

Fiche 1

THE RAW MATERIALS SUPPLY GROUP

Origin and Objectives: The Raw Materials Supply Group is a stakeholder group comprising industry, environmental NGOs, trade unions, Member States, candidate countries and the Commission which was established in the Eighties to discuss the issue of the supply of raw materials. The Council, in its Conclusions on the definition of a Community approach on the development of the non-energy extractive industry in 1993, invited the Commission to continue its work to reinforce the competitiveness of the sector. The Raw Materials Supply Group was used as the main forum to take forward this work. Between 1994 and 1999 the RMSG concentrated its work on the following key issues:

- access to information and transparency (resulting in the publication of the Minerals Yearbook in 1995, and the subsequent revision in 1997)
- promoting a balance between the economic interests of the sector and environmental protection requirements, including consideration of the restoration of closed sites
- tailoring training structures to industry requirements (inventory of mining-specific training)
- strengthening industrial co-operation with third countries (including organising a seminar with Russia, China).

In response to two major mining accidents which occurred in Europe in the late 1990s, the Commission underlined the need for the environmental performance of the extractive industry to improve. In its Communications on promoting sustainable development in the EU non-energy extractive industries (COM/2000/265) and Safe operations of mining activities (COM/2000/664) it proposed a number of actions. At the same time, the Council and the European Parliament made a number of recommendations, including one to extend the Membership of the RMSG to include workers federations and NGOs. The RMSG agreed in its meeting on 13 March 2000 to intensify the exchange of information and work.

In order to allow a deeper analysis of the key issues, the following Working Groups were created to meet on an ad-hoc basis between plenary meetings of the RMSG

- Sustainable development indicators
- Sustainability of Extractive Industry Enterprises (*formerly Safe operations of mining activities*)
- Enlargement (*no longer operational*)
- Reform of the RMSG (*no longer operational*)

The aims, objectives and composition of these working groups are described in separate fiches.

Current status: The remit of the Group was extended in January 2004 to consider work on the competitiveness of the non-energy extractive industry. It was further extended in October to include work on the access to raw materials.

To facilitate the administrative organisation and enable easy access by members of the RMSG to all documents, a web-site based on CIRCA was developed. More limited access is available to the public. This virtual "Interest Group", contains all the relevant information on the plenary sessions of the RMSG and as far as finalised, the documents and statements of the ad-hoc working groups.

Fiche 2:

Working Group on Sustainable Development Indicators

Objective: To establish a set of Sustainable Development indicators describing the social, economic and environmental performance of the sector. The indicators, which are to be developed on a voluntary basis by companies and Member States, are intended to enhance the level of communication between industry, its surrounding communities and the relevant authorities.

Participation: The WG, chaired by DG Enterprise and Industry, consists of experts and representatives from Member States, industry, academia and an NGO which have the necessary expertise and interest in the development of these indicators.

Current status: The WG prepared a first set of indicators in early 2002. Thirteen indicators sought to measure the performance of the industry at the company level, while seven were aimed at Member States. The European Federations representing the construction minerals, industrial minerals and metalliferous minerals sub-sectors circulated questionnaires to their members in September 2002. The responses were aggregated by the Federations before being sent to the Commission. The Commission with the assistance of an editorial committee then drafted a report based on the aggregated data from the three sub-sectors.

The RMSG discussed and endorsed the first SDI report, prepared by the WG, at its meeting on 22 January 2004. The report was published in February 2004 on the following website: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/steel/non-energy-extractive-industry/sd-indicators.htm>. It is considered as a baseline report, which will allow for future benchmarking and to establish trends.

The European federations subsequently launched the second data collection campaign by asking their members to complete the related questionnaires for the year 2002. Most federations will combine the data collection for both 2002 and 2003 in one campaign.

The WG will continue to exchange information and will co-operate, where appropriate, with similar exercises outside of the EU. This includes initiatives such as the Minerals & Metals Initiative of Natural Resources Canada, the US Sustainable Minerals Round Table and the Global Reporting Initiative.

Next steps: The WG has started to prepare the second SDI report which will provide feedback on the results for the period 2001-2003. The results will be presented to the plenary meeting of the RMSG on 1 July. The second report will be completed in the months following the meeting. It is considered important to involve the new Member States in future data collection activities and further thought needs to be given to means of achieving greater involvement. The questionnaire and guidance document will also be evaluated on the basis of the last data collection campaign to ensure clarity, and if necessary, it will be revised.

Fiche 3:

Working Group on the Sustainability of Extractive Industry Enterprises

(former WG on Safe operations of mining activities¹)

Objective: To enhance the sustainability aspects of the operations and competitiveness of the extractive industries, in particular; with respect to the development of European legislation and related issues. To provide support for the legislator in the development and implementation of EU legislation but also to analyse other possible alternatives to the traditional legislative approach, such as voluntary initiatives, in order to achieve sustainability within the sector.

Participation: The WG, chaired by Euromines, comprises experts from industry, NGOs, Member States and the Commission.

Work to date: This WG has held several meetings and events to discuss the proposal for a Directive on the management of waste from the extractive industry (MWD). This included a seminar on financial guarantees and securities in the extractive industry, which was hosted by the UK Government and DG Enterprise and Industry in London on 20 January 2003. High-level experts from Europe and North America discussed the various approaches used to fund the restoration of closed mineral workings, their costs and the impacts on industry and the environment.

Members of the WG have contributed significantly to the preparation of the Best Available Technologies (BAT) note on mining residues which was developed by the European IPPC Bureau in Seville. This reference document is considered to be of crucial importance by many stakeholders and authorities in their future decision-making on the management of mining waste. It can be downloaded from: <http://www.jrc.es/pub/english.cgi/0/733169>

The WG also followed the evolution of the amendments to the Seveso II Directive, the final text of which was adopted on 16 December 2003.

At its plenary meeting on 22 January 2004, the RMSG adopted new terms of reference and work programme for this WG. In order to reflect the changed terms of reference, the name of the WG was changed to "Working Group on the Sustainability of Extractive Industry Enterprises" (WG SEIE). The WG held its first meeting under its new name on 27 April 2004. The main topics discussed were the Thematic Strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources, the Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection and the DG ENTR study on minerals planning policies.

Next steps: At the WG SEIE meeting of 26 May new action points were proposed. These included: exploring the use of the EU SDIs as a contribution to the Thematic Strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources; to draft a guidance note regarding financial guarantees (MWD); to contribute to the assessment of the competitiveness of the extractive industry; to create a small task to assist the consultants who will carry out the evaluation of Communication (2000) 265 on Promoting Sustainable development in the EU non-energy extractive industry.

¹ The former WG on Safe operations of mining activities had a more limited scope, namely to exchange information and discuss the follow-up activities announced in the Communication on safe operation of mining activities (COM/2000/664).

Fiche 4:

Working group on Enlargement

(no longer operational)

Objective: Chaired by DG Enterprise and Industry, the role of this WG was to assess the situation of the extractive industries in the Acceding and Candidate Countries; to identify potential problems from enlargement and to define areas for co-operation.

Participation: The WG, chaired by DG Enterprise and Industry, consisted of representatives from the Acceding and candidate countries, industry and other organisations (e.g. EuroGeoSurveys).

Current status: At its meeting of 31 March 2003 the WG agreed to focus on involvement in conferences and workshops set up in these countries to exchange information and best practices on a range of issues including health & safety, land use & rehabilitation, education and training, innovation and development of SMEs.

During 2003 members of the WG were actively involved in different workshops and conferences held in acceding and candidate countries. Furthermore, contacts have been established with representatives from geological institutes, industry and authorities in order to set up workshops in their countries on issues that are of importance to them. This has resulted in a number of Taix²-funded workshops:

- “EU legislation and best practices in the field of land restoration”, Ljubljana, 3-4 February 2004
- “EU legislation and initiatives regarding sustainable development in the industrial minerals sector”, Lodz, 15-17 September 2004
- “Responsible mining in Romania: the implementation of EU legislation and its impact on the European mining industry”, Bucharest, 13-14 April 2005
- “EU legislation and initiatives regarding access to mineral resources in the extractive industry”, Krakow, 13-15 June 2005
- “Proposed EU directive on the management of waste from the extractive industries”, Miskolc, 21-23 November 2005

At the plenary meeting of the RMSG on 22 January 2004, it was agreed that the Group was no longer necessary as the challenges and issues affecting the extractive industries in the Acceding countries and candidate countries would continue to require focused actions to be taken in these countries. However, it was felt that the specific needs and challenges of the extractive industries in these countries could be discussed adequately within the forum of the RMSG at its plenary

² Taix provides short-term technical assistance and supports technical meetings on the implementation or enforcement of the body of law delivered to participants from the PHARE candidate countries at their initiative. More information: <http://taix.be>

meetings as well as within the two remaining Working Groups, dealing with Sustainable Development Indicators and the Sustainability of Extractive Industry Enterprises.

Fiche 5:

Working group on Institutional Reform of the RMSG

(no longer operational)

Objective: This WG was created to review the role and composition of the RMSG, and to identify the most appropriate structure and working methods of the RMSG and possible ad-hoc groups.

Current status: A meeting was held on 16 May 2001, chaired by DG ENTR, where intense discussions took place on the work programme and objectives of the RMSG, and on the status of resolutions made by the Group. Consideration was also given to possible co-operation with other Commission services. The participants expressed the need to reinforce the exchange of information by extending the range of ad-hoc working groups.

Based on the recommendations of the WG, the Commission prepared a Mission statement, which was submitted to the members of the RMSG for comments. However due to new constraints, the Commission suggested reviewing the document to bring it into line with the comitology procedures adopted by the Commission in 2001 and to reconsider membership aspects due to the extension to new Member States. The adoption of the Mission Statement was therefore postponed. At the plenary meeting of 13 February 2003 it was considered not to be a priority in view of the current flexible functioning of the RMSG as a platform for exchanging information.

Fiche 6

CIRCA

Objective: In order to improve the exchange of information among the members of the RMSG, a web site has been developed on the CIRCA facility to produce a virtual "interest group". To enable communication with a wider public, limited access is possible to non-members. This RMSG-site has the following key functions:

List of members (max. two per organisation, country)

Organisation of meetings (agenda, documents, minutes)

Library: all relevant documents or links to them will be stored (including relevant legislation or draft legislation)

Links to other sites of interest (e.g. ministries, competent authorities)

Exchange of information

Virtual meetings (to be developed later, mainly for adoption of documents, reports)

The web-sites address is: <http://www.forum.europa.eu.int/>

Current status: User statistics indicate that the CIRCA library is being used more and more frequently. A new category has been added to the Library, called 'Events'. It contains information on seminars, workshops and conferences, which involves members of the RMSG. The CIRCA managers are Hilde Tobbackx (Tel 0032 2 2953286) and Paul Anciaux (Tel 00 32 2 2953832).