

## 4<sup>th</sup> PDA Europe conference



From the various papers it was clear that polyurea can compete effectively against materials such as saturated polyester and epoxy coatings due to better chemical resistance and lower styrene emissions and that they are suitable for concrete and metal structure protection in challenging environments, as well as in drinking water storage tanks. Most of the other talks were about various application examples and projects that have been conducted by PDA members recently. It became very obvious that reference projects for the material and long term studies are still scarce. PU Magazine has already reported on some of these projects earlier this year for example, the repair of the Girotte dam in the French Alps and the high speed rail links in China (PU Magazine 04-2010, p. 213ff).

From 15–17 November this year's PDA Europe conference took place in Sitges, a small township near the Spanish metropolis of Barcelona. Now in its fourth year, PDA Europe has 88 members from 27 countries. 115 attendees mostly from European countries as well as some visitors from further afield informed themselves about new developments in the field of polyurea during 13 lectures and a small tabletop exhibition. All major raw material suppliers, machine builders and system houses in this small market segment gathered for the event. That was why some attendees commented: "Somehow we are stewing in our own juices". Unfortunately, the PDA Europe organisation could not convince major decision makers such as politicians, building companies, architects or contractors to participate. This might be because PDA Europe is quite a new organisation where a lot of personal time and dedication in addition to their day to day work, is provided by the president, his board members and secretaries to compensate for a lack of financial resources.

Another limiting factor might be that the word polyurea can not be found in any building code so far. The red tape that is orchestrated in Brussels regarding the creation of new codes and approval methods was clearly illustrated in the speech given by **Inga Hohberg** (Deutsche Bauchemie): **Assessment of Release of Dangerous Substances – Actual CEN**

**Activities Concerning Test Methods for Construction.** This legislation and testing will be in addition to that required for the raw materials, as part of REACH registration. Hohberg suggested that the cost of registering a product under CEN could cost in the region of EUR 22,000. This draft regulation is still in the committee stage, involving more than 120 people. It is anticipated that agreement will be reached by 2017. Fears that this could stall the further development of polyurea and other new chemical products were stated by some manufacturers while others suggested that the legislative process was failing to keep up with scientific evolution of polyurea. In seven years time new machinery and formulations will have been created which will invalidate any agreed test procedures.

Furthermore, it became apparent that the success or failure of a project is still very dependent on the manual skills of the respective applicator. There is a need for approved spray applicators to avoid future claims made against the system manufacturer. Current claims over product failure are reported to be mainly due to the applicator rather than the chemicals. Product failure can occur simply due to material being sprayed in only one direction.

There are many opportunities for the use of polyurea, but a lot of work lies ahead for the newly elected president of the PDA, **Stephan Rindfleisch** (Graco) in the coming year. ■



*Handover of the presidency from Karl Heinrich Wührer (left), Bayer MaterialScience, to Stephan Rindfleisch, Graco*