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**GLASS WOOL INSULATORS  
AND OPEN SCIENTIFIC  
QUESTIONS**

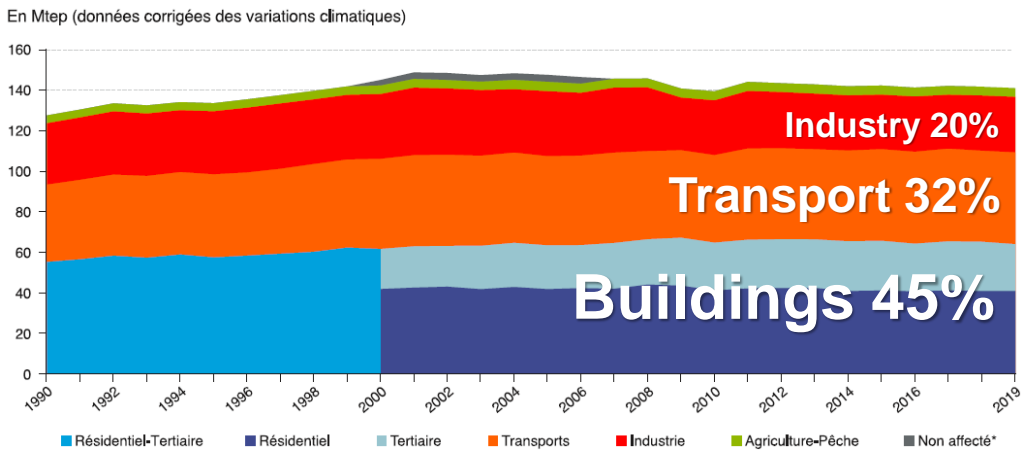
Jean-Marc FLESSELLES  
Journées Verre, Dijon  
13 – 15 nov 2024



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**REDUCING ENERGY USES IN BUILDINGS AS A PRIMARY TARGET**

Overall energy consumption in France



Source: Bilan énergétique de la France pour 2019 – jan. 2021 – Statistique Publique  
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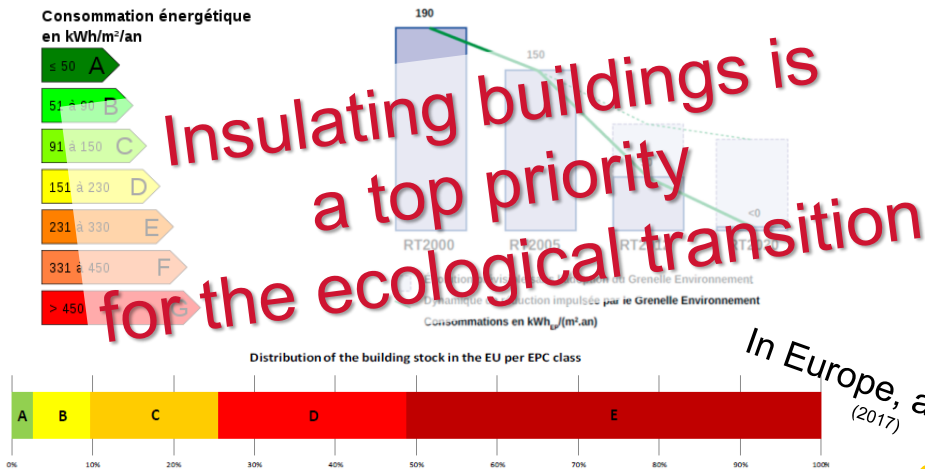


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## REDUCING ENERGY USES IN BUILDINGS AS A PRIMARY TARGET

Solutions do exist!

Évolution des exigences réglementaires de consommation énergétique des bâtiments neufs : une rupture opérée par le Grenelle Environnement



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In Europe, as well!  
(2017)

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# MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER HOME




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# WORLDWIDE LEADER IN LIGHT AND SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

 **76** industrial presence in 76 countries

 **350** Founded more than 350 years ago

 **8** 8 cross-business R&D centers

 **900** more than 900 plants

 **2,700** more than 2,700 sales outlets

 **2050** commitment to achieve net zero emissions by 2050



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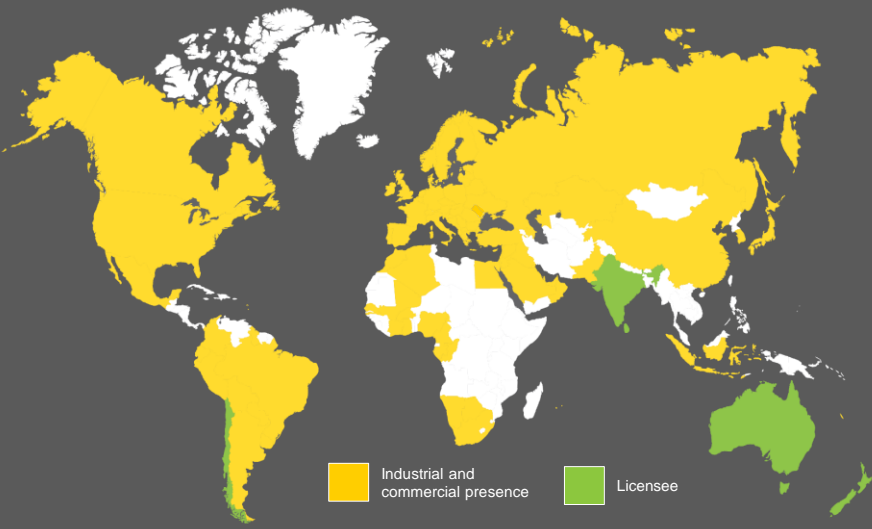
**ISOVER** manufactures and supplies high performing **insulation solutions** to address a variety of markets in buildings, transportation and industrial applications.

**ISOVER** provides **wellbeing, energy performance and fire safety** while helping to protect the environment.



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## A STRONG LOCAL FOOTPRINT WITH AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK




**107** countries  
(excluding licensees)

**More than 10 000** employees

**63** industrial sites  
(excluding licensees)

Industrial and commercial presence    Licensee



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## A MULTI-APPLICATIONS OFFER



1. Marine and offshore
2. HVAC - Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning
3. Trains
4. Automotive
5. Flat roofs insulation and waterproofing
6. Appliances (cooking ovens, washing machines...)
7. Basements
8. Saunas
9. Floors and ceilings
10. Sarking, pitched roofs
11. Internal insulation, partition walls
12. ETICS (External Thermal Insulation Composite Systems), ventilated facade, cavity walls
13. Thermal solar collectors
14. Industry

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## HOW TO DESIGN AN INSULATING MATERIAL?

Basics of heat transfer



**Total heat flux**  
 =  
**Conductive flux**  $\lambda_{\text{cond}}$   
 +  
**Convective flux**  $\lambda_{\text{conv}}$   
 +  
**Radiative flux**  $\lambda_{\text{rad}}$

$$\phi = -\lambda \nabla T$$

**Minimize**

$$\lambda = \lambda_{\text{cond}} + \lambda_{\text{conv}} + \lambda_{\text{rad}}$$

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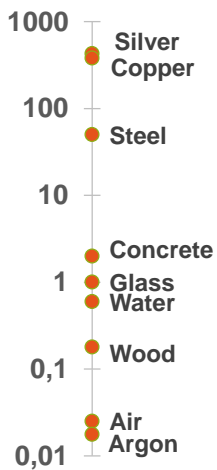


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## HOW TO DESIGN AN INSULATING MATERIAL?

...with common materials

$\lambda$  [W.m<sup>-1</sup>.K<sup>-1</sup>] at 10°C



- Create **tiny pockets** of **motion-less air** in a **sparse structure** of **low heat-conducting solid**.



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## A MULTI-MATERIAL OFFER

### CORE OFFER



**GLASS MINERAL WOOL**

Rolls, panels, pipe sections, blowing wool...



**STONE MINERAL WOOL**

Panels, rolls, wired mats, pipe sections

### COMPLEMENTARY OFFER



**ELASTOMERIC FOAMS**

Pipe sections, sheets



**HIGH PERFORMANCE VACUUM INSULATION**

Panels



**ULTIMATE™**

Rolls, panels, wired mat, pipe sections



**PIR & XPS PANELS**



**WOOD fibre**

Flexible and dense panels



**OTHERS**

Accessories, vapor and wind barriers

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*ULTIMATE™: Unique insulation solution lighter than standard stone wool with similar fire performance*



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## IN A NUTSHELL, GLASS WOOL IS MADE OF...

**98% air in volume**

**95% glass fibres in mass**

**5% binder**

others as traces



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## THE BINDER

Organic material that gives glasswool its mechanical properties



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## INSULATION GLASSES AMONG INDUSTRIAL GLASSES



Certificate for biosolubility

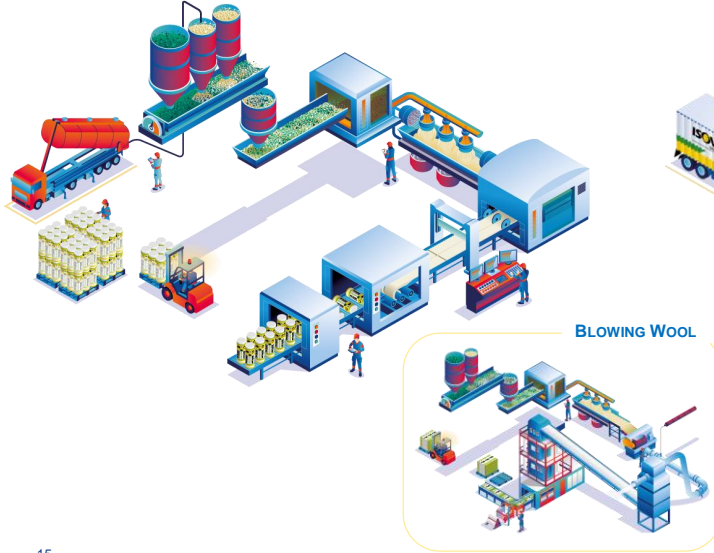
Main Oxides	Flat glass	Container glass	Glass wool	Stone wool	E Glass
<b>SiO<sub>2</sub></b>	<b>72</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>55</b>
Na <sub>2</sub> O+K <sub>2</sub> O	14.5	14	16.5		
CaO	10	10	7	39	21
MgO	4	2	3	4	1
B <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>			4.5		7
Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	0.5	2	3	12	15
Others	Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> Cr <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> , MnO...			

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# PROCESSES IN INSULATION GLASS WOOL



# STONE WOOL

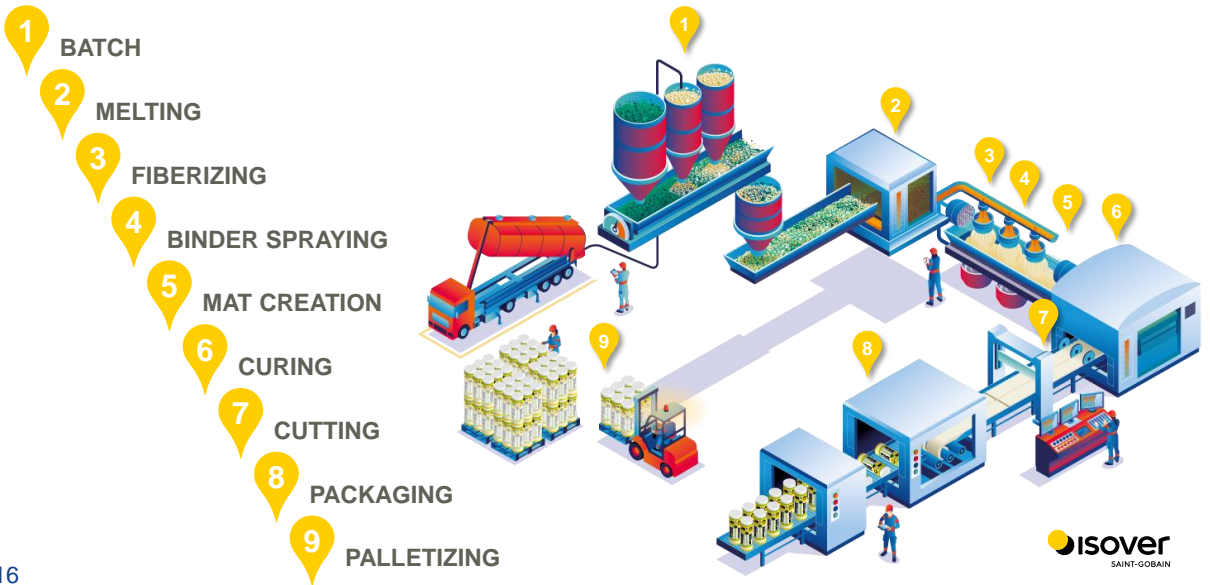


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# GLASS WOOL PRODUCTION PROCESS



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**Candy floss at 1000°C, 2000 rpm, 30 tpd !**



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## SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES RELATED TO GLASS WOOL

A glass-savvy selection

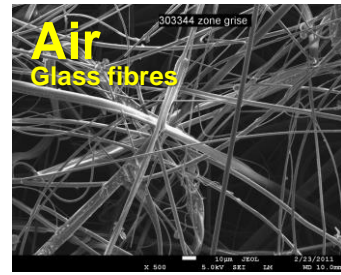
- Glass wool is a remarkable material **but / because it's a glass...**
  - Energy intensive
  - Brittle
  - Low reactivity at room temperature, **highly corrosive at melting temperature**
  - Infinitely recyclable
- Science is necessary to enhance applications
  - Improve performance in use: **thermal in the infrared**
  - Improve comfort during installation: **reduce dust**
  - Improve sustainability: **predict biosolubility, facilitate recyclability, increase spinner lifetime**

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# PHYSICS OF INSULATING MATERIALS



$$\lambda_{eff} = \lambda_a + \lambda_s + \lambda_r$$

$$\lambda_a(T) \propto T^{\alpha \approx -1}$$

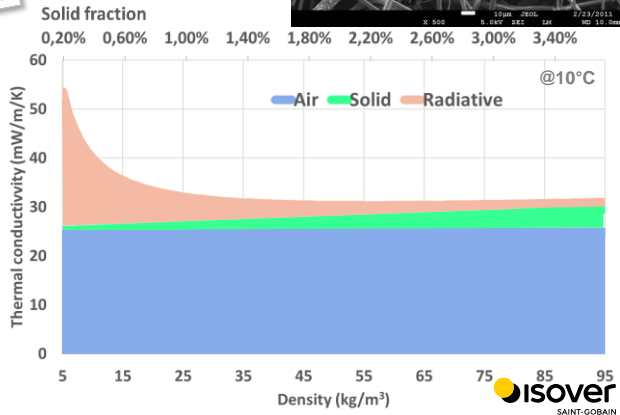
conduction in air

$$\lambda_s(\rho) \propto \rho(T)$$

conduction in solid

$$\lambda_r(\rho, T, e, \dots) = \frac{4\sigma T^3 \rho}{\frac{2}{\varepsilon} - 1 - N(\rho, \dots)e}$$

radiation



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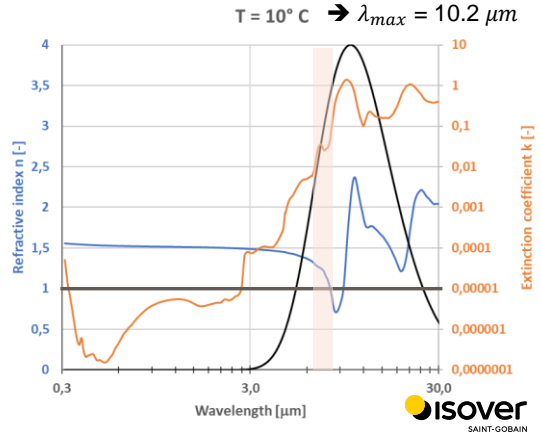
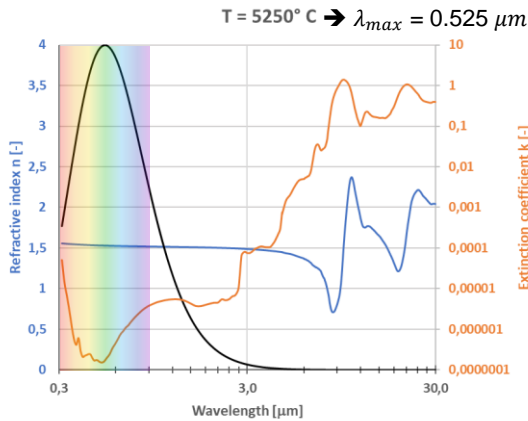
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## SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

Optics in the infrared

- Glass purely refractive in the visible  
Wien's displacement law:  $\lambda_{max} T = 2898 \mu\text{m} \cdot \text{K}$

- The unlucky Christiansen window



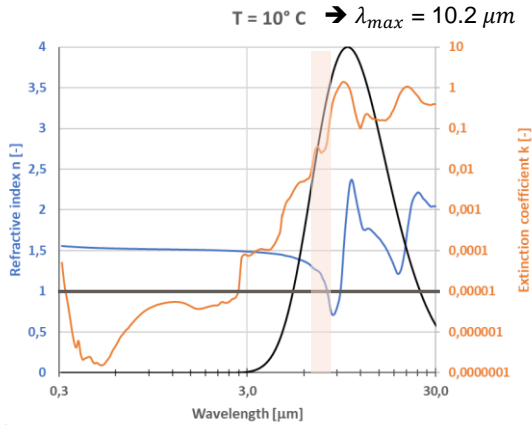
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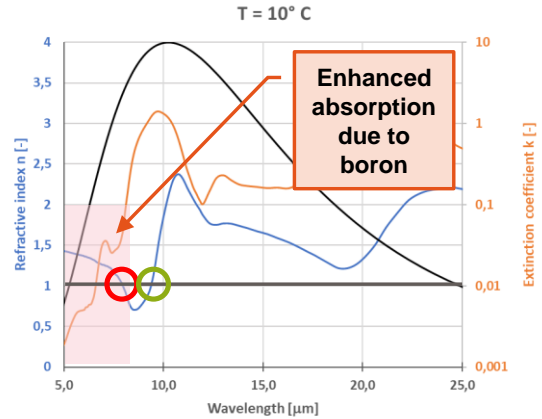
## SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

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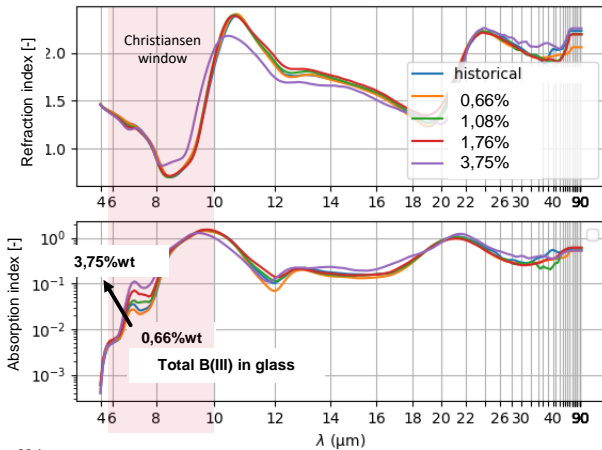


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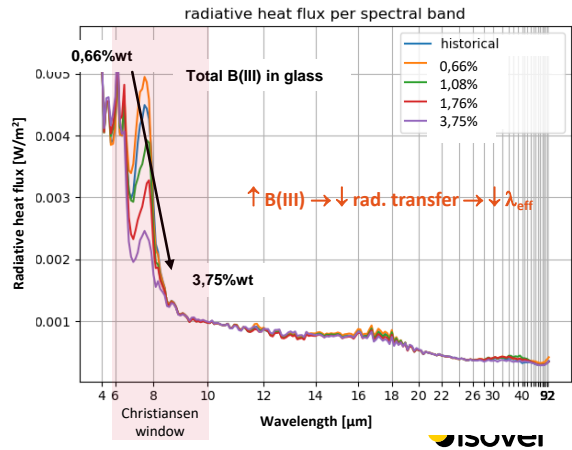
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## THE ROLE OF B(III) IN GLASS WOOL CONDUCTIVITY

- Only absorption in Christiansen window matters, and only B(III) only  
 → Why? How to improve? Substitute?



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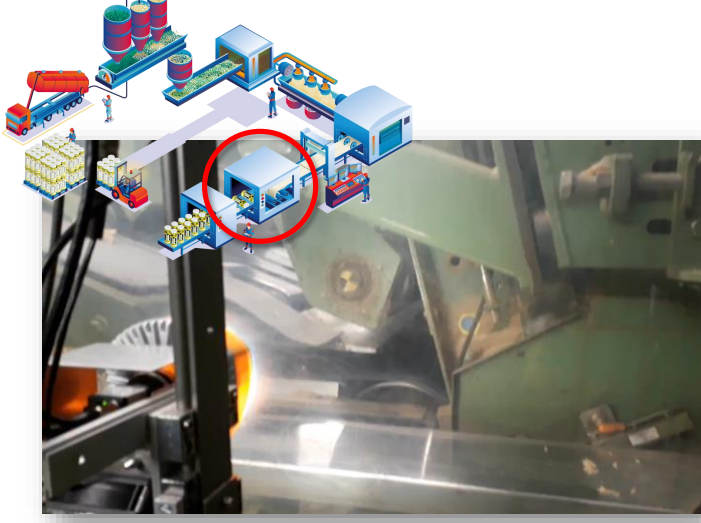


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## SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES TO IMPROVE COMFORT

The mechanics of glass wool: how to avoid brittleness and control the creation of dust



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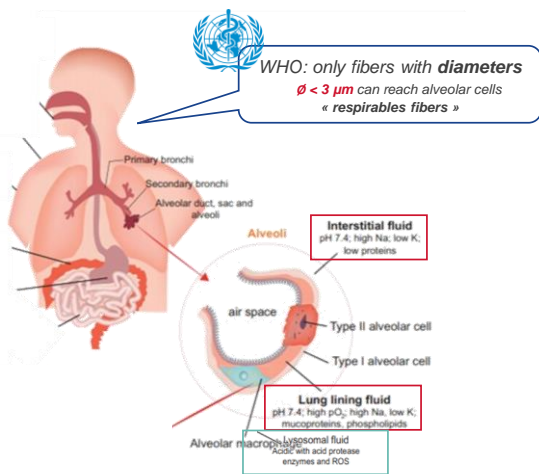
- Intense compression  
→ some fibres fracture
- What is the mechanics behind?
  - How many do fracture?
  - How to avoid/reduce?
    - Lubrication? Glass surface?
    - Process?
    - Glass composition?



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## SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES TO PREDICT BIOSOLUBILITY

A short reminder on biosolubility



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Only thinner fibers can reach deep lung alveolar cells

- **Dissolution** : glass hydrolysis by water
- **Biosolubility** : dissolution modified by proteins, complexing agents
- **Two types of mechanisms:**
  - **Dissolution** inside pulmonary fluids pH 7.4  
→ glasswools fibers
  - **Phagocytose** of fibers with alveolar macrophages pH 4.5  
→ stonewools and Ultimate fibers



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## THE CLP REGULATION

A legal framework for commercialising fibres in EU

- European Classification, Labelling and Packaging of chemical substances and mixtures
- For mineral fibres
  - Cat.1A : known to have carcinogenic potential for humans (asbestos)
  - Cat. 1B : presumed to have carcinogenic potential for humans (refractory ceramic fibers)
  - Cat. 2 : suspected to have carcinogenic potential for humans: glasswool & stonewool



Exemption of Cat. 2 if validated by certified in-vivo test  
**Compulsory for all fibres produced in Europe since 1997**

**All fibres sold in EU since 1997 have been validated ... a “tour de force” in formulation**



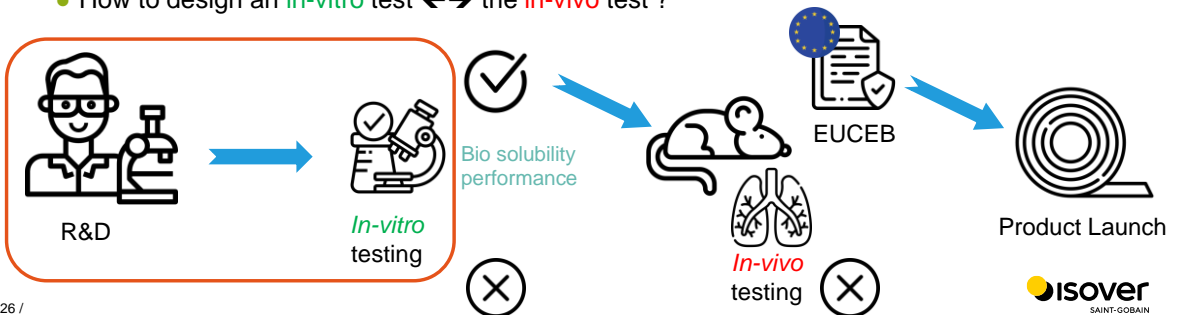
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## TESTING BIOSOLUBILITY: IS IT POSSIBLE TO DO BETTER?

An alternative to killing rats?

- For 3 months, rats breath fibres, sacrificed, lungs analyzed..
  - Measure #fibres, determine  $T_{1/2}$  ; test passed if  $T_{1/2} \leq 40$  days
- How to formulate a glass which fibres would pass the **in-vivo** test?
  - How to design an **in-vitro** test  $\leftrightarrow$  the **in-vivo** test ?



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## SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY

Recycling glass wool is necessary



- Scarcity will arise
  - In 2017, 76% of bottle glass in EU recycled to make bottles.  
2030 target: ~ 90%
  - Today ~10% ext. cullet in flat glass.  
2030 target: ~25%
- Adapt glass recipe (CaO)
- Recycle glass wool



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## WHAT DO DECONSTRUCTION WASTES LOOK LIKE?

Not exactly a glass maker raw material



- Pollutants galore!
  - **Ceramics / Stones / Porcelain**
    - Measure amount?
    - Predict digestion?
  - **Iron & other heavy metals**
    - // Poorly melt
    - Extract ? Melt ?
  - **Aluminium**
    - // + SiO<sub>2</sub> → Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> + Si (m)
    - oxidisers?
  - **Sulfate**
  - **Organic materials – C**
    - efficient & effective oxidation ?

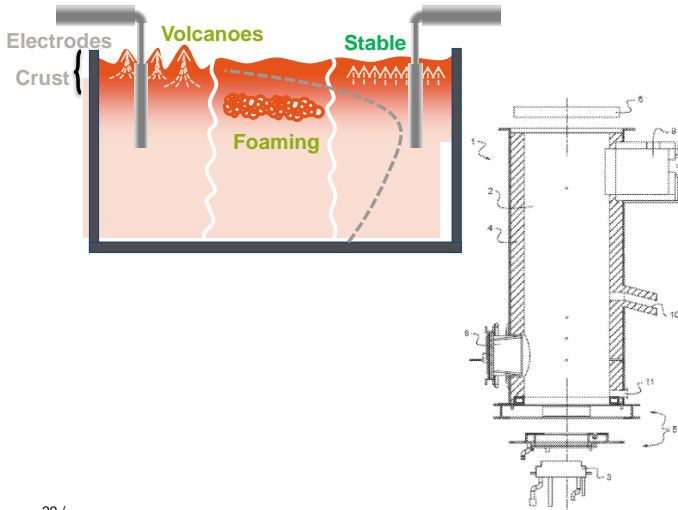


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## SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY

Fundamental limitations in the recycling of glass wool



- Which efficient melting furnace
- Electric furnace?
  - Foaming...
  - Electrode wear...
  - Residence time...
- Submerged Burner Melter?
  - Decarbonize...
  - Control redox...

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## SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGES AT FIBERIZING

...it is eventually a material problem



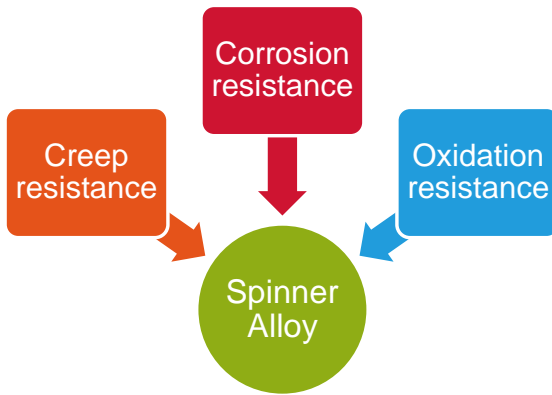
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## WHICH METALLURGY TESTS TO PROBE SUPER ALLOYS...

...in contact with molten glass?



*in rotation with liquid glass at 1000°C – 1200°C*

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- In the lab  
∄ correlation corrosion – creep
- In the plant  
∃ correlation corrosion – creep  
→ very difficult to develop new alloys
- On going work
  - Mechanism at play between glass / alloy / alloy structure
  - Design new test / bench test

## GLASSWOOL IS NOT THAT SIMPLE

Many open technical questions linked to real scientific problems

- Improve **performance**
  - How to enhance and achieve **absorption in the infrared?**
  - How to control **brittleness?**
- Anticipate **reactivity**
  - How to test and predict **biosolubility...**
  - ...while **maintaining hydrolytic** resistance for decades?
- Develop **sustainability**
  - How to facilitate **recyclability?**
  - Design materials that sustain contact with **molten glass**

*Thanks to  
G Barba Rossa  
A Rony  
M Jacquet  
Q Hérault  
V Grigorova-Moutiers  
S Gandon  
...*

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