



# European Construction Sector Observatory

Policy fact sheet

**Romania**

Green Building Professional

Training and Certification Programme

Thematic objectives 2 & 3

October 2021



## In a nutshell

Implementing body	Romania Green Building Council (ROGBC)
Key features & objectives	Modular training programme designed to impart the basic principles and cross/inter-disciplinary skills required to undertake and deliver green building projects.
Implementation date	2010 – ongoing
Targeted beneficiaries	Construction and related industry professionals, as well as other interested individuals (e.g. students).
Targeted sub-sectors	All sub-sectors and associated sectors (e.g. legal, financial).
Budget (EUR)	Not published. Funded by the ROGBC.
Good practice	★★★★☆
Transferability	★★★★☆

The Romanian Green Building Council (ROGBC) was established in Romania in 2008. The Green Building Professional – Certificate and Training Programme (GBP) was their first project.

Launched in 2010, the GBP scheme was designed to impart green building skills and knowledge to a significant number of local stakeholders<sup>1</sup>. The initiative was based on sustainable construction development models from other countries and was implemented during a flourishing period for the Romanian construction sector<sup>2</sup>.

**The GBP Programme is financed by ROGBC's own resources and does not receive any external funding. The course fees are paid for by trainees. The fees aim to ensure the delivery of high-quality training<sup>3</sup>.**

**The GBP Programme is designed to provide trainees from a wide range of professions and backgrounds with multi-disciplined training on sustainable green buildings and construction. It aims to provide trainees with the skills they need to undertake and delivery successful green building projects.**

GBP training and certification is intended to complement, not replace, academic qualifications that construction and related sector professionals may have. GBP courses provide trainees with complementary skills and competences that they can then apply in green building projects. GBP certification also offers additional know-how to help professionals to obtain internationally recognised LEED and BREEAM certification<sup>4</sup>.

**The GBP Programme is a private initiative that is helping to shape the Romanian green buildings sector. The programme has also been adopted by other Green Building Councils in Europe.**

First offered in Bucharest and Cluj, the GBP Programme has trained more than 1,000 construction and related industry professionals. In 2015, the ROGBC opened a new branch in Iasi County and, as a result, has managed to extend the GBP programme into the Moldova region.

GBP training and certification has helped to increase the number of green buildings across the largest cities in Romania over the last decade. Trainee feedback has been very positive and the programme has helped to create a community and network of professionals that share an interest in green building projects.

The programme provides useful and practical extracurricular learning that complements academic course material. GBP courses offer original content that enables participants to gain valuable cross-disciplinary insights on green building requirements, techniques, methods and benefits.

## 1.

## General description

The Green Building Professional Certification and Training Programme (GBP) was launched in 2010 by the Romanian Green Building Council (ROGBC).

GBP training is cross-disciplinary and is designed to provide construction and related sector professionals of any experience level with access to green building skills<sup>5</sup>.

Certification is an important component of GBP training because it formally recognises the competencies of Romanian specialists that have completed the training. To obtain the certification, trainees must complete ten course modules, including eight mandatory modules and two optional modules<sup>6</sup>.

The GBP training programme is financially supported by the resources of the ROGBC<sup>7</sup>. Course fees are set at an affordable rate and are payable by those that join the courses.

The Romania Green Building Council (ROGBC) was established in 2008. It is an association of businesses and operates as a non-profit organisation.

**Green Building Professional is a business-led training and certification programme that aims to develop a qualified green building knowledge and skills base within the Romanian construction sector and across all relevant stakeholders. The goal is to provide the knowledge and skills needed to create a market and demand for green buildings.**

In the beginning, one of the main challenges for the ROGBC was to overcome scepticism about green buildings among Romanian construction companies, developers, investors and even occupiers.

The ROGBC's main activities are focused on encouraging market, legislative and educational conditions to promote high performance, sustainable and profitable construction. ROGBC activities are well-aligned with ongoing government work to adopt better legislation and improve energy efficiency in the construction sector<sup>8</sup>.

The ROGBC is tasked with helping the construction sector and related industries to become more environmentally responsible, with a view to turning Romania into a reference point in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE)<sup>9</sup>.

The ROGBC also provides specialised training to help real estate developers to understand and acknowledge the advantages that the green building concept offer – e.g. better design and lower costs. This focus is even more relevant because the GBP training programme has been designed and launched by the business-led ROGBC. In fact, in 2009, a year before the launch of the GBP, there were already six investors in Romania that were interested in gaining certification for green buildings.

**The GBP aims to bring together all construction and related industry stakeholders to learn about the basic principles and benefits of green buildings<sup>10</sup>.**

Another important goal for the GBP is to create synergies and improve communication between different categories of professionals, from investors to architects and construction engineers. This is viewed as an essential approach for the successful implementation of the green building concept<sup>11</sup>.

The GBP training programme is structured around eight mandatory courses and four optional courses, as shown in Table 1. Certification requires trainees to complete at least ten course modules, including the eight mandatory modules and at least two out of the four optional modules<sup>12</sup>.

Table 1: GBP course structure and modules

Type	Title
Mandatory	Legal Requirements and Voluntary Certification for Green Buildings in Romania
	Green Design Principles
	Financial Valuation of Green Buildings
	Managing Green Building Projects
	Sustainable Site Selection and Management
	Lighting Design and Smart Buildings
	Sustainable Materials and Resources
	Green Building Envelopes
Optional	The Future of Facilities Management / Creating Greener Workspaces
	Landscape and Exterior Design
	Circular Economy
	Green Home Certification

Source: ROGBC<sup>13</sup>

Initially, optional courses included topics such as: IT tools for green design; Transport nodes, roads, vehicles and electrical recharging; HVAC and hot water solutions; Energy management and integration with renewable energy sources; Water preservation and efficiency<sup>14</sup>.

Over time, the programme has updated its curriculum to ensure a better fit with stakeholder needs and the ROGBC's latest projects<sup>15</sup>. Recently, the programme has introduced some new courses. Examples include: NZEB building concept; Health and indoor air quality in green buildings; Sustainable interior design in the circular economy context<sup>16</sup>.

All courses are made available in Romanian and English. Course modules feature theoretical training and practical case studies, each lasting 6 hours in duration. Instructors conduct individual evaluations and decide whether a participant has passed a training course. Each course curriculum is periodically evaluated and updated, as required by the ROGBC training group, to ensure the delivery of high-quality training content. The frequency with which courses are run depends on demand<sup>17</sup>.

Courses can be run as often as necessary to ensure equal access and maximum participation<sup>18</sup>.

Typically, two GBP training programmes are run per year. They are normally held in spring and autumn<sup>19</sup>. The following types of professionals are the main target audience of the GBP programme:

- Architects;
- Engineers;
- Business;
- Finance;
- Legal;
- Building contractors;
- Materials and Technology suppliers;
- Building administrators<sup>20</sup>.

Students are also welcome to attend GBP courses at preferential rates. All interested parties can register for GBP courses on the ROGBC website. Course fees depend on a participant's status, as shown in Table 2<sup>21</sup>.

Table 2: GBP course fees

Participant type	Payment type	Fee per course
ROGBC Member	Advance payment for 10 courses	EUR 20 (RON 100)
ROGBC Member	Single course payment	EUR 30 (RON 150)
Non-member	Advance payment for 10 courses	EUR 30 (RON 150)
Non-member	Single course payment	EUR 40 (RON 200)
Student	Advance payment for 10 courses	EUR 10 (RON 50)
Student	Single course payment	EUR 16 (RON 80)

Source: ROGBC<sup>22</sup>

Despite the fact that the ROGBC has formed partnerships with the Romanian Government to deliver various projects over the past twelve years, government funding support for the GBP Programme has not been forthcoming<sup>23</sup>.

Over recent years, some GBP courses have been offered free of charge, as many lecturers involved in the programme are volunteers. Financial support for the courses is drawn from other ongoing projects managed by the ROGBC<sup>24</sup>.

## 2.

## Achieved or expected results

The Green Building Professional (GBP) Training and Certification Programme has grown organically since its launch in 2010.

Over the last decade, the GBP has produced some significant results:

- In 2009, interest in green buildings was fairly low among real estate developers;
- Since 2010, GBP programme has managed to create a community of professionals in the construction sector and motivate them to find innovative and sustainable solutions for green buildings in Bucharest, Cluj and Iasi;
- By 2018, more than half of the office buildings in large Romanian cities had been awarded green certificates;
- Over 1,000 trainees have attended GBP courses;
- 120 professionals have gained a GBP certificate;
- The Construction21 portal has become a by-product of GBP, increasing the transferability level of the programme to other Green Building Councils in Europe.

In 2009, ROGBC estimated that only 30% of Romanian real estate developers were interested in green buildings. To create a market for green buildings, GBP identified a need for awareness-raising and training. The challenge involved:

- Changing buyer and occupier perceptions;
- Increasing the demand for green buildings and construction;
- Encouraging investors to unlock funds;
- Incentivising developers to use available funds for green construction and engage contractors to build them.

GBP created a platform to enable stakeholders to share knowledge, build collaborative partnerships

at local, regional and international level, and access/promote business opportunities<sup>25</sup>.

**GBP programme was simultaneously launched in Bucharest and Cluj in 2010. Five years later, a new branch was opened in Iasi and continued the programme for interested stakeholders in the Moldova region<sup>26</sup>.**

The ROGBC has 21 founding members. It is made up of businesses from a range of sectors that include construction, architecture, materials and manufacturing, real estate, business, law and finance<sup>27</sup>. ROGBC membership has increased since the launch of the GBP Programme.

Since the launch of the GBP programme, effort has been made to increase the marketability of professional green building services<sup>28</sup>. GBP courses continued to be offered annually and are widely promoted, mostly in professional magazines<sup>29</sup>.

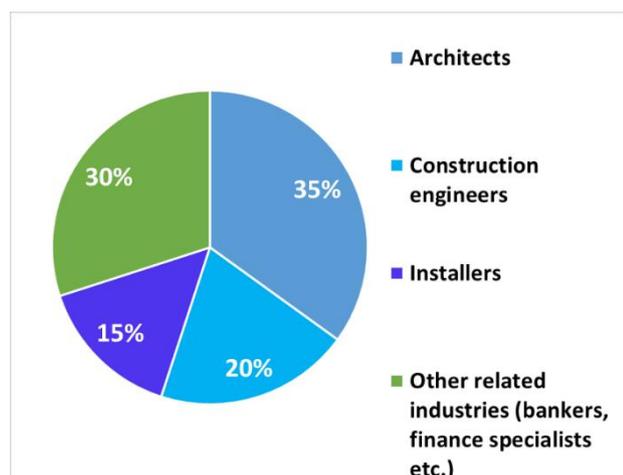
Over 1,000 professionals have participated in the GBP training programme<sup>30</sup>. A number of certified trainees have subsequently become lecturers on courses such as "Sustainable Materials and Resources". One example is a director of a construction company<sup>31</sup>.

Since 2010, approximately 120 participants have obtained a GBP certificate. Currently, there are another 200 participants in the process of gaining this certificate. Most of the participants are from Bucharest, although trainees from Cluj, Timisoara and Iasi are increasing in number. There are also another 20 participants from other countries who are currently completing the GBP training offered by ROGBC<sup>32</sup>.

An estimation based on professional categories of participants who obtained the certificate shows that a majority of the trainees are architects. Professionals from other related sectors (business, finance, banking, legal, etc.) also make up a very significant share, as shown in Figure 1. The

involvement of broad construction and related sector stakeholders is a positive sign that green buildings and the concept of sustainability are gaining traction in Romania<sup>33</sup>.

Figure 1: GBP certification: share of professional categories



Source: Interview with GBP trainer<sup>34</sup>

In 2013, ROGBC and the Construction21 platform developed a European database that contains all green building certifications. It includes the schedule and details of upcoming GBP courses in Romania and across Europe. Professionals are able to access the platform and compare GBP course curricula in a number of European countries<sup>35</sup>.

The GBP programme has also had a positive spill-over effect. It is the first Romanian initiative designed to help professionals:

- Gain basic insights, knowledge, skills and qualifications on green construction;
- Apply these principles in current and future projects;
- Obtain LEED and BREEAM certifications.

In the end, the programme was expected to increase the number of green buildings and their level of sustainability, eventually transforming Romania into a regional leader in this field<sup>36</sup>.

Over the last decade, the ROGBC has become a local market leader in the field of green buildings and an established member of the World Green Building Council.

Some of the benefits for gaining a GBP Certificate include:

- Accreditation for construction professionals, providing formal recognition of the skills they have acquired and that qualify them to successfully deliver a green building project;
- Basic competencies for professionals to help them and their projects and clients to obtain a high score in Energy Audits and other private and voluntary building certification processes (LEED; BREEAM, German Building Certificate)<sup>37</sup>;
- Valuable new perspectives on the future development of the construction sector.

**The ROGBC has become a reference point in Central and Eastern Europe region. Many other European branches have now adopted the GBP Programme.**

The GBP Programme is helping to drive the construction sector towards a greener and more sustainable future. Over the years, the GBP Programme and related ROGBC initiatives have led to a rising number of green buildings across the country. In 2018, around half of the construction projects built in Romania qualified for a green certificate<sup>38</sup>. The GBP Programme has also paved the way for other ROGBC projects such as: residential building certifications; advantageous mortgage schemes for green construction; and programmes designed to help professionals to become energy auditors<sup>39</sup>.

**The GBP Programme has successfully developed an educational platform that has been adopted by 13 other Green Building Councils across Europe<sup>40</sup>. Currently, ROGBC is developing an online platform for the GBP programme to bring together global professionals to learn and share knowledge about green buildings and sustainability<sup>41</sup>.**

**In 2021, the government has also launched a special working group to analyse sustainable construction specialisations and training mechanisms. The end goal is to eventually include these specialisations in the Romanian nomenclature of occupations<sup>42</sup>.**

## 3.

## Perspectives and lessons learned

### Building green means better planning, not additional spending.

A former GBP trainee that works in construction and is now a GBP trainer is very appreciative of the training received. The former trainee highlights some key benefits: learning the basic building principles of green construction; while also looking forward to new, innovative possibilities that can decrease costs and improve living and working conditions and experience. Green buildings are strongly focused on creating a better future for the next generation. At the same time, the concept is also a viable and valuable business opportunity. The former trainee concludes by saying that Romania is ready for green buildings<sup>43</sup>.

### Synergic partnerships, with broad stakeholder involvement, are key for green building projects.

An architect (and former trainee) believes that the success of a green building project is measured by the equal implication and dedication of all stakeholders required in a construction project. There is a need for an approach that creates synergies across all professions in the construction industry. The former trainee acknowledges the importance of communication and the practice of sharing experiences during the training programme with representatives from related domains<sup>44</sup>.

### The GBP Programme curriculum complements architecture degree curricula offered by universities.

From an educational perspective, the GBP Programme is a relevant and useful addition to the knowledge already acquired in construction, architecture, engineering academic environments. Sustainable building concepts, case studies and new

trends in the field are key for current and former students. Attending GBP courses has also increased awareness about successful, real green building projects across Romania. The future is considered to be a “revolution of green buildings”<sup>45</sup>.

### GBP’s greatest achievement is the creation of a network of professionals.

The Romanian construction sector has become greener and more sustainable since the Green Building Council was established in Romania. The GBP Programme has managed to create a network and a new generation of professionals who demand higher, better and greener construction standards<sup>46</sup>.

### Public servants involved in aspects related to green building authorisation should also join the GBP training programme.

As sustainability and the green transition in the construction sector become more of a reality and a requirement, there is an increasing need for certain public servants to also receive information, training and knowledge about these concepts. Today, this specialisation is more than necessary, given the fact that certain public institutions are required to authorise green building projects and evaluate the energy efficiency of buildings<sup>47</sup>.

### The GBP Programme is increasing green building knowledge growth and interest to the benefit of current and future professionals.

Programme trainees not only acquire important green building skills, they are also incentivised to get involved in green building projects. Students are also able to interact and network with professionals, increasing their chances of finding work or internship opportunities<sup>48</sup>.

## 4.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The Green Building Professional (GBP) Training and Certification Programme is a successful initiative. In 2010, ROGBC concluded that the Romanian construction sector needed to be redirected towards a sustainable, but no less profitable built environment. GBP represented an essential step towards achieving this goal.

Over the years, the course structure has changed in order to train participants on the latest technologies and construction techniques regarding green buildings. Today, there is a network of professionals working towards extending this practice across Romania.

Key results include:

- Over 1,000 professionals trained;
- 120 professionals certified;
- More than half of the office buildings in large Romanian cities had been awarded green certificates;
- An educational platform has been developed and adopted by 13 other Green Building Councils across Europe<sup>49</sup>;
- A GBP programme platform is currently being developed to support broad stakeholder learning and knowledge sharing<sup>50</sup>;
- It has motivated the government to launch a special working group to assess sustainable construction specialisations and training mechanisms<sup>51</sup>.

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed the courses from an offline to an online format, which has helped to attract the interest of more professionals, especially in the finance and banking sector. The programme has become more accessible, removing the need for travel costs. However, the online format has also reduced trainee engagement, which may limit the impact of networking activities<sup>52</sup>.

Looking forward, two recommendations are suggested to help improve the reach and impact of the GBP Training and Certification Programme:

- Consideration should be given to integrating the GBP curriculum and certification scheme with national curricula and certification systems (e.g. higher education construction and architecture programmes);
- The Romanian Government should consider officially recognising the GBP certificate to make it easier for qualified GBP professionals to contribute to green building projects. It would also help to improve overall alignment with the objectives of the European Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus Initiative.

**Overall, the GBP Training and Certification Programme is rated a '4-star good practice measure' on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).**

This score is based on a number of factors. The GBP Programme has created a growing community of qualified green building professionals and interested stakeholders. It promotes green building and sustainable construction concepts and it continues to facilitate knowledge sharing and networking and collaboration. The key challenge in the coming years will be to ramp up participation levels to increase its impact on related sectors.

**The GBP Training and Certification Programme is rated a '4-star transferable measure' on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).**

This score is based on the adaptable format of the programme and the fact that it has already been implemented by other Green Building Councils in other European countries, such as Hungary, Croatia, the Netherlands and Poland.

# Endnotes

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