Interview by Peter Edwards, Global Gypsum Magazine

In discussion: Claude Alain Tardy, President of Eurogypsum for 2014 - 2016

On 21 May 2014 Eurogypsum, the European federation of national associations of producers of gypsum products, elected Claude Alain Tardy as its President for the period 2014 - 2016. Tardy, the President of Saint-Gobain's Gypsum Activity, succeeds Maurizio Casalini, managing director of Knauf Italy, who was appointed in May 2012. Here, *Global Gypsum* speaks with the new President about the challenges and opportunities for European gypsum producers over the coming years and his advocacy targets during his Eurogypsum Presidency.

***GG:* What is the largest challenge facing the European gypsum industry at the moment?**

Claude Alain Tardy (CAT): The largest challenge facing the European gypsum industry, as for other industries, is the cumulative cost of the EU environmental legislation, energy policies (energy price fluctuations that cannot be passed on), climate change regulation (Emissions Trading Scheme Directive) and product and quarries legislation.

As an integrated industry we are faced with compliance and administrative costs for 24 EU legislative acts and dozens of non-regulatory initiatives. You need to add the national legislation on top. Streamlining legislation is the way to go for increased competitiveness of European industry in general and of our industry in particular.

***GG:* What are the largest opportunities for the European gypsum industry?**

CAT: The beauty of gypsum is its sustainability, its splendid chemical properties and its endless recyclability. The aim of the European gypsum industry is to manage its products and solutions in a way that is consistent with the ever-increasing environmental, social and economic standards and cultures that we operate in. Gypsum producers contribute to shaping customers' total quality of life, not merely in the products that they supply, but also by ensuring that they do not degrade customers' life experiences in the process of manufacturing its products.

Gypsum products are among the very few 'green' construction materials where 'closed-loop' recycling is possible. This is a major advantage compared to many other building materials. The processed gypsum waste can be used as a secondary raw material to make the same product again. As such, gypsum is 100% eternally recyclable. You can always reuse it because its chemical composition always remains the same.

The European gypsum industry wishes to go forward in reducing the environmental impact of construction materials at the end-of life, i.e. at the demolition phase of a building or during major renovation work.

This is a challenging task that we wish to push forward, while being conscious that success depends on our real willingness to make our commitment happen and on the willingness of all of the operators in the value chain.

The main project of Eurogypsum that I wish to push forward personally is the GtoG project. A consortium composed of 16 partners, led by

Claude Alain Tardy: President of Eurogypsum

Claude Alain Tardy is a civil engineer graduate of the École Centrale de Paris. He also has an MS in Industrial Engineering & Engineering Management from the University of Stanford, USA. Tardy joined Saint-Gobain in 1981 and between 2005 and 2009 he was CEO of Saint-Gobain Insulation, before being appointed as president of Saint-Gobain Gypsum in 2009.

Upon his appointment, Tardy said, "I am convinced that wallboard and plaster solutions will play a growing role in the future. The unique attributes of our products; recyclability, ease of installation, fire-resistance, acoustics and thermal properties make our systems inescapable for the construction and renovation of buildings."

Eurogypsum, was selected by the European Commission (EC) in 2012 to conduct a Life + project LIFE11 ENV/BE/001039 entitled *'GtoG (From Gypsum to Gypsum) - from production to recycling: a circular economy for the European gypsum industry with the demolition and recycling industry.'* The project started in January 2013 and will finish in December 2015.

The aim is to 'close the loop' effectively and transform the wallboard demolition waste market to achieve higher recycling rates of wallboard waste. The work being performed in the project includes:

- Diagnosis of buildings prior to deconstruction;
- Auditing and the creation of an inventory of recyclable materials;
- Decontaminating the waste if necessary and separating the different waste streams;
- Processing of the gypsum waste received (separation of the gypsum core from the paper);
- Qualifying gypsum waste;
- Reincorporating the recycled gypsum powder in wallboard manufacturing plants;
- Establishing the end-of-waste criteria for the recycled gypsum powder at a national level (as is currently the case in the UK).

Pilot projects implementing the deconstruction techniques, decontamination, gypsum waste processing and qualification and reincorporation in gypsum manufacturing plants are currently being carried out in France, the UK, Germany and Belgium. The results of those pilot projects will be essential for building the roadmap of the European gypsum industry circular economy in 2015.

***GG:* What are your advocacy aims during your time as President?**

CAT: I will concentrate on three goals:

1. I will promote gypsum solutions for new construction and renovation as the best solutions for our planet at affordable costs for society.

2. The European Institutions must take the right decisions for our sector. Gypsum provides a uniquely positive answer to the complex environmental equations of this century, be it in relation to the sourcing of raw materials, to the use of gypsum products in buildings or recycling at the end of their useful life.

Further, gypsum provides safe, low-cost, comfortable and convenient solutions for the built environment. Therefore, the European gypsum industry will provide the solutions to shape the regulatory framework for renovation, resource efficiency and recycling in the next five years.

"We have to keep in mind that FGD gypsum is not an 'everlasting' raw material..."

3. I will strongly support the national association members of Eurogypsum, which are key players in influencing the policies that impact our sector in Europe. Indeed, successful EU advocacy requires vigilance and consistency at EU and national levels on an ongoing basis.

Information must be shared effectively and used. Successful advocacy of the EU Parliament must first be executed at the national level by national associations that share local interests with their local Member of the European Parliament (MEP).

***GG:* Can you explain the reasons behind the decision to end the *Eurogypsum Congress* events?**

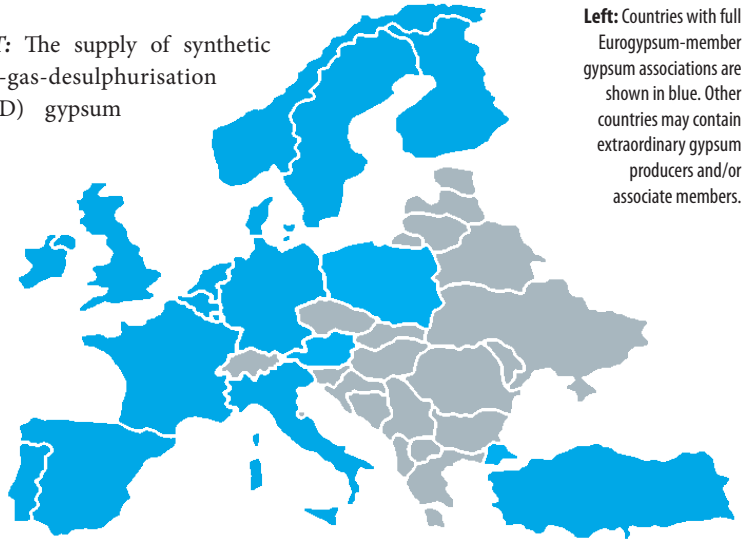
CAT: The *Eurogypsum Congresses* were organised for the membership as internal industry events, but they had no impact on policy-making.

Today, Eurogypsum's main goal is to shape EU policies to create a healthy and comfortable built environment. We do so by organising events in Brussels on EU policies concerning megatrends in construction - for example renovation, resource-efficiency (including energy-efficiency) and recycling.

For that purpose, we have set up a European Parliament Gypsum Forum where MEPs, Officials of the Commission, the gypsum industry and other relevant stakeholders meet to exchange information and to brainstorm on the future of construction in Europe.

***GG:* Do you think the supply of synthetic gypsum will change in the future?**

CAT: The supply of synthetic flue-gas-desulphurisation (FGD) gypsum



Left: Countries with full Eurogypsum-member gypsum associations are shown in blue. Other countries may contain extraordinary gypsum producers and/or associate members.

depends mainly on the survival of coal power combustion plants in Europe, which in turn depends on the national energy policies and the energy mix of each EU Member State.

Today, the country producing half of the FGD in Europe is Germany. The German government has decided to shut down the country's nuclear power plants and to implement an aggressive renewable-energy strategy. According to scenarios produced by the German government, the new energy policy, if successful, may lead to a sharp decrease of coal combustion plants and thus of FGD gypsum by 2030. However, Poland also produces electricity using a high proportion of coal.

Right: A German hard coal power plant. Plants like these are currently responsible for making significant proportions of FGD gypsum. However, as Claude Alain Tardy points out, the European gypsum industry still needs natural gypsum resources.

The European gypsum industry is taking this threat seriously in order to find the right solutions and ensure the continuous supply of our industry with reliable raw materials.

Despite the environmental and health benefits of FGD gypsum production, the current EU and national political debates about sustainable energy (Kyoto protocol and the EU commitment to reduction of CO_2 emissions), about secure energy supply (with the need to rebalance the energy mix), about the growing need to use alternative energy sources and the existence of new efficient technologies of power stations, might change the scene for the production of FGD gypsum.

This will make it difficult for the European gypsum industry to give a reliable long-term forecast for the sustainable production of future FGD gypsum. Due to this uncertainty, we have to keep in mind that FGD gypsum is not an 'everlasting' raw material source and that, furthermore, this by-product cannot satisfy all the industry needs. Therefore, it becomes a priority to ensure access to natural gypsum deposits and to obtain new quarrying permits. Today, a reliable use of FGD gypsum is only possible if we can also at the same time secure a reliable supply of natural gypsum.

***GG:* What steps is Eurogypsum taking to secure that natural gypsum? Does having more quarries represent a backwards step?**

CAT: The development of a gypsum quarry can create favourable conditions that provide habitats for rare species. Indeed, the European gypsum industry has measured biodiversity in pilot quarries with a view to extending best practice throughout the 154 quarries in Europe.

Indicators used to measure biodiversity were developed in 2014 in cooperation with academics from the University of Gembloux, Belgium in an interactive way with national and EU stakeholders. The indicators obtained are thus consensual ones across the political and academic fora.

This exemplarity *must* be sustained by Member States facilitating access to resources in Natura 2000 and non-Natura 2000 areas. The European gypsum industry's key objectives to develop sustainable extraction in the EU are thus:

- Effective national land-use planning policy allowing the regular supply of raw material, including Natura 2000 areas and avoiding excessive urbanisation that might disrupt this regular supply;
- Effective dialogue with local communities leading to mutual comprehension of the real benefits of extraction for the EU economy and society;
- Promotion at national level of a 'one-stop-shop' system covering all environmental assessments in one single process and linking the national authorities involved in a permitting procedure.

***GG:* Thank you for your time.**

CAT: You are most welcome.

Right: Natura 2000 sites like the Hallerburger Holz in Germany are currently protected as examples of Europe's most diverse and unique ecosystems.