



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

Industrial Transformation and Advanced Value Chains

Resource Efficiency and Raw Materials

## **Raw Materials Week 2019**

21 November 2019, Le Plaza Hotel, Boulevard Adolphe Max 118-126, 1000 Brussels

### **Raw materials meeting societal needs**

#### **1. Nature of the meeting**

This full day event, co-organized by DG GROW, Horizon 2020 – project MIREU (Mining and metallurgy regions of EU), European Mineral Resources Confederation - EUMICON and European Minerals Day, was part of the Raw Materials Week, which included representatives from academia, business, NGOs and governments. The event aimed to address the challenges and needs of the European raw materials sector and the importance of raw materials for local and regional economies.

#### **2. Welcome and objectives of the meeting**

The EC explained that Europe needs to make a better use of its raw materials potential as a decisive factor to allow value chains to remain and be developed in the EU. Important gaps still need to be addressed such as lack of investments in exploration and mining, lengthy permitting process and low public acceptance.

#### **3. Session I: Sustainable supply of European industry needs with raw materials from European Sources**

The objective of the session was to reflect on the importance of sustainable access to Europe's raw material potential as a way of making supply chains more secured, transparent and sustainable.

The session was opened pointing out that our society and economy is very dependent on the environment and raw materials. Humans have already changed 70% of Earth's surface and are using more raw materials than ever. Sustainable development goals provide an appropriate framework but must be more operational, keeping environmental considerations at the core.

Mining in Europe implies better security of supply, control of environmental and labour conditions and more employment in the industrial sector. Better acceptance (promoting that mining can be "something good"), streamline permitting procedures, and good communication are also required. Concerning recycling in Europe, it means making more use of raw materials we have, reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) footprint and create employment opportunities; materials aimed for recycling need to be treated differently to waste and reasonable regulation for transport and handling put in place.

The added value of mining value chains is estimated to be two trillion euros worldwide. Looking back, 1990 with political changes in some parts of Europe and 2015 with commodity prices falling were two important years for increasing sustainability and efficiency of raw materials extraction. Europe has the capacity to build sustainable raw materials value chains but competitiveness of the sector can be hampered by too restrictive legislation.

Future metal demand will be driven by poverty reduction, increasing urbanization and a growing middle class in China and India. Major metals have a wider range of applications and prices change more smoothly; minor metals have few uses and are more affected by

technological changes. During the discussion it was pointed the need to improve European markets, regulatory certainty, incentivise consumers demand for clean products and the lack of market power of minor metals.

## **Session II: Strengthening the European competence and creating public awareness on the role of raw materials sector**

The objective of this session was to provide concrete examples on how to create awareness of the importance of raw materials and integrate them in the regional and local economy.

Impacts of extractive activities in biodiversity can be significant. Quarries are an opportunity to develop biodiversity, changing from the concept of minimizing impacts to having net positive effects. The example of “LIFE in quarries” project was mentioned pointing out the need to make all actors in operations fully involved.

Raw materials and energy are two sectors with a high demand and increasing awareness. A pilot project for installing floating photovoltaic systems in Germany on a flooded quarry (publicly accessible) was presented. Another example showed how mining can contribute to economic development and be complementary with other economic sectors. The case of Milos Island (Greece) where mining provides 30% of GDP and receives annually 200,000 visitors was explained. The main mining company in the area has established an active cooperation with the local community.

The Employers’ Organization of Polish Copper is located in lower Silesia (Poland) where the discovery of copper deposits 60 years ago had a significant impact in regional development. The organization gathers more than 125 entities and one of its main roles is keeping a continuous dialogue with relevant stakeholders based on facts (best practices applied, expenditure and tax in the regions, etc.)

The panel stressed that keeping relations with locals requires companies to be innovative and professional. Common interests rather than differences, and show that extractive industry is a modern sector must be highlighted.

## **Session III: Raw materials as driving force for economic growth and regional competitiveness in times of global changes**

Delegates discussed how to create business opportunities in mining regions. In Lapland (Finland), regional development is focused on boosting activities around specific projects; a sound circular economy cluster exists in Kemi area with mining and metallurgy as an essential part of it. Challenges on social acceptance of mining operations often do not exist at municipal but at national level with little understanding on the situation at local level.

A delegate presented the perspectives for mining critical raw materials (CRM) in France where significant resources exist but there is a strong opposition due to bad image of historic mining. Potential solutions for having better social acceptance are regular and transparent public information, include environmental restoration as a prerequisite when reopening old mines, present long-term and sustainable projects and insert production in local value chains.

South West England is another example of a region with promising projects (lithium, tin), depth deposits potential, and good technical capacity. Challenges to future mining development

include complex mineral rights, protected historic mining areas, and low acceptance among young generations.

Different challenges for maintaining and gaining social acceptance in Poland were presented; following solutions were suggested: protection of selected mineral deposits; preventing misinformation; proper land reclamation; and promoting examples of coexistence of mining with other activities. Finally, a Portuguese case on the potential of converting mining waste into construction materials was presented. The project would improve stabilization of mining waste while reducing the surface affected.

The panel discussion pointed out the importance of keeping companies openess, raise awareness among young generations, and be clear about how long a mine would be operating. Electrification and innovative developments were also considered as essential towards social acceptance.

#### **Session IV: Closing and take away messages**

Each mining development must complete its own mining project or Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), often with little differences between projects. It was suggested to explore the feasibility of a standard license covering over-arching issues (similar to FIDIC contract in the construction sector) with room to include specificities of each project. This would be particularly suitable for EIA reports.

Extractive sector in Europe must communicate better what it is doing well. Mining operations in Europe are investing in electrification, remote operations, R&D, and are continuously improving their environmental performance. More financial support, join up policies (including trade policies) and reduce burden on industries is needed.

There are some extreme perceptions of mining often based on lack of communication. Positive economic benefits and environmental impacts are considered as the main outcomes of sustainable mining. For improving public's perception of mining, the most effective actions are demonstrate that impacts are properly managed and that benefits for local population are considered.

Finally, it was discussed how to strengthen communication between all stakeholders in order to gain social acceptance. Corporate social responsibility reports, group good practices, distribute royalties at regional and local level, and clearly explain life-time of projects were suggested as potential actions.