

ROAD MAINTENANCE STILL DECLINING: “IT PERFORMS ONLY HALF OF THE NEEDED WORKS”

Verona, 22 February 2017 – **In 2016 the consumption of asphalt concrete in Italy fell again to record low: only about 22 million tons to build and maintain our roads. After the growth recorded in 2015, thanks to some large construction works, road works are once again at a standstill, with half of the necessary maintenance work not performed. Potholes remain a subject confined to election campaigns, while in order to bring again safe our roads a special plan of at least 40 billion Euros will be essential.**

These are the main elements emerging from the analysis presented today by SITEB (the Association of the main players in the road an asphalt business) during the opening of **Asphaltica**, the European exhibition dedicated to the asphalt industry and road infrastructure, scheduled in Verona from 22 to 25 February 2017. The event is promoted by **SITEB** and **Veronafiore**.

The 2016 figures included in the analysis of SITEB (asphalt production steady at 22,371 million tons, i.e. minus 3.2% vs 2015) showed a new step backwards in terms of construction and maintenance of roads, after the 2015 positive figures (+ 3.7% vs. 2014), the first after nine years of continuous decline. This is a clear sign that the growth of two years ago was not due to an effective recovery of the maintenance of our road heritage, but it was largely driven by a few important works, related to the Expo in Milan and to the completion of several major motorway works in northern Italy (like Brebemi, TEN and Pedemontana).

If we exclude these works, construction and maintenance of roads today are at a standstill, with the consumption halved respect the 2006 data (44 million tons.). Siteb has calculated that the average consumption of asphalt concrete necessary to keep in order our roads is about 40,000 million tons.). Italy has a road network (excluding urban and private roads) long about 500,000 km (including approximately 7,000 km of highways and 25,000 km under the responsibility of ANAS), whose total value is estimated at 5,000 billion euros.

In 2016, despite the significant drop of the oil price, the relaxation of the Stability Pact, and the revival of investment in maintenance by ANAS, the road maintenance politics have not started; the introduction of the Contract Code did not certainly help.

The constant delaying of the maintenance works and the absence of periodic resurfacing pavement wearing layers has produced in many roads cracks and decay down to the base layers.

*“The situation in Italy remains difficult”, noted the **President of SITEB Michele Turrini**, “the road asset is now deteriorated and there are considerable inconveniences to road users. We invest in maintenance less than 30 years ago, but on a more extensive and busy road network, which has been in critical condition for years. We estimate that, because of lack of investment over the last 8 years in road maintenance, to return the network to the standard quality values of 2006, it would take at least 40 billion Euros. Companies and contractors still remained in the market and working for public bodies are suffering because of missed payments. Despite the hopes and promises of the past few years, 2016 has been a year of strong disappointment and there is no feeling or hope for recovery in the near term.”*

“It’s time,” concluded Turrini, “that roads and their proper maintenance being part of the agenda of the local and national institutions, not only during election campaigns. Today, our country does not need great works, but a constant maintenance work to preserve the existing network, before it collapses.”

The analysis of SITEB shows that over the past two years the number of producing plants has been reduced by -16.7%; however, the total number of employees (drastically reduced between 2010 and 2013) remained virtually unchanged, while the value of the production declined further by 3.3%, due to the lower cost of oil.

Meanwhile, in the face of an unprecedented crisis of the building industry, it continues the “shopping” of Italian companies by foreign investors, generally large multinational groups, operating especially in the production of waterproofing membranes.

The asphalt industry in 2010/2016

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	var. % 2016-2014	var. % 2016-2010
Bituminous conglomerate (Mil. tons.)	22,371	23,119	22,302	22,265	23,224	28,300	29,060	0.3%	-23.22%
Production value (Mil. €)	1.230	1.295	1.273	1.284	1.357	1.655	1.700	-3.3%	-27.81%
Employees number	33.000	33.000	33.000	34.000	35.000	45.000	50.000	0%	-34%
Companies (production plants)	400	430	480	490	520	630	650	-16.67%	-38.46%

Playing a leading role during the event Asphaltica (Verona, Italy / 22-25 February) are the new technologies which ensure safety and durability of our roads, reducing hazards and pollution

ROAD CONSTRUCTION:

“THERE ARE A LOT OF AVAILABLE TECHNOLOGIES TO MAKE OUR ROADS SAFER AND REDUCE THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT”

Verona, 22-25 February 2017 – The evolution of the techniques of construction and maintenance of roads is the undisputed star of Asphaltica, the European trade show dedicated to the entire asphalt industry and road infrastructure, scheduled in Verona from 22 to 25 February 2017 and promoted by SITEB – Italian Association of Asphalt Bitumen Roads, with Veronafiere.

Companies in the sector, struggling for 10 years with the crisis that causes contractions of the work, are now engaged in lots of investments in innovation to reduce pollutant emissions produced during the construction and maintenance and to make durable and safe our road heritage, about 500,000 kilometers of roads and highways.

“The steady progress and investment of operators” noted the **President of SITEB Michele Turrini**, *“have led today to the availability of advanced technologies at European level, that very often, however, are confronted with tenders still made according to the logic of the maximum discount, or that only favor the economic elements of supply and do not reward the adoption of environmentally sustainable techniques or involve the use of recycled materials.”*

More or less innovative, more or less widespread on our roads, there are several main technologies adopted to improve the safety of motorists and reducing polluting emissions:

Asphalt and perpetual roads

They are designed and built to last at least 50 years without need for structural or reconstruction, with only periodic renewal of the thin surface layer of 2-3 cm.

A technology called ‘thin lay’, also allows to realize road surface layers of only 2 centimeters with high strength, able to last up to 12 years.

Smog-eating asphalt

This is a fotocatalytic technology that, in the presence of light, absorbs polluting components such as nitrogen and sulfur oxides, in addition to CO². This effect is achieved through eco-coatings containing titanium oxide. The “smog-eating” solution is particularly suited to city centers with high levels of harmful emissions and to those sections of road where the traffic is congested structurally.

Deicing asphalt

This type of asphalt uses special chemicals that lower the freezing point of the paving in the presence of snow, avoiding the formation of hazardous layers of ice. It is specially suitable for mountain roads subject to rainfall and snowfall.

“Recycled” roads

Asphalt is an easily and fully recyclable material. In the resurfacing of a pavement we can, therefore, also employ a significant amount (70-80%) of recycled asphalt, especially in the binder and base layers, avoiding to consume non-renewable resources (bitumen and aggregates).

Asphalt mix with PFU

Another interesting application relates to the use of used tires recycled, whose granule or powder is mixed with the bituminous mix, increasing the adherence of the vehicle to the road surface, favoring the trajectory control and the braking, and considerably reducing the noise.

Inert alternative materials

Asphaltica also shows the new inert materials generated by treatment and recovery processes both of blast furnace slag and of municipal solid waste, used as substitute products of the natural raw materials. And much more could be done if in Italy (unlike what happens in the rest of Europe) the milled asphalt, material produced by the removal of road surfaces, was not considered as special waste from government that actually instead encouraging the use, limits in any way the recovery.

Porous, draining asphalt

A consolidated solution, generally applied on our motorways, is obtained through the application of an asphaltic surface more porous than the traditional one and able to absorb the rainwater; travel security is increased and ride comfort is improved. This technology makes use of a special modified bitumen used as a binding agent. Water flows on the underlying layer of the road and is collected at the side of the road. Today at least 15% of the asphalt product is of this type.

Noise mitigation

This technology, more and more applied in highways and in residential areas, creates sound-absorbing pavements and reduces the noise pollution. It can be realized by applying a special type of porous asphalt or by using additives and rubber crumbs from worn out tyres.

Warm and cold asphalt

The so-called warm asphalt is produced and laid at temperatures of about 120 ° C (instead of 160 °) and significantly reduces the fuel consumption and the emissions of fumes and odors. The emissions can be completely eliminated by using a "cold" technique based on bitumen emulsion or foam-bitumen.

Clear, colored, and printed asphalt

In certain historical sites and landscapes, pavement coloring is important for aesthetic reasons. By using synthetic binders, we can obtain clear and bright pavements. With the aid of metallic grids, in addition, we can print various designs on the asphalt, simulating the use of paving stones. The colored asphalt is used in monumental urban areas, but also in gardens and parks. The application in pedestrian and bicycle paths is also important to highlight them, thus increasing security.

Reinforcing membranes for asphalt pavements

An affordable and effective alternative to the complete renovation of damaged roads can be the interposition of a diaphragm between the conglomerate layers. Such a diaphragm is made from a bituminous membrane glass veil that acts as armor, thus reducing the tensions and spreading the loads. Acting as a shield, it prevents cracking and increases the resistance to fatigue, so extending the life of the pavement.

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Asphaltica 2017

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