



PORR, Saint-Gobain, Saubermacher:

Closed-loop recycling becoming a reality – green light for the first gypsum-to-gypsum recycling plant in Austria

- **Cross-sector partnership to implement “Zero Waste Vision” for gypsum plaster boards**
- **Legal framework represents both a factor for success and a challenge**
- **Future-oriented model for active closed-loop recycling that works**

Vienna, 3 October 2023 – Construction company PORR, drywall specialist Saint-Gobain (known as the brand RIGIPS) and waste management company Saubermacher are lined up to launch the first gypsum-to-gypsum recycling plant in Austria. The new plant will have an annual capacity of around 60,000 tonnes, making it capable of covering the demand in the east of Austria. This is great news not just for the raw material reserves in Austria, which are not infinitely available, but also for the limited landfill volume. With this joint initiative, the nationwide landfill ban on gypsum plaster boards, due to enter into force on 01.01.2026, is being proactively met, and a further milestone in the Austrian circular economy achieved. Federal Minister Leonore Gewessler*) also welcomes the presented gypsum-to-gypsum project.

The implementation requires an investment of 7 million euros, divided between the gypsum-to-gypsum (GtoG) recycling plant and the logistics solution. Commissioning at the Saint-Gobain location in Stockerau is planned for mid-2025.

Gypsum-to-gypsum recycling – closed-loop recycling means teamwork

PORR and Saubermacher are active as strong players on the deconstruction and disposal market, which ensures the delivery of the gypsum waste. Among other things, recycling specialist Saubermacher offers new digital logistics solutions for transporting gypsum waste from building sites to processing plants in a transparent and traceable manner. Each year, PORR recycles approx. 2 million tonnes of rubble, making it the largest recycling company in the Austrian construction industry. The majority of this replaces the primary raw materials at the group’s own building sites and facilities.



After preparation, the recycling gypsum is transported by rail to Bad Aussee, thus reducing CO₂ emissions; there, drywall specialist Saint-Gobain produces new gypsum plaster boards (RIGIPS boards) from the recycled material. Up to 40 percent of recycling gypsum can be processed into new gypsum plaster board. This also saves on the raw material of natural gypsum. *“It’s only with a cross-sector partnership such as this that sustainable and economic recycling is made possible”*, emphasise PORR, Saint-Gobain and Saubermacher unanimously in the scope of a press conference. The economic efficiency of the project is the key to success, since at present it is still extremely cost-effective to deposit cutting and demolition material from gypsum boards in landfills. Until now, this has led to almost 100 percent of demolition material ending up in landfills.

No recycling without separate collection

“Gypsum can be recycled an infinite number of times, but in order for recycling gypsum to flow back into the production of new boards, specific quality criteria must be met”, explains Peter Giffinger, CEO Austria at Saint-Gobain. Correct pre-sorting at construction sites is thus essential. *“With fully homogeneous separation on building sites, we’re entering new territory in Austria. Among other things, we at PORR are currently investigating what degree of crushing is ideal in order to enable proper processing of the demolition material in the new plant”*, says PORR CEO Karl-Heinz Strauss.

“Successful recycling depends not just on the quality of the material, but also heavily on the quantity”, clarifies Ralf Mittermayr, CEO at Saubermacher. Only when sufficient material is supplied does the expenditure pay off. Alongside PORR, Saubermacher is among the biggest construction site waste disposal companies in Austria. The company has direct access to the producers of waste via its own waste disposal centres and the digital collection platform wastebox, meaning that separated grouping can be taught and therefore more effectively implemented.

Indispensable legal framework

For “true closed-loop recycling”, the legal framework plays a decisive role. Because the three project partners have made it their clear goal to fulfil the Union objectives with regard to high-quality recycling. Accordingly, the legal text serving as the basis is not just about preventing the direct path to the landfill as of 1 January 2026,



but also about promoting the closed-loop recycling of gypsum plaster boards. It is for this reason that PORR, Saint-Gobain and Saubermacher are endorsing the drafting of a recycling gypsum regulation that pushes the closed-loop circulation of gypsum and simultaneously guarantees the high quality of recycling gypsum.

Ensuring the supply of raw materials

Gypsum is a natural raw material of which there is a finite supply. The popular building material is extracted by mining or obtained as a by-product of chemical processes and during flue gas desulphurisation at coal power plants (FGD gypsum). Based on the Green Deal by the European Commission, all coal-fired power plants are to be phased out by 2035, meaning that the regional raw material supply will gain even more in importance.

The Master Plan "Raw Materials 2030" by the Austrian federal government is dedicated to securing the supply. The European raw materials strategy also pushes domestic sources and recycling. To prevent a bottleneck in the raw material of gypsum, therefore, the aim is to place greater emphasis on recycling as a complementary source. For this, Gips-zu-Gips Recycling GmbH will play a leading role in Austria.

*) Video statement by Federal Minister Gewessler <https://youtu.be/W-hzWf-AxfY>

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Should you have any questions, please contact:

Saint-Gobain Austria GmbH, press service

AKONSULT KG

Kristin Allwinger, MSc.

+43 (660) 3737 118, allwinger@akonsult.at

Saubermacher Dienstleistungs AG

Prok. Mag. Bernadette Triebel-Wurzenberger, Head of Group Communications,

Company Spokeswoman

+43 (664) 805981013, B.Triebel@saubermacher.at

PORR AG

Mag. Melanie Manner, Press Spokeswoman & Media Relations

+43 50 626-5867, melanie.manner@porr.at