

Nano-particle products from new mineral resources in Europe ProMine



Summary of the Stakeholders Panel at ProMine Information Day in Brussels, 25th February 2010

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¹ PU=public, PP= Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services), RE= Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services), CO= Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)

Background

A high level roundtable was organised by the Geological Survey of Finland – GTK and the ProMine project on 25th February 2010 in Brussels to bring together experts from the mining community and European Commission for an open discussion on the topic: *What are your needs, what can ProMine offer?*

Moderator:

- Pär Weihed, Technical University of Luleå

Participants:

- Milan Grohol, European Commission
- Corina Hebestreit, Euromines
- Dumitru Fornea, European Economic and Social Committee
- Ludo Schyvinck, Minerals Technologies Europe NV/Industrial Minerals Association
- Horst Hejny, Dr. Horst Hejny Consulting/ETP-SMR

Rapporteurs:

- Marie-Louise Wiklund, Geological Survey of Finland - GTK
- Juha Kaija, Geological Survey of Finland - GTK

Opening remarks

In the opening remarks the panellists touched upon three main topics: the need for knowledge of available resources, the goals to improve data bases and the economics for metal mining. The supply for metals in Europe is import-driven and the prices of many metals are expected to rise during the next decade while predicted consumption of metals will increase. There is urgent need to develop mines, ways of mineral usage and recycling of metals. The panellists called for a better dialogue with policy makers. They reminded that the demand for energy is rising and available renewable energy resources are not sufficient to satisfy the energy needs. ProMine offers improved resource databases, new technology and solutions supporting the knowledge based industry but also the other sectors including environmental industry.

Although the use of industrial minerals in Europe is big business, it involves mostly SME's. ProMine still includes only a small group of SME's that could be enlarged with communication about processes and goals. An obstacle in involving more SME's in EU-funded projects might be the actors' competitiveness and the intellectual properties involved.

The question whether the mining industry is acceptable for all aspects of the society (social, economic and environmental) was raised. Nevertheless, future demand for metals exceed known resources and we need new substitutes for known metals as well as more efficient usage of metals.

EESC supports the mining industry provided it fits the criteria social, economical and environmental factors have been fully taken into account (see more information at: http://eescopinions.eesc.europa.eu/EESCopinionDocument.aspx?identifier=ces\ccmi\ccmi060\ces880-2009_ac.doc&language=EN). There are needs for substitutes for critical minerals, their more effective use and improved cooperation and networking with EU and neighbouring countries since the transport of mineral resources from these countries would be much more sustainable. One of the biggest challenges is also that not all EU and neighbouring countries have the capacity to handle mining related environmental problems.

The ProMine project offers a great opportunity to explore knowledge and experience on Pan European level and it could act as a template for new industrial research projects in the future. Above all, ProMine can trigger new initiatives in the field of industrial technologies.

Public-Private-Partnership and FP8

At the end of year 2009, European Commission's Directorate G - Industrial technologies launched 3 new Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) initiatives:

1. Factories of the Future
2. Energy-efficient Buildings
3. Green Cars

These PPPs represent means of boosting research in three large industrial sectors - automotive, construction and manufacturing - with the main goal of significantly contributing to more green and advanced production and sustainable economy (see more information at:

http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial_technologies/lists/list_114_en.html)

Discussion about the FP 8 Programme has started. The structure is still unclear and new joint technological initiatives can be used in formulating the FP8 Programme. It is important to bear in mind that the intention of the Framework Programme is not to create projects from projects, but to solve existing problems.

Image of the mining industry in Europe

As the discussion was taken to the floor, members of the audience commented on the image of the mining industry, also touching upon the responsibilities of image building. Many were concerned that the general knowledge of metals and their usage is poor in the society and amongst decision-makers. Social acceptability of the mining industry is closely related to the technology used. If mining industry is able to provide clean technology in its processes, its social acceptance will also improve. The entire mining sector is responsible for the image of mining. The mining industry is conceived as an old-fashioned and dirty industry although there are good examples of innovative projects.

Better usage of known resources, best practices, intelligent mining, invisible mine concept, the idea of certificates for environmentally sound production of metals (“green global metals”) and life cycle analysis for metals were discussed. It was recognised that the active debate on these issues is important and the whole community should be able to contribute. ProMine could promote the public image of mining industry as innovative sector and this would be extremely valuable for the industry.

Mineral supply and mineral potential

The topic of mineral supply and mineral potential were discussed in numerous addresses. New technology, better available data and enhanced modeling techniques show potential in new and already explored sites in the EU (e.g. Fennoscandia), but also outside the EU (e.g. Ukraine). In discussions with decision-makers it is important to show the potential of occurrence and accessibility of minerals. The Raw Materials Initiative (RMI) of the European Commission addresses the same topic: where and how can we find economically accessible minerals in an environmentally sustainable way? There is need for European co-operation and conformity in regulations in safeguarding raw material security. RMI will be finalised in 2010 and contributions are needed from the stakeholders. More information on the RMI:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/ef/document.cfm?action=display&doc_id=894&userservice_id=1

New mineral products

The floor also discussed new products and converting waste streams into new products and recyclability of products. Especially waste-to-products should attract general public. In ProMine the whole chain from extractive industry to end-user industry is covered, and focus has been put to the development of new mineral products. This was considered very positive and ambitious.

Health and safety issues related to nano-materials were discussed briefly. In fact in ProMine not all products are nano and end-user industry is well aware of the health and safety issues related to nanotechnology. It was agreed that sustainability issues need more attention. European Commission’s Joint Research centre is active in the field of nanotoxicology and they have large database about nano-materials. ProMine should establish contacts to JRC (see more information at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/jrc/index.cfm?id=5570>)

Concluding remarks

In the wrap-up of the panel discussion chair Pär Weihed said it is too early to talk about ProMine’s legacy. However, the tone of the discussion had been extremely positive with lots of vivid addresses both from the panel members and the floor and everyone was convinced that ProMine will be a success.