTION 2

How positive or negative would you be about living in a newly built home where some of the material is reused?

A clear majority are very positive about living in a newly built home where some of the material is reused. In total, eight out of ten say they are very positive or positive. The proportion who are negative is very low, only four percent. Just over one in ten choose the middle option and find it difficult to take a position.

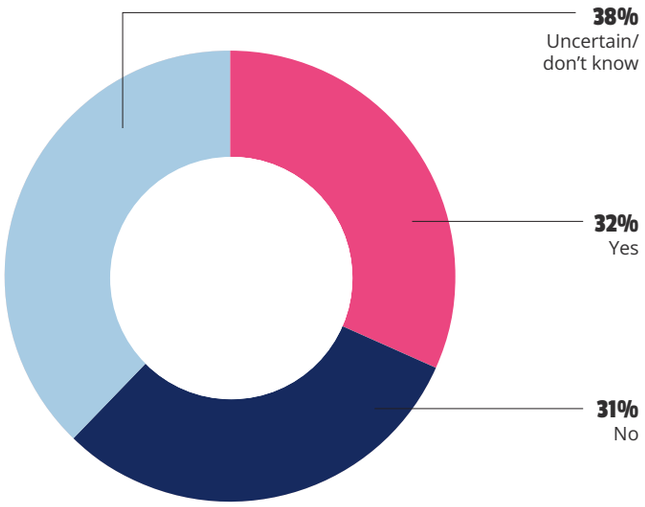
More women than men say they are very positive: 57 percent compared with 48 percent.



QUESTION 3

Do you think reused building material is always better for the environment?

One third believe that reused building material is always better for the environment. An equally large proportion answer no. In addition, just over a third find it difficult to take a position or answer that they don't know, indicating uncertainty about the actual environmental impact of reuse.



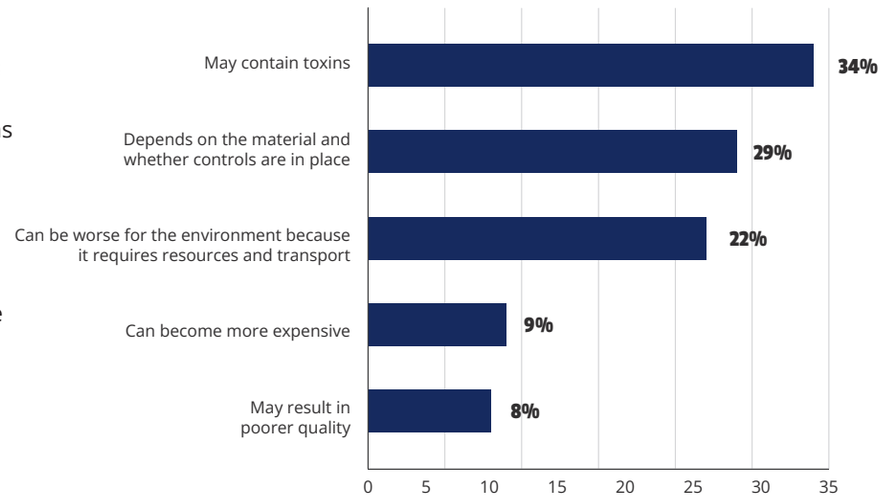
Those who believe reuse is always better for the environment mainly argue that it is better to use material that has already been produced rather than manufacture new material.

"Manufacturing new material takes resources from our planet."
– Man, 68, Uddevalla

"A smaller footprint than new production."
– Woman, 39, Krokom

"I assume environmentally hazardous substances are not used and that the material is checked to make sure it is good."
– Woman, 69, Stockholm

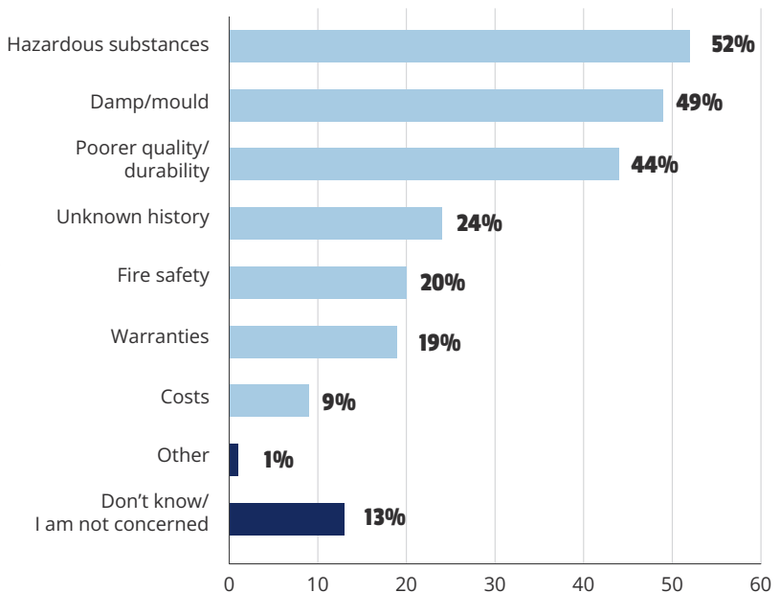
Those who do not believe reuse is always better for the environment mention concerns about hazardous substances, the origin of the material and the fact that reuse can itself require resources, for example through transport.



QUESTION 4

What, if anything, concerns you most about reused building materials?

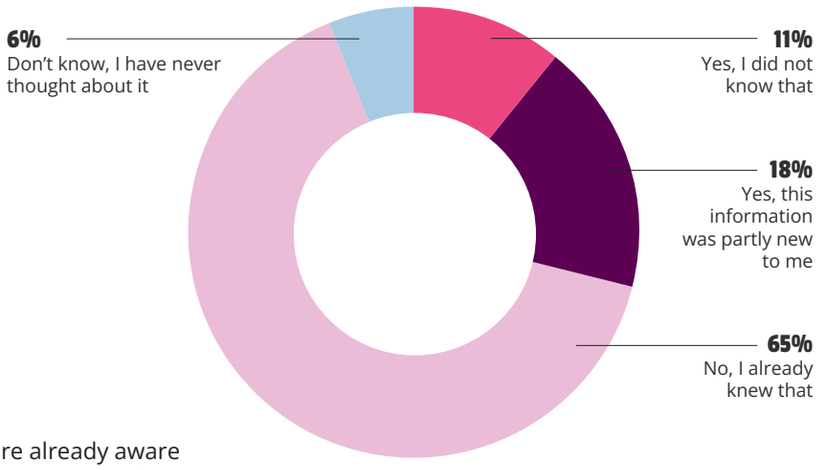
The greatest concern is hazardous substances in building materials. Almost half are concerned about damp and mould and about poorer quality and durability. This is followed by concern about the material's unknown history.



Respondents could select more than one answer.

QUESTION 5

Many older building products contain substances that are now prohibited because of risks to health and the environment. When materials are reused, these substances can be carried forward if they are not identified and handled correctly. Knowledge of content and origin is therefore crucial to safe and sustainable reuse. Was this information, that older building products may contain substances that are now prohibited, new to you?



65 percent say they were already aware of the issue. Around one in ten say the information was new to them, while the remainder say it was partly new. The result indicates a certain knowledge gap.



20 years of getting the house in order:

“We were left holding the Old Maid”

Twenty years ago, the construction industry was something of a Wild West when it came to the content of materials – no one really knew what was hidden in the walls. The turning point came when Jerker Nyblom and a group of property developers refused to accept the status quo. This year we celebrate a 20-year journey – from threats of legal action to becoming a valued and established part of the industry.

Jerker Nyblom has now been retired for several years. But 20 years ago, he was one of the key people who laid the foundation for what Byggvarubedömningen is today.

We rewind to the years around the turn of the millennium. Jerker Nyblom was Head of Environment and Sustainability at the property owner Akademiska Hus. Environmental and health issues related to buildings were beginning to be taken seriously by society, but the tools needed to manage them were lacking. This put him and the company in a difficult position.

– There was no requirement to declare what products contained. We had problems with PCBs and radon, but in reality we did not know what we were buying or building in. We were left holding the Old Maid, Jerker Nyblom tells.

One of the major challenges was getting material suppliers to declare product content. What today feels self-evident to construction companies was, at the time, something that shook the foundations of an entire industry.

– The construction sector accounted for an enormous share of society’s resource consumption. Of course we could easily find out the content of a wooden board from the supplier. But declaring the content of an electronic product with components from all over the world? That was a major undertaking, says Jerker Nyblom.

Widespread scepticism

This led to the creation of Milab in 2003, with Jerker Nyblom as chair. Together with major actors such as Vasakronan, the group began building a system based on ‘avoid lists’. But another association, ByggdMiljö in Stockholm, was thinking along similar lines. During this work it became clear that the industry did not need more systems – it needed one common system.

Three years later, in 2006, Milab and ByggdMiljö merged to form Byggvarubedömningen together. It was an important milestone and a proud moment for the founders, but a source of frustration for other actors.



Jerker Nyblom was one of the key persons who laid the foundation for what Byggvarubedömningen is today.

– The suppliers did not want to be assessed. From their perspective, all we were doing was making things more expensive and complicated, so the resistance was enormous. They questioned our right even to get involved, Jerker Nyblom tells.

That is no exaggeration. Shortly afterwards, as Jerker Nyblom and his colleagues were preparing for a much-awaited Christmas break, a letter arrived from an industry organisation: 'We will sue Byggvarubedömningen if the database is launched.'

– Our budget was of course tiny – we did not even have any employees. So the resources to fight a legal battle simply did not exist. But after speaking to the Chief Legal Officer at Akademiska Hus, we decided to publish the database, he says and continues:

– It was a somewhat tense meeting with a CEO, but it ended well. I drew a parallel with the food industry: 'As a customer, I want to know whether I am buying Felix or Findus pickles, and what they contain.' Material suppliers started to deliver information, those of us who would own, work and live in the buildings for decades to come obviously needed to know what was in them. You could see the penny drop, and that was the beginning of a change in the discussion.

Today, resistance has been replaced by demand. From a modest start with a budget of SEK 1.2 million, Byggvarubedömningen now has annual revenue of close to SEK 55 million. Jerker Nyblom, who now follows developments from a distance, is pleased to see the organisation continuing to evolve and becoming a valued part of the industry rather than the opposite.

– It is wonderful to see that Byggvarubedömningen is now fully accepted. It has become a basic requirement in the industry, where companies want their products to be assessed. Being part of starting this is the greatest joy of my professional life – to have achieved something for the industry, for future generations and for human health. ■

The companies behind the formation of Byggvarubedömningen

The Swedish property owners federation acted as a hub during the development of Milab. In addition to Akademiska Hus and Vasakronan, the companies and organisations involved included HSB, Peab, AP Fastigheter, Hufvudstaden, Landstingsfastigheter i Örebro, Lokalförsörjningsförvaltningen Göteborg, the National Property Board Sweden, Ekobyggcentrum in Degerfors and Specialfastigheter.



"It is wonderful to see that Byggvarubedömningen is now fully accepted. It has become a basic requirement in the industry."
– Jerker Nyblom.

Summary

The foundation has been laid for scaling up reuse

The industry is ready, legislation is being developed and there are high hopes for improved infrastructure for large-scale reuse. If we summarise what we see in our own work together with the signals we receive from member companies and industry colleagues, everything points towards a future in which reuse is the norm. Circularity is also an important piece of the puzzle in limiting climate change, protecting biodiversity and making the most of resources in an uncertain world. We are not there today, but we are well on our way.

Major change takes time, particularly when it involves creating the economic and logistical conditions required for reuse to become a genuine large-scale alternative. Despite the challenges, the journey has begun. The features on the Återbruket block and the redevelopment of Stockholm Public Library provide good examples of projects that have required both big planning and a high degree of agility when unexpected opportunities have arisen.

One of Byggvarubedömningen's primary purposes is to facilitate this process. Our work with documentation has indirectly laid a foundation that enables some of today's reuse. Without content declarations and logbooks stretching back decades, it is difficult – or at least very expensive – to know what can actually be reused safely. We now make this process smoother than would otherwise have been possible.

The market is maturing and much is happening

But where are we today? It is clear that the industry has not yet reached full maturity in this area. At the same time, our member surveys and dialogues with construction companies show enormous development. EU legislation is being developed; for example, the Ecodesign Regulation includes requirements relating to reuse and refurbishment, while digital product passports are under development. Companies have begun to shift their focus towards reuse, and awareness is



growing of circular measures that can deliver major climate benefits with minimal loss of resources.

Although most reuse today takes place internally within companies, things are beginning to happen. It mainly involves retaining existing material during refurbishment or moving resources between projects within the same company. The next step – creating scale at societal level – requires external infrastructure. The industry needs hubs and storage facilities where reused material can be traded with the same predictability as new products.

Questions that still need answers

Patience is required, as many critical questions remain. How should warranties be handled? Who is responsible if problems arise afterwards? Quality assurance and allocation of responsibility are two central pieces of the puzzle that need clear solutions before the market can scale up in earnest. Today, large-scale reuse is often too complicated a process to justify financially. Lead times become longer, and the required volumes of material are rarely available at exactly the right time.

At its core, an entirely new business area is needed. But external solutions are not enough; companies themselves need to integrate reuse much earlier into planning and design. Instead of reacting to material needs, we need to become proactive and consider what construction projects will require one or even several years ahead. Only then will reuse have a fair chance of working in practice. Another important aspect is to create a clear plan for future dismantling already at the new-build stage, making it possible for more materials to circulate in the future.

“We need to give future reuse projects the chance to succeed, and the reuse work needs to begin the moment a new construction project is planned.”

The way forward for Byggvarubedömningen

How can Byggvarubedömningen contribute further to making reuse work? If we allow ourselves to speculate, one possibility would be to become even more active in requesting dismantling instructions in the Logbook and thereby encourage more reuse. We need to give future reuse projects the chance to succeed, and the reuse work needs to begin the moment a new construction project is planned.

Another important area is making it easier for logbooks to be transferred between property owners and property managers. Active, living logbooks are key; an inactive logbook risks losing relevance after only a few years without updates. Above all, our work on this year’s report has underlined the importance of content declarations, because reuse entails a risk if we do not know the content of the building materials we are reusing. Without these logbooks, much of the health, environmental and economic rationale for reuse would be lost.

The foundation for large-scale reuse has been laid. All we need to do now is keep building. ■



In Byggvarubedömningen's 2026 industry report, we focus on large-scale reuse: observations, the challenges that exist and how the industry can scale up reuse in the future. We have spoken to the public, our member companies and construction companies working on reuse projects, and here we present their answers along with our own insights and reflections.

Byggvarubedömningen's vision is to contribute to the development of non-toxic and sustainable construction for both current and future generations.

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