

Cementing its leadership

Cementir is the global leader in white cement, having extended its capacity to cover five continents in supporting the right requirements of the construction industry

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Uniting a number of brands under its umbrella, Cementir Holding is a multinational group headquartered in Italy, but today with 100 per cent of its activity abroad, that specialises in the production and distribution of cement (grey and white), ready-mix concrete, aggregates, and concrete products. Of these, it is white cement that is regarded as the DNA of the company, with Cementir covering around 13 per cent of the material's total production capacity globally through one of its daughter companies – Aalborg Portland.

Cementir's Chief Sales, Marketing & Commercial Development Officer, Mr. Michele Di Marino details: "White cement has been vital for our value proposition throughout our history: it is a niche, high-end product, whose special technical features that make it a bit harder to produce, have allowed us to build a unique offering around it, centring on the possibilities it gives us to develop diverse applications for our customers while closely collaborating with them."

Unlike grey cement, its white peer is not as widespread and requires more specific manufacturing capabilities to be produced. To ensure this, Cementir has established production plants and other assets in various strategic geographic areas, including the US, Scandinavia and West Europe, Egypt, Australia, China, and Malaysia, among others. "It is a really strong network of sites that we have created around the world and we are truly unique in this sense, because we have the ability to synergise the different plants in the different regions," comments Michele.

Acting locally whilst remaining a global company is a clearly observable and definitive trait of Cementir's approach that underpins what is known as the business' 'glocal' strategy. "We have always aimed to invest heavily in the development of our services on a local level," Michele remarks. "We are convinced that we need to be close to our customers, speak their language (literally), and deploy local staff to provide technical support. Growing our presence in certain strategic markets can also provide

us with a much-needed platform to further increase our customer base, which is crucial from a long-term perspective. In addition, we have been investing in our supply chain, setting up fruitful business partnerships with logistics providers to secure the smooth supply of our products to the market.

"As an international leader in manufacturing and commercialising white cement, we also possess a sense of duty to grow the market by opening up new opportunities for our clients in regions where some of the applications of the product might not be so well-known. We try to leverage best practices and sometimes even seek inspiration from our customers, applying the method of cross-fertilization, to mix different ideas that could strengthen our value proposition. The global side of our 'glocal' strategy naturally manifests itself in our customer relationships, too. Tailoring an offering based on the unique characteristics of a local market may be playing a central role in the way we operate, but with some customers who are global players in their realm, we



have to think globally and create a value-added service proposition that is aligned to their international goals and footprint,” Michele explains.

Cementir has grown a reputation of a white cement specialist on the back of Aalborg Portland – a business that was acquired by the group in 2006. At that point, Aalborg Portland was already a recognised global leader, its history of white cement production stretching back to the early 1930s. For nearly 90 years, the city of Aalborg in northern Denmark has been the home of the production process, but in recent years, Cementir has initiated that manufacturing also begins in Asia, Africa, and the US. Michele adds: “There are some minor technical differences between the types of cement we produce in the different plants we have, which we consider a company strength, because we can then offer a greater number of product variations that closely match the needs of our customers’ applications. Its whiteness aside, the Aalborg White® cement excels in quality aspects such as high consistency, low content of alkali, and high sulphate resistance, which is why it is viewed as one of the top white cements worldwide.”

As of late, Cementir has seen an



Top: Anqing China White Cement Plant

Above: SAS Guillem, White cement application in facade of Ecole de Polytechnique in France

increased growth in demand for white cement from manufacturers of glass fibre reinforced concrete (GFRC) and ultra-high performance concrete (UHPC) products. “It is a clear trend in the construction industry that people are now increasingly looking to find quicker and leaner ways of building, paying more attention to sustainability and to the energy efficiency of their newbuilds. GFRC and UHPC are showing signs of fast growth in every region, so we are trying to identify exactly what clients are interested in with regards to these applications,” Michele discusses.

Despite being based in Italy, last year, Cementir’s major shareholder in the like of the Caltagirone Group decided to divest the business’ domestic operations. As big a decision this move might have

been, it has by no means diverted Cementir from its selected path of development. “We know what we are pushing for and the direction for our future pursuits is perfectly clear. First and foremost, we want to continue creating value for our customers in all the businesses and further reinforce our position as a global leader in white cement. By following the ‘glocal’ approach, we are also looking to strengthen our local capabilities and invest in emerging markets. From a financial point of view, it is an ongoing target for Cementir to constantly improve its results and KPIs, and this is not going to change in the coming years.

“In order to capitalise on current trends, we have just launched a new product called Aalborg Extreme®, a new concept of UHPC premix, perfectly suited for the production processes at our precast customers’ plants. The technology is based on a further refinement of Cementir Holdings’ recently patented binder technology, Futurecem™. Furthermore, we are also planning to advance a project, which is not directly related to the world of building materials, but still requires cement and concrete, and that is a programme concerning the possibility of charging vehicles

Nanjing Beilida, White cement applied in Zaha Hadid's project in China (GRC)



wirelessly. Still on the innovation front, we are also eager to explore the opportunities 3D printing might give us in our mission to continuously improve our value proposition," Michele sheds light on Cementir's vision for the future.

Finally, he talks about the emphasis the company places on people and talent development. "We now have more than 3000 staff from more than 20 nationalities within the group, which inevitably calls forth the need for deeper integration of people from differing cultural backgrounds. It has been a major focus area for the business over the past 18 months and initiatives like the Cementir Academy and the various talent and leadership programmes we are running,

are set to continue, so that we can secure our expertise and capabilities and keep our employees engaged and motivated, securing the long-term sustainability of the Group." ○

Cementir

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"What we greatly appreciate with AMCS is their in-depth knowledge of our business," adds Giacomo Cornetti, Chief Information Technology Officer at Cementir. "We see AMCS as our collaboration partner, working together towards a mutual goal."

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