

MINING AND CIRCULAR REGIONS GO TO BRUSSELS - European Regions are committed to enhancing responsible raw materials production- organised on 16th June 2022, at the North-Sweden European Office, Avenue des Arts 11, 1210 St Josse, Brussels.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Smart Specialisation Partnership on Mining Industry and Global Value Chain (S3P Mining Industry) brings the European mining regions to work together on improving the conditions for sustainable access and supply of raw materials in the EU. EU mining and circular regions have a vital role since these regions have the most significant mineral potential for the discovery and development of mining projects, that is, the basis of a truly sustainable mineral value chain. The choice of this path will also potentially improve the social acceptance of such projects, a challenge that Europe today faces.

In this regard, the S3P Mining Industry organised the roundtable and invited European mining regions' authorities and stakeholders, European Commission and OECD officials, and interregional network representatives to discuss **"How to collaborate to enhance the responsible mineral raw material production in Europe?"** During the roundtables, the discussion focuses on:

- ⇒ How to utilise the ongoing regional investments and projects on critical raw materials in line with the EU strategies for a greater added European value.
- ⇒ How to inspire mineral-rich regions to develop regional innovation ecosystem(s) to be linked up with extended value chains and EU strategic policy initiatives.
- ⇒ How to develop a more integrated approach to connecting upstream and downstream, making use of new socio-economic challenges and opportunities.
- ⇒ How the interregional collaboration will strengthen the capacity of the regional ecosystems to develop.

Today, more than ever, there is an urgent need to strengthen the European Union's strategic autonomy and reduce our dependence on imported mineral raw materials, especially from countries with high geopolitical risk. Recently the EC President, Ursula von der Leyen, emphasised this point, saying that the Commission "would put forward new legislation, the European Critical Raw Materials Act, to identify potential strategic projects and build up reserves where supply was at risk". Following to that, in 30 September, the Commission launched a first version of this document, which confirms the principles of the Raw Materials Initiative, asking for feedback in a "Call for Evidence" process. Solid and integrated industrial ecosystems must be developed to boost the green transition and strong EU economy. That all depends on the success of guaranteeing the supply of the needed strategic and critical mineral raw materials. Mining and metallurgical regions should play a crucial role in achieving these objectives.

- **Follow-up measures to collaborate to increase responsible mineral raw material production in Europe.**
 - ⇒ Mineral Resources Regions should work closely with the European Commission. Therefore, a platform should build for improved dialogue and institutional cooperation. That could be supported by the Joint European cluster (EuroCluster) collaboration engaging the regionally operating clusters.
 - ⇒ EU Mining regions differ significantly in their geographical circumstances, infrastructure and mining history, creating a different operational environment for the mining industry. All regions share the common need for skilled labour forces throughout the mining value chain.
 - ⇒ Launching the OECD Multi-country case study of EU mining regions.

- **Devoted investment models and practices to develop environmentally sound critical raw material exploration and production in the regions is the core to building a regional mining and innovation ecosystem. It will be essential to synergise regional, national and European policy-making and implementation to overcome internal and external barriers in transforming the EU towards a climate-neutral economy. Regional and interregional collaboration is our strength and gives us the power to continue the development of the sustainable and responsible mining industry.**
- ⇒ The Commission should create financial tools specific for those regions through several European programs, like Horizon Europe, Interreg, ERA-MIN, etc. Regional problems, like lack of infrastructure and labour force, and low innovation capacity in thematic areas like digitalisation, automation, and decarbonisation, should be solved as a common European challenge. That should be supported with the dedicated approach by developing synergies between regional, national, and interregional structural funds (ERDF or ESF+ programmes) and Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, Life+, Digital, Single market programmes, InvestEU and other direct financing instruments.
- **Enhancing the circular economy operations is an essential part of the mining industry by providing the basis for societal acceptance.**
- ⇒ Circularity in mineral raw materials should be improved from the very beginning of the industrial value chain, in close collaboration with regional governments, through supporting different instruments for mapping participants and materials at the regional level, to promote and incentivising remining, utilisation, and recycling whenever is technically possible and financially feasible.
- ⇒ Communication concerning the sustainable use of mineral raw materials and the divulgation of the use of the Best Available Technologies (BATs) should be supported by a common strategy developed by Central and Regional governments and by the EC to improve the social acceptance of the mineral resources industry.