



THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR EUROPE'S FUTURE

Can Europe secure essential raw materials for its housing policy needs?

Summary note

19 November 2025

On 19 November, Eurogypsum, the European federation of national associations of gypsum product manufacturers, hosted the event **"The Building Blocks for Europe's Future: Can Europe secure essential raw materials for its housing policy needs?"** in Brussels. In the context of Raw Materials Week, the conference aimed at looking at current challenges in access to essential raw materials needed to tackle the housing shortage.

Christoph Dorn, Eurogypsum's President, welcomed participants and presented the programme of the day. He outlined the relevance of supplying raw materials. Europe is experiencing a serious housing crisis, with the lack of affordable and high-quality homes. The figures speak for themselves: house prices have risen by 24% since 2015, rents in major cities have risen by 45% on average. Moreover, 85% of buildings in the EU were built before 2000 and 75% have poor energy performance. The roots of this crisis are manifold, ranging from urbanisation to a lack of social housing to high land prices. This has led to a stagnation of the construction market in recent years. Increasing the supply of (affordable) housing is a major part of the solution, e.g. with new construction and the renovation and repurposing of existing buildings. This is only possible by using all levers to make housing more affordable: prefabrication, investments in energy infrastructure, but also securing a reliable supply of raw materials. Only by guaranteeing a stable supply of essential raw materials, we could deliver on our housing needs. Unlocking access to raw materials is therefore key to improving housing affordability.

Unlocking Raw Materials

After outlining "why" securing essential raw materials is an integral part of Europe's competitiveness for solving the housing crisis, representatives from European extractive industries discussed "how" we can unlock access to the raw materials needed. Our discussion with **Dirk Fincke**, Secretary General at Aggregates Europe, **Roger Doome**, Director General at IMA-Europe, and **Jean-Luc Marchand**, Eurogypsum's Raw Materials Committee Chairperson, revealed a paradox:





Europe has significant reserves of essential raw materials, yet access is slow. At least 10 years are usually needed to open a new quarry. It is a slow process that is further slowed down by permitting procedures and – often – legislation changes throughout the process.

The administrative capacity is often limited and slows down the process. Using Artificial Intelligence to conduct **pre-screening of applications** could help towards streamlining the permitting procedures, as suggested by Roger Doome.

This issue was echoed by Dirk Fincke, who pointed out how the climate around new extraction projects in the framework of the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) increased scepticism around all extractive activities. Jean-Luc Marchand mentioned local reluctance as an additional hurdle to opening a quarry, one that can only be tackled with **transparency with local communities**. **Collaborating with NGOs** from the beginning of a project can be a good practice, not only to create a partnership that can lead to implementing better biodiversity management during/after quarrying, but also to **build trust** among companies, NGOs and – potentially – local communities. Building trust is an indispensable long-term commitment, one that makes companies take responsibility and communicate openly with all actors involved in the success of raw material supply activities.

Quarries give back

Next, as a powerful visual testimony to the realities of sustainable practices in raw material supply, Eurogypsum celebrated its second **Biodiversity Photo Awards**. Quarries are unknown places to most, but they are lively ecosystems where biodiversity is actively managed before, during and after this temporary use of land.

One of the judges, **Przemysław Ogiński**, Policy Officer in the Unit on Nature Conservation at the European Commission's Directorate-General Environment (DG ENV), attended the Awards ceremony. The other judges were Thomas Sebrechts, Conservation Partnerships Officer at BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, and Maria Spiridonova, Senior Communications Officer at the European office of International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The following pictures were awarded in each of the respective four categories:



- **Biodiversity Gains:** **Davide Bertini** – Gypsum Valley, Roccastrada (Italy)
- **Fauna:** **Andreas Nolte** – Ührde quarry, Osterode am Harz (Germany)
- **Flora:** **Davide Bertini** – Gypsum Valley, Roccastrada (Italy) & **Debora Lazzerini** – Gypsum Valley, Roccastrada (Italy)
- **Landscape:** **Davide Bertini** – Gypsum Valley, Roccastrada (Italy)

A “People’s Vote” conducted during the conference resulted in a new award for Andreas Nolte for his picture of the owl (in the fauna category).

You can see all pictures submitted to our contest and the winners [on our website](#).



From extraction to restoration: different voices for a shared goal

After the ceremony, a deep dive into nature restoration followed, with a fireside chat between **Przemysław Ogiński** and **Felice Tirabasso**, the Chief Technology Officer at Fibran / Gessi Roccastrada (Italy) and member of Eurogypsum. Przemysław Ogiński outlined the next steps for the implementation of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation (NRR), with the Member States currently preparing their national restoration plans. Felice Tirabasso presented the often simple yet effective actions that he, together with his team, carries out in the Roccastrada gypsum quarry (Italy), often in cooperation with scientists and other stakeholders, to protect and restore nature. Both speakers agreed on the positive role extractive industries can play with local and national authorities when it comes to the achievement of the NRR's objectives. The private sector's contribution is even more relevant when public money is becoming short. However, it appeared that the voice of the raw material supply industries was rarely considered in the drafting of the National Restoration Plans, unlike foreseen in the Regulation. This is a missed opportunity, given the expertise and best position of the quarry staff when it comes to restoring land.



Responsible use of water

After discussing challenges and solutions to access essential raw materials like gypsum, the event shifted the focus to another fundamental resource that is often taken for granted: water.

Annita Papa, Senior Public Affairs Officer at Eurogypsum, presented the association's [Water Roadmap](#)



– the European gypsum industry's strategic plan to reduce its water footprint. Mindful of the increasing frequency of water scarcity and extreme weather events and of the resource intensity of the construction sector, Eurogypsum recognises we have a responsibility to use water wisely. As such, this introductory roadmap maps out the industry's water needs along all stages of plasterboard production and looks at the industry's solutions to reduce its water footprint. By looking at three case studies in France, the gypsum sector recognises that the commitment to reducing water withdrawals can

only be achieved and scaled up with a supporting policy framework. This should include the implementation of the "polluter pays" principle as well as a revision of the rules to facilitate innovation

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in water technology. The latter would help implement the “*water efficiency first*” principle. Finally, support in expanding access to non-potable water networks would strongly help redirect to the use of the correct water sources. Water is a shared resource and a shared responsibility: substantial progress can only be achieved if a supportive policy framework facilitates and encourages the adoption of water saving practices.

Eurogypsum’s President Christoph Dorn concluded the event, thanking participants and sharing his take-aways from the meeting:

- Europe’s housing supply challenge depends on securing essential raw materials.
- To achieve this, Europe needs to accelerate permitting, and extractive industries must continue to build trust with local communities and promote transparency.
- The gypsum industry shows that extraction and sustainability can go hand in hand, as illustrated by the Biodiversity Photo Awards.
- Above all, our industries should keep on using all resources responsibly, as exemplified by Eurogypsum’s Water Roadmap.
- Collaboration among stakeholders and supportive policies are the key to deliver affordable housing in a sustainable way.