Sustainable Development in the European Aggregates Industry

FOR THE BENEFITS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS
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I very much welcome the UEPG Sustainable Development brochure published on the occasion of UEPG’s 20th Anniversary.

This publication illustrates the way in which a dynamic European industrial sector can successfully combine competitiveness and sustainability.

The achievements presented here illustrate very well the guiding principle underpinning the Growth and Jobs Strategy. My deep conviction is that competitiveness and sustainability do not contradict but complement each other.

With 13,500 companies across Europe, the European Aggregates Industry demonstrates how an industrial sector comprising many SMEs can provide essential materials in a responsible way to meet Europe’s needs.

At a time when competitiveness is at the forefront of the European Commission’s strategy, this brochure contributes to improving our understanding of the sector’s sustainability performance and of its future challenges.

Günter Verheugen
Vice-President of the European Commission
Building Foundations for Europe’s future

Since 1987, the European Aggregates Association - UEPG - has represented the European Aggregates producers on economic, technical, environmental and health & safety issues. Twenty years after its creation, UEPG is the European voice of 21 national associations, with 13,500 companies, 3 billion tonnes of materials produced yearly, and around 28,000 operating sites involving more than 350,000 employees.

Few industries make a greater contribution to the quality of our lives than the aggregates industry. Our materials, which provide the foundations of all private and public infrastructures, play a vital role in contributing to the welfare of our European fellow citizens.

Our industry has fully embraced the principles of sustainable development: we are committed to operating with care and concern for our employees, our neighbours and for society as a whole. We believe our relationships with our stakeholders are essential to the future of our sector in the same way as our products are indispensable to society. This is why managing responsibly our economic, social and environmental impacts is a challenge we have tackled for many years, with remarkable results.

In the economic field, it is our responsibility to supply aggregates everywhere in Europe. Our sector sustains European society not just through the end-uses of its products but through its inputs to the local communities in which it operates.

In the social field, the health & safety of our employees, contractors and visitors is our highest priority. Our companies also strive to maintain and develop a well trained and professional workforce. Finally, they play a significant part in sustaining local communities, bringing dynamism to the life of rural areas.

In the environmental field, we acknowledge our role as land managers to prepare sites for environmental, agricultural, recreational, landscape or other community use during and after the operations in harmony with local communities.

Overall, our sector has made significant progress over the years in its economic, environmental and social performance and we now have a much clearer understanding of our sustainability footprint. We can draw on successful initiatives such as the UEPG Sustainable Development Awards and our contribution to the EU Sustainable Development Indicators (SDIs).

I would like to thank UEPG members and our General Secretariat for their outstanding work and involvement during the last 20 years. Together, they have enabled our European association to become what it is today, a trusted partner of the EU Institutions on any issue impacting our sector.

Didier Audibert
UEPG President
EuropEan aggrEgatEs association

The European Aggregates Association, UEPG, represents 13,500 companies and 28,000 sites with a total production of 3 billion tons per year. In this context it should be noted that Europe provides over 23% of the world-wide production of sand, gravel and crushed rock.

More than 350,000 people are directly employed (1.3 million indirectly) by the European aggregates industry. Many sites are based in rural regions where secure jobs are scarce. The companies are therefore valuable partners in the local and regional labour market.

Aggregates and recycled materials from construction and demolition waste are relatively low cost products. This means that on both environmental and economic grounds local sites serve local markets. The average delivery distance is less than 39 km.

The extraction of aggregates for construction has a positive impact on the local and regional economy. The investment of the aggregates industry benefits the communities and/or the regional authorities. Aggregates are needed mainly by the construction industry:

- 400 tons of aggregates for an average home
- 3,000 tons of aggregates for a school
- 30,000 tons of aggregates for one km of motorway
- 90,000 tons of aggregates for one km of high-speed railway track.

“No construction without aggregates”. This sentence remains true. The construction industry produces a very important part of the Gross Domestic Product (10-12%). It is like an “employment motor”. The aggregates industry is the most important supplier to the construction industry.

SECURING ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Aggregates are essential to the lives of every citizen in the European Union. They provide homes, offices, schools, hospitals, transport infrastructure as well as power station desulphurisation. They are also used for roads, bridges, tunnels, airports, dams, railway ballast and for flood defence and geology dictates where they are to be found.

Of all the minerals aggregates are by far the most available and most used (by volume and tonnage) as well as being the least expensive. Transport is a large component of the end price unless they are specialised aggregates, for example, ones with a high polished stone value, which is essential for skid resistance on roads. On average the price doubles at a radius of delivery of about 40 kilometres. Local sourcing is therefore a key criterion.

In order to achieve a sustainable supply, access to these potential resources must be maintained. It is important therefore that access is not be denied unnecessarily, for example, by artificial constraints such as environmental designations, where the apparent environmental advantage of not extracting is outweighed by the economic and social need for the minerals, or by sterilising the supply through other development, such as housing and factories.

Aggregates extraction has high start-up costs and are long term. Obtaining planning consents can take up an additional ten years. National supply strategies, therefore, need to embrace long term planning for a continued sustainable supply of these essential materials.
DEVELOPING EUROPEAN STANDARDS

Aggregates are a basic ingredient in concrete, mortar and asphalt. Aggregates also have unbound applications such as drainage and aggregates come under the Construction Products Directive. This wide field of application requires standardisation of natural and manufactured aggregates, by specifying aggregate performance requirements, sampling and methods of testing. This is the work of the European Standardisation Organisation (CEN) Technical Committee on Aggregates.

At the outset of its work in 1989, the Technical Committee decided to formulate product standards based on the different end uses of aggregates, sharing common test methods. It was further considered essential that the repeatability and reproducibility of test methods should be validated through precision testing and the recent series of cross-border testing. The publication of all test methods and product specifications relating to the EC mandated work and the implementation of CE-marking in 2004 was the result of the work of many experts from different countries and the process of standardisation is still in progress.

The UEPG Technical Committee is the platform to prepare the technical decisions and activities of UEPG. All proposals and decisions are based on a free, open and professional debate among its members. The following major tasks are defined for future work:

- ensuring full consistency between harmonised European aggregate standards,
- using its influence to reduce the number of test methods which is an essential concern of the producers,
- monitoring the different opinions on a national level concerning the binding character of CE-marking and the further developments in this field,
- engaging in the field of regulated substances as part of the essential requirement “Hygiene, health and environment” which is seen to have increasing importance, and
- developing activities for precise proposals for research work in the field of aggregates.

UEPG makes a positive contribution to the research and technical development. One important example is its participation in the European Technology Platform on Sustainable Mineral Resources. This was established in 2006 with the following aims:

- to reshape a traditional industry from being resource-driven to a knowledge-driven industry
- to foster new and better jobs, particularly at the level of small and medium size companies and in the New Member States
- to supply and secure the mineral resources needed by the European economy, while minimising the related environmental footprints
- to strengthen competitiveness of the technology of the mineral industry, and
- to add value for customers and the society.

Examples of topics related to the aggregates industry, include (according to European Technology Platform on Sustainable Mineral Resources Strategic Research Agenda):

- full resource utilisation
- energy optimised fragmentation and extraction
- progress towards fully automated extraction
- sustainable and competitive extraction systems towards zero impact
- future aggregate products related to the construction industry

Besides these topics there is an on-going research project on alkali-silica reactivity related to both, the aggregate, cement- and concrete industry which are monitored by UEPG.
ENSURING HEALTH & SAFETY

Health and safety at work is one of the three main pillars on which sustainable development in the aggregates industry is based. Therefore, UEPG, member associations, and especially for aggregates companies at their sites, the prevention of occupational risks is an essential part of the extraction process.

UEPG produced a Good Practice Guide on health and safety at work, with the involvement of more than 20 member countries. This provided many useful case studies.

Close relations are maintained with the European Commission through active participation in the Standing Working Party for the Extractive Industry, and as a specialist adviser on the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at work.

UEPG participated a Mutisectorial Dialogue Platform for Respirable Crystalline Silica, promoted by the European Commission. This platform successfully reached an agreement about the reduction of the exposure of workers to respirable crystalline silica, applying a Good Practice Guide. The control and monitoring of this agreement, is carried out through a Council, on which UEPG is represented.

UEPG participated in the 2006 European Minerals forum on Social Challenges. This forum covered preventing occupational accidents and reducing noise, vibration and dust.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

The acceptability of quarries has become a major issue for the aggregates industry. Dialogue with local stakeholders is nowadays completely integrated in quarry management. It starts with the opening of a site and stays to be an important tool to ensure smooth cohabitation. It is also essential for the site restoration to determine the most advantageous planning, environmentally and socially. Dialogue is well perceived by the population as it responds to their demands.

The importance of dialogue: A French case study

Representatives of local communities report: “Our relationship with the operator was quite tense at the beginning” says Henry Viols, in charge of environment in Villeneuve-lès-Maguelone (Hérault), “but working together has shown that economic and environment could go hand in hand”. A local committee, which was composed by numerous citizens and associations, have gathered eight times in eight months. “Thanks to the dialogue”, Henry Viols says, “an important step has been made by the citizens and the operator to agree on extraction operations respecting the environment and citizen. I think we found a good compromise.”

In Vignoc (Ile-et-Vilaine) the mayor Jean Le Gall, observes: “We never heard people complaining about the quarry. This is due to an ongoing dialogue between the representatives, the population and the operators. In addition, the site plays a key role in supplying the Rennes area with aggregates.”

Jean Untermair, Mayor of Montceaux-Ragny (Saône-et-Loire), is also Professor in environmental law, Director of the Environmental Law Institute and Chair of the Society of nature protection. As a representative of a local community, he worked in partnership with UNICEM for the regional Charter on quarry restoration. He compliments the partnership: “I am very much in favour of this approach launched by the Charter. It enables us to anticipate conflicts, introducing a real dialogue between industry and its interlocutors, in particular at the local level.”
PROVIDING JOBS

UEPG is represented in 21 European countries producing 3 billion tonnes of aggregates per year. This means 28,000 sites providing 350,000 people with a job.

According to a study of the Austrian Institute for industrial economy 13 jobs are created for each million tonne of aggregates produced. Through the investment by the raw material sector of 1 million Euro - 18 jobs are secured.

Many companies are operating in rural areas which are structurally weak. Providing jobs in these areas the aggregates industry is having a positive effect on the labour market.

CONTRIBUTING TO EUROPE’S BUILT AND NATURAL HERITAGE

From time immemorial stone has associated with human progress – from the Pantheon in classical Rome to the city of arts and sciences in today's Valencia.

From sand and stone collected from the shores from which man derived his first utensils, to stone used to build homes and to the hard rock, laboriously extracted from the mountains, used to raise monuments and the masterpieces that still today represents the heritage of the great civilisation of our past.

Aggregates have always formed the humble, but nevertheless essential elements of the structure of many buildings. On roads, essentially made by aggregates and stone, ideas and inventions have been circulated, making a major contribution to our European civilisation.

The route of Roman roads that determined the birth of our cities is still the axis of many intra European transport routes. In buildings of these times, essentially made from stone and aggregates, man learned to organise public affairs, to teach new generations, to administer justice, manage economics and to dream of new worlds.

The 43 meters wide Pantheon dome, made by light bound aggregates, is still there after 20 centuries to celebrate the glory of “all Gods” - the literal translation of the term Pantheon.

With the Portland cement discovery, we have seen a real revolution in building techniques. As a result, the industry has been able to meet the challenge of satisfying the new and growing demands of modern society.

So today, the use of mineral resources - improved through significant technological progress and by an environmental performance is still essential to meet the demand for construction of homes, offices, factories, infrastructures and the primary needs of living, working and moving.
Environmental Stewardship

IMPLEMENTING NATURA 2000

UEPG supports the objectives of Natura 2000 and is committed to contributing to Nature and Biodiversity conservation. UEPG Members are convinced that aggregates production is compatible with a favourable conservation status of habitat types and species.

However, the way Natura 2000 is implemented sometimes lacks clarity, and this is a major concern to us. This may have a significant impact on projects and needs of aggregates resources, which are essential materials for European living standards.

- Broadening the scope of consultation with stakeholders
  All major actors in rural areas including farmers, forest companies, and extractive industries should be systematically included in the consultation process and their needs should be taken more into account. Recommendations from cross-sectorial bodies or agencies are not sufficient on their own to obtain a fair assessment.

- Making assessment studies accessible to stakeholders
  Transparency is essential. As scientific and ecological criteria constitute the basis for assessment, studies and reports should be made accessible to all stakeholders and this should provide detailed references.

- Taking into account the importance of underground resources
  The importance of underground resources is not mentioned as such in the directives on “Habitats” and “Birds”.

This contributes to creating a legal uncertainty for the extractive industries, and might lead to a decrease in related local investments. Legal texts should indicate that extractive operations can be compatible with the objectives of Special Protected Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Contractual measures should be made possible for the extractive industries as for example in the case for agriculture and forest activities.

- Enabling more compensatory measures in case of temporary operations
  The decision to authorise compensatory measures is linked to imperative reasons of overriding public interest, which refer to situations where plans and projects prove to be indispensable. The proof of existence of imperative reasons of overriding public interest should also be demonstrated by operators and not only by administrative bodies. Operators should then provide a comprehensive impact assessment.
Aggregates are an indispensable part of daily life in Europe. Every European, young or old, consumes approximately 7 tonnes per year. The aggregates industry strives for supply security while dealing carefully with the environment and resources. The European Aggregates Association UEPG supports its members to intensify the cooperation with environmental NGOs.

**UEPG:**
Why does the World Wide Fund for Nature - WWF Austria cooperate with the Aggregates Industry?

**Dr. Hildegard AICHBERGER:**
Animal and plant species become extinct everyday. We irrecoverably lost 40% of the earth’s biodiversity since 1970. WWF has committed to fighting this worldwide loss. But this is not a small goal and we need strong partners if we want to be successful. In cooperation with WWF the aggregates industry has implemented many projects for the protection of endangered animals on the red list. This has created new habitats for rare species like Bee-eater, Stone Curlew, Eagle Owl, European Green Toad, Yellow-bellied Toad, Dragonfly and Natterjack Toad. Progressively, endangered species will regain habitats hardly existing anymore in the natural environment. Co-operation between WWF and companies of the raw materials sector is a primary example of how business and environmental protection can work together.

**UEPG:**
What is the incentive for the industry to cooperate in the field of environmental protection?

**Dr. Manfred ASAMER:**
We can only achieve sustainable business success if we take environmental concerns into account. That is why we joined forces with WWF. Because acting instead of reacting is our industry’s guiding principle and dealing responsibly with the environment.

**UEPG:**
How does WWF assist companies to achieve this goal?

**Dr. Hildegard AICHBERGER:**
WWF and its partner at the national level are providing interested companies the theoretical and practical know-how. Particularly successful are awards for most sustainable environment protection projects.

**UEPG:**
What is the profit for aggregate producer coming out of this cooperation?

**Dr. Manfred ASAMER:**
The aggregates industry may not be one of the funders of the environment protection movement. But we have undergone a conversion, and environmental protection is one of our essential commitments today. Gravel and Stone producers are continually breaking new ground in environmental and endangered species protection. And we are reporting more of these activities to the public than ever before. We feel that working with children and youths is especially important. Finally, everyone is profiting; endangered species are getting back their habitats, a better image helps the aggregates industry to operate efficiently, and we all can enjoy the achievements of a clean aggregates extraction of a modern civilisation.

**UEPG:**
Thank you for the interview.
CONTRIBUTING TO BIODIVERSITY

It is timely that UEPG is currently addressing the role of the European extractive industry with regard to biodiversity. With over 28,000 sites across Europe, it is uniquely placed to make a significant contribution to the promotion of biodiversity both during operations and after restoration of the sites. Extraction sites provide an ideal location for propagation of rare plants and other flora while fauna flourish uncontested by agricultural uses on the same land.

Extraction, unlike other forms of industrial development, involves the temporary use of land and it is incumbent on operators to work in a professional and sustainable manner. This includes respect for the land, appropriate conservation of habitats and heritage, and a solid commitment to a lasting benefit to society of the extracted lands. Promotion of biodiversity must, therefore, be central to operational and closure practices.

Many UEPG members have achieved recognised success in this area.

DISSEMINATING BEST PRACTICE

The European Aggregates Industry supports the principle of sustainable development. It is committed to operate with care and concern for the environment, for its neighbours and for society as a whole. Thanks to the success of the European Restoration Awards since 1997, UEPG decided in 2005 to enlarge it to the three pillars of Sustainable Development: economic, social and environmental.

The UEPG Sustainable Development and Quarry Awards illustrate this commitment by rewarding and promoting the spread of best practice and encouraging projects which go beyond what is required by planners or regulators in such areas as:

- Site restoration
- Environmental best practice
- Local community partnership
- Health and safety best practice
- Economic contribution / added value to Society
- Operational best practices

Composed by European independent experts, the 2007 Jury will be chaired by Roger Cans, journalist and former Environmental Editor for the newspaper Le Monde (France). The award’s ceremony 2007 will take place in Brussels. Senior representatives of European Commission and European Parliament will be present.
Providing essential materials does not come without some impact on the environment in which companies operate. Over many years, member companies have developed their environmental awareness and understanding, while monitoring and mitigating these impacts.

This process has not been achieved solely by the companies themselves (since the industry have not always had the required skills to do so) but also by working with partners such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Over the years, companies have come to realise the importance of developing partnerships and collaborating with NGOs. This provides an opportunity to identify, create and enhance the habitats and ecosystems within which many operate. NGOs can assist with increasing knowledge and experience to create appropriate habitats and ecosystems best suited to their location, while the extractive industry can provide the technology and expertise and commitment to restore such sites.

An additional benefit of this collaboration between the extractive industry and NGOs is the impact in the educational field. Partnerships with NGOs create important opportunities to develop educational projects involving local schools, colleges, universities and local communities.

These partnerships also demonstrate the value the industry places on preserving the environment. Collaboration between UEPG member companies and NGO partners on a wide variety of different environmental projects has resulted in significant contributions to habitats’ biodiversity and ecosystems, of which local communities, NGOs and member companies can be rightly proud. These includes partnerships with:

- French bird conservation organisation (LPO). Ways have been explored to develop a common approach to nature conservation with the objective of expanding the issues around sustainable development.
- Natural History Museum in France.
- Polish Society for the Protection of Birds
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the United Kingdom
- BirdLife Austria
- Lackford Lakes Suffolk nature reserve, United Kingdom
- Blackwater Valley Leisure site

These important relationships between the industry and NGOs provide companies with a great opportunity to support encourage and promote the protection and creation of European habitats and ecosystems.
UEPG – The Association

MEMBERS
MISSION

UEPG positively promotes the profile of the European aggregates industry. It proactively identifies EU initiatives and policies that are likely to impact on European aggregates producers. It provides Members with brief and concise information through regular publications and ad-hoc updates, and ensures UEPG positions are considered by EU decision-makers.
UEPG milestones (1987-2007)

2005-2007  President: Didier Audibert, France
Secretary General: Antony Fell
Deepening the environmental and economic competence of UEPG

2003-2005  President: Manfred Asamer, Austria
Secretary General: Antony Fell
UEPG as the driving force EU policies impacting the aggregates industry
creates a wide network in the Commission and Parliament

2000-2003  President: Cipriano Gomez Carrion, Spain
Secretary General: Rafael Fernández Aller
Strengthening UEPG network with the new permanent office in Brussels

1997-2000  President: Michael Schulz, Germany
Secretary General: Hans-Peter Braus
Second UEPG Restoration Awards in Strasbourg

1994-1997  President: Tim Ross, United Kingdom
Secretary General: Antony Fell
First UEPG Restoration Awards in the European Parliament in Strasbourg

1991-1994  President: Eric Dam-Hansen, Denmark
Secretary General: Hans-Jürgen Reitzig
UEPG is recognised as a partner and driver of harmonised European standards for aggregates

1988-1991  President: Raymond Berger, France
Secretary General: Jean-Marie Gross
Foundation of a European Association for Aggregates in the EU and EFTA-countries

1987  Foundation of UEPG
GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

NSSGA – UNITED STATES

Raw materials are a worldwide business. This applies increasingly for the exchange of best practices and information in the aggregates industry.

This is why Manfred Asamer, President of UEPG at that time, established contact with the National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association (NSSGA) in the USA. NSSGA emerged in 2000 as the world largest raw material extraction association representing an annual production of 3 billion tonnes creating 280,000 jobs.

NSSGA and UEPG have identified a number of common challenges:

- Access to resources
- Sustainable Use of Natural Resources
- Mineral planning policy
- Management of Waste
- Water treatment
- Protection of endangered species
- Health & Safety of its employees and neighbourhood
- Further development of products through European and American standards

The establishment of regular contact between NSSGA and UEPG aims at improving the conditions for extraction, production and use of aggregates.

ATLANTIC ALLIANCE

The ‘Atlantic Alliance’ is currently a grouping of national Producers and national health & safety Regulators from the surface extractive industries. Founder member countries are the USA, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Eire and Germany. At the moment, it is steered by the Producers & Regulators from the founder countries.

Meetings of the Alliance
2004 South-West England
2005 Orlando, USA
2006 Dundalk, Eire
2007 Munich, Germany

Positive results include the constructive ‘log-jam breaking’ outcomes of the “Atlantic Alliance” Conferences of past years – “access & egress” to/from mobile excavation/hauling/loading equipment, being the prime example. It was the Alliance that persuaded the multinational manufacturers (Cat, Volvo, Komatsu, etc.) to listen to the needs of their customers, so far as ‘access to’ and ‘egress from’ their equipment is concerned. For many years, these manufacturers had been perceived as ‘hiding’ behind the lack of European Norms and/or ISO standards (International Organisation for Standardisation), as a reason to continue to ignore the health & safety requirements of their customers, in this regard.

The Atlantic Alliance will only continue to be supported if it can continue to add value beyond that generated by the national associations and UEPG.

SOUTH AMERICA

UEPG maintains close links through ANEFA with the Federacion Iberoamericana de Productores de Aridos (FIPA), consisting of representatives from Spain (ANEFA), Colombia (ASOGRAVAS), Brazil (ANEPA) Argentina, Panamá and Dominican Republic (through their Mining Chambers).

Other national associations like Portugal, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Chile, El Salvador, Mexico or Venezuela have shown their deep interest in becoming a part of this Federation.

UEPG provides FIPA with good practices and supports its organisation and development.
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