



UEPG at Green Week 2015

Site visit: Aggregates and biodiversity
EU stakeholders learn about compatibility of aggregates extraction and biodiversity

UEPG speaks at Green Week
President Jesús Ortiz and Secretary General Dirk Fincke deliver messages

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UEPG at Green Week 2015

Never before the European Aggregates Industry, recognised as the biggest non-energy extractive industry, had been so visible to the highest level of EU decision-makers. UEPG promoted the compatibility of aggregates extraction with biodiversity during Green Week 2015, the biggest European Environmental Conference. This included an official satellite event (site visit), two UEPG speakers, with a UEPG stand at Green Week and many UEPG Members attending sessions and networking with EU stakeholders.

Site visit: Aggregates and biodiversity

UEPG and its Belgian Member FEDIEX, together with Birdlife and CEMBUREAU, organised a site visit to the SAGREX (HeidelbergCement) aggregates extraction site Quenast. Representatives from DG Environment, DG Growth, the NGOs Bird Life International and Friends of the Earth joined in to learn more about the achievements and contribution of aggregates producing companies to biodiversity and environmental management.

UEPG Vice-President Thilo Juchem welcomed the group underlining that aggregates

extraction is not only compatible with biodiversity, but has the potential to create it. Plant Manager Vincent van Overbeke and HeidelbergCement Biodiversity Expert Dido Gosse presented the projects developed at Quenast before going into the field.



Welcoming visitors to the satellite event
UEPG Vice-President Thilo Juchem addressing the delegation at Quenast, Belgium.

Visitors were guided across the site in two separate groups by biologists explaining the different habitats, plant and animal species. New concepts such as temporary nature were explained and how companies could provide benefits to nature before, during and after aggregates extraction.

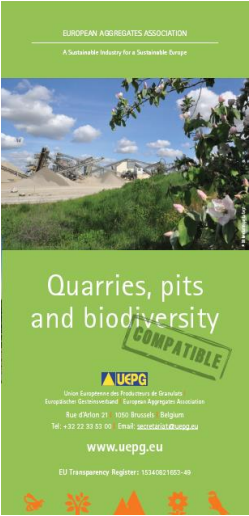


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NGOs and European Commission on-site
EU stakeholders visiting the SAGREX aggregates extraction site Quenast, Belgium.



For that purpose and at the occasion of the Green Week 2015, UEPG published a brochure "[Quarries, pits and biodiversity](#)" available on the UEPG website. Full UEPG Members will receive the printable high-quality file on request. The brochure provides facts and figures about the European

Aggregates Industry and explains how quarries and pits create high-value habitats and are compatible with biodiversity.



Aggregates extraction and biodiversity
Benoit Lussis (left), Chair of the UEPG Biodiversity Task Force with Strahil Christov from the Biodiversity Unit in DG Environment, European Commission.

UEPG speaks at Green Week

UEPG President Jesús Ortiz, General Manager Spain and Director Concrete and Aggregates Competence Center for North-West Europe, Mediterranean Basin and Africa for HeidelbergCement presented UEPG's activities and outlined his companies' performance on environmental management including the biodiversity and monitoring

indicators, the training to employees and the "Internal Guideline for biodiversity management in quarries and pits" of HeidelbergCement.



Measuring and monitoring progress
Jesús Ortiz, UEPG President at the Business Roundtable of Green Week 2015.

Being asked at a Business Roundtable moderated by Jonathan Hughes, Chief Executive of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, what the Aggregates Industry could further do to help biodiversity, Mr Ortiz identified illegal extraction as a major problem addressed by UEPG.



Calling to overcome outdated images
Dirk Fincke, UEPG Secretary General at the Mid-Term Review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

UEPG Secretary General Dirk Fincke was invited to speak at a Panel addressing the mid-term review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy. He emphasised the need to overcome the outdated image that industry destroys environment and that NGOs are blocking economic development. The numerous projects of aggregates producing companies with NGOs are demonstrating that there are benefits to be gained when cooperating. Like UEPG President Ortiz, Dirk Fincke offered NGOs to combat together illegal extraction which harms environment and the competitiveness of the industry.

Great visibility with a UEPG stand

Thanks to its Members, UEPG was able to offer a whole range of high quality publications in several languages, videos, sample of aggregates, T-shirts, bags, games, and also showcased winners of the UEPG 2013 Sustainable Development Awards of the biodiversity and environmental categories. Visitors had the possibility to try Protective Personal Equipment showing that environmental management goes hand in hand with a sound health and safety policy.



What would you like to know about aggregates?
Miette Dechelle, UEPG Public Affairs Manager at the UEPG stand at Green Week 2015.

Being one of the three business representatives out of almost 50 exhibitors present at Green Week, the UEPG stand attracted many high-level visitors including the European Commissioner for Environment Karmenu Vella, Director-General Karl Falkenberg, Director Pia Bucella, several Heads of Unit and Policy Officers from DG Environment, the Director of the European Environment Agency Hans Bruyninckx, the Luxembourgish Minister of Environment taking the upcoming EU Presidency Carole Dieschbourg, representatives from the



Discussing future policies: Natura 2000, Circular Economy and Mining Waste
Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (left) in discussion with UEPG Past-President Arnaud Colson (right) and UEPG Secretary General Dirk Fincke at the UEPG stand.



Natura 2000: Quo vadis?
Sandrine Devos, UEPG Public Affairs Manager with Thierry de l'Escaille, Secretary General of ELO.

The area where all could meet and agree, was the fact that the implementation of the Directives was problematic, which differs significantly between regions and sectors. Agriculture, with its large land-use, was in the spotlight as many felt that the sector has not provided enough efforts yet. The role of the Aggregates Industry was, on the contrary, underlined as a good example of cooperation with the NGOs and as a sector able to do its part for biodiversity.

There is no doubt that the ongoing public consultation will be one of the most popular ones and that the results will be analysed carefully.

What next?

The Green Week 2015 has shown the opportunity to enlarge the UEPG network. UEPG and its Members had been invited to attend several stakeholder meetings including the Polish B@B Platform taking place on 16 June in Krakow, the World Forum on Natural Capital on 23-24 November in Edinburgh or the First Annual Congress of the International Land Conservation Network on 19-21 October in Berlin.

UEPG met key EU stakeholders working on Natura 2000, Biodiversity, Marine Aggregates, Waste, Recycling and other Environment and PR relevant topics for aggregates producers.

During this Green Week, UEPG was confirmed as a recognised and trusted EU stakeholder and the Aggregates Industry as a local, sustainable and responsible industry. Green Week 2015 allowed UEPG and its Members to illustrate success stories for the wealth of Environment and Biodiversity in Europe.

European Parliament, the Joint Research Centre, national and regional Ministries, local governments, academia, NGOs, EU Trade Associations and UEPG Members as well as a large public.

polarised the whole event. Indeed, the NGO communities have never been so mobilised and vocal in expressing its strong opposition to what may be seen as a threat of lowering standards of the EU Nature legislation, while other stakeholders are split, between the fear of legal uncertainty and the opportunity to cut red tape and to obtain more balance between the environmental, social and economic pillars of sustainable development.

During the Opening session of the Green Week 2015, European Commission First Vice-President Frans Timmermans reiterated his commitment towards nature protection, but highlighted the need to modernise legislation, without lowering environmental standards. Environment Commissioner Vella refused to express publicly whether he was in favour of a revision or not. This did not convince the audience and advocates of the Directives, who were numerous at the Green Week and who used this public forum as a platform to save the Directives.

Birdlife, in particular, warned that re-opening the Directives would lead to decades of destroying efforts. Some economic sectors expressed the same point of view, including the European Landowners' Organisation.



UEPG – a recognised EU stakeholder
Karl Falkenberg, Director General of DG Environment (right) with Dirk Fincke, UEPG Secretary General.

Natura 2000 fit for purpose?

Although the European Commission states strongly that the current Fitness Check of the Birds and Habitats Directives ("Natura 2000" directives) is a regular exercise of the REFIT and that it is too early to be discussing a revision, the topic was on all the lips and largely debated during the Green Week. The potential revision of Natura 2000 has