

Raw material strategy

It is hoped that the Strategic Implementation Plan will help reduce the EU's dependency on raw materials

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At the beginning of 2013, the European Commission (EC) launched the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on raw materials to help transform Europe into a world leader in raw materials exploration, extraction, processing, recycling and substitution by 2020.

The EC proposed targets to be achieved by 2020 to reduce Europe's dependency on imported raw materials, to replace rare materials with substitutes in some applications and to set up innovative pilot actions. The extractive sector welcomes the acknowledgement that raw materials are important for the overall growth and competitiveness of the European economy and society.

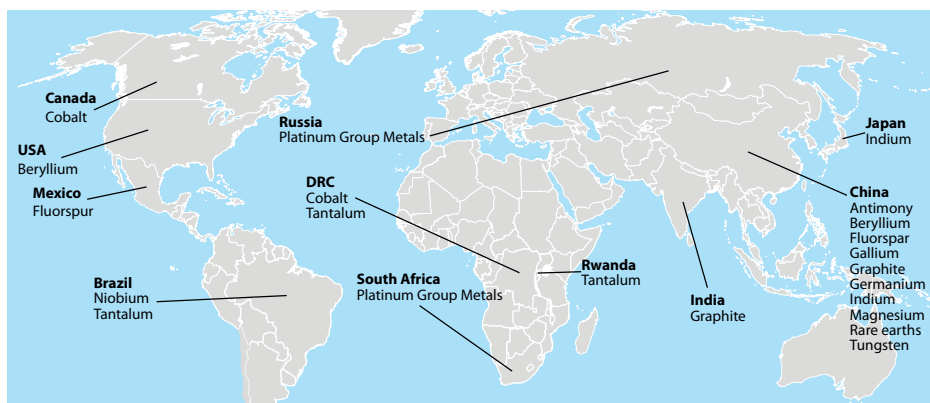
The aim of EIP is to address weaknesses, bottlenecks and obstacles in the European research and innovation system that prevent or slow down good technology ideas and extractive operations being developed and brought to the market.

“Europe has not invested sufficiently in mineral exploration, which is a key factor for maintaining a healthy industry”

The EIP brings together EU member states and other stakeholders (companies, non-governmental organisations, researchers, and so on) to develop joint strategies, bring together capital and human resources and ensure the implementation and dissemination of innovative solutions to our challenges in the field of raw materials.

At the end of September the EC officially launched its Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for the EIP on Raw Materials to address all necessary actions to achieve the objectives and targets of the EIP. This included research and development along the value chain, raw materials knowledge, exchange of best practices, revision of selected legislations, licensing steps, standardisation, and policy dialogues.

It is important that member states recognise that national minerals policies in different



The EC has identified a list of 14 economically important raw materials, many of which are produced abroad and are subject to supply interruption

countries are not always clear and effective enough and that the permitting procedure for mining can be lengthy and lack transparency.

All Euromines members are ready and willing to get involved in the legislative processes to simplify and streamline the sustainable access to domestic raw materials. In particular, by reducing permitting times and increasing the legislative reliability of investments in the extractive sector.

Improving access

Access to land is another key challenge for the industry, where competing land uses may sterilise deposits for future use. Europe has its own natural resources, world-class deposits and still has major potential, yet today its mines occupy no more than a fraction of 1% of the land surface on a temporary basis.

Europe has not invested sufficiently in mineral exploration, which is a key factor for maintaining a healthy industry.

Mark Rachovides, president of Euromines, says: "Sustainable exploitation of a large number of valuable raw materials deposits in Europe can increase Europe's supply of mineral resources, help to ease imports from third countries usually applying lower environmental, corporate and social standards, foster the socio-economic growth of Europe's regions, as well as provide raw materials that are crucial for the competitiveness of several industry sectors and the development of green technologies."

Boosting innovation capacity

The extractive sector has been very supportive of the work conducted so far and welcomes the EC's long-term vision to tap the full potential of primary and secondary materials and to

boost innovation in the EU raw materials sector, while still addressing societal challenges and increasing benefits for society.

Increased populations and a worldwide increase in living standards will continue to drive the growing demand for raw materials. Due to these developments, resource efficiency measures, such as optimising reuse and recycling, as well as extending the lifespan of products, will still not close the material deficit until 2050 at the earliest.

However, through SIP, by 2020 the EIP proposes a number of specific research and innovation actions that will target the beginning of the raw materials value chain and integrate with the downstream industries in order to kick-start the process of transforming the EU raw materials sector.

The EIP will bring advantages in the longer term to all those involved. The idea is to develop:

- ▼ new exemplary cost-effective, environmentally sound and safe technological solutions for securing supply of raw materials; and,
- ▼ knowledge and skills in the EU to attract investment in the industry by bringing new jobs and growth to the EU economy.

"The European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials is an important attempt to build on Europe's strengths," adds Rachovides.

"Our companies lead the world in modern mining and technology. New EU policy initiatives deserve our participation and support. Innovation, research and resource efficiency are themes at the core of what we do."

"Our future is one where technological advances lead our industry and where regulation complements growth." ▼

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