

COBALT note on the European Innovation Partnership Annual Conference - Taking a glimpse on civil society perspectives

A representative of the COBALT consortium attended the European Innovation Partnership Annual Conference on Dec. 5, 2013. The conference indicated the wide spectrum of opportunities for especially industry and academia to engage in activities framed by the EIP. Yet, a plethora of various aspects throughout the whole value chain also address civil society or the individual consumer in both an active or more passive way. Please find our summary of the presentations below.

Commissioner Tajani (DG Enterprise and Industry) opened the European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials Annual Conference by underlining the important of secure and sustainable supply and use of raw materials for societal well-being in Europe.

Relevance of supply for societal well-being

Streamlining various raw material challenges in national policy agendas

Both the Polish and the Austrian government representative pointed out that raw materials challenges have been lifted highly on the political agenda at EU Member States level. Henceforth, EU Member States have been following this call by proposing a portfolio of actions (such as promoting mineral policy strategies or supporting so-called knowledge and innovation communities - KIC) addressing raw material challenges. In this respect, the Austrian representative mentioned that different facets of the raw materials debate such as environment protection as well as industrial competitiveness need to be streamlined in one policy strategy.

From the perspective of industry (Mr Jean-Luc Deleersnyder, CEO of Sibelco – supplier for industrial minerals) a series of actions can leverage certain raw material challenges. Among these are, for example, creating public awareness, acceptance and trust in particular with regard to transparency on impacts and industrial processes (through initiatives such as the European Minerals Day – an annual event for where companies are opening their sites for the public).

Public awareness for industry sustainability performance

Responsible mineral development on the international agenda

Engaging in an international perspective, Mr Wong (World Economic Forum) coined the term "responsible mineral development" (RMD). However, many international examples showed that stakeholders are not necessarily in agreement on best way to achieve this, and, moreover, the first step for opening a dialogue bears several challenges. These comprise for example limited capacity of certain groups or inadequate inclusion of stakeholders in decision processes. Moreover, equitable distribution of economic and other benefits as well as risks from mining are key issues for a broader acceptance for minerals development.

Mr Mattia Pellegrini and Mr Milan Grohol (DG Enterprise and Industry) presented the broader framework of the European Innovation Partnership and its link to Horizon 2020. Transparent procedures and comprehensive accounting (e.g. taking into account post-mine operation and rehabilitation) for mining operations are prominent issues for concerned stakeholders (e.g. local municipalities) affected by mining operations. In this regard, DG Enterprise is preparing a report on Member States best practices for extraction authorisation or permitting systems. Furthermore, research and innovation for alternative (e.g.

Alternative (e.g. socially acceptable) and environmentally sound mining technologies in Horizon 2020

COBALT

COntributing to **B**uilding of **A**wareness, **L**earning and **T**ransfer of knowledge on sustainable use of raw materials

socially acceptable) and environmentally sound mining technologies and concepts are part in the EU Commission's new research programme Horizon 2020.

A network on sustainable solutions for raw material supply and use

From the perspective of research tackling raw material challenges, Ms Margareta Groth explained that ERA-MIN ⁽¹⁾ developed a research roadmap for sustainable solutions for raw material supply and use. Beyond technological means for example on mining/quarrying or mineral processing, she emphasised that focus also lies on mine closure, remediation and rehabilitation as well as minimising the environmental and social impact of mining.

As different raw materials distinguish themselves by geological availability across Europe, several representatives highlighted the regional importance and associated challenges of raw materials management.

Regional importance and challenges in Europe

The role of civil society and end-users for innovation

In general, DG Regio pointed out the importance of innovation for tackling raw materials challenges. More specifically, the involvement of civil society and end users in the entrepreneurial process and ultimately innovation are one way to foster smart specialisation in regions. In particular, it refers to the notion of a circular economy where involvement for civil society and users are crucial for issues of such as Eco-design as well as re-use and recycling.

Representing the region of Lapland (Finland), Ms Kristiina Jokelainen generally indicated the challenge of finding a balance between economic, environment and social development of regions. In this regard, the mining sector plays a major role employment and regional development whereas the impacts on and co-existence with traditional economic sectors such as tourism or agriculture are to be taken into account. Furthermore, she highlighted that importance of Finland's recent Action Plan on Sustainable Extractive Industries. ⁽²⁾ Among eco-efficiency and recycling in mining operations, it foresees a good dialogue among effected stakeholders and, consequently, coming up with a "social" licensing approach. Similar to Lapland's approach for sustainable raw material extraction, the region of Andalucía (Spain) emphasised the importance of transparency for licensing in the mining sector ⁽³⁾.

Extractives industries opportunities and challenges – balancing economic, environment and social aspects for the development of regions

RMCs stressing civil society aspects for sustainable raw materials management

Among the range of ideas for Raw Material Commitments (RMC⁴) presented at the conference, several ones can be associated to civil society aspects for sustainable raw materials management: For example, the RMC BioMore (University of Nancy) addresses technological solutions for mining operations which are less intrusive for other land use purposes and, therefore, socially more acceptable. Another RMC WEEE2020 (WEEE Forum) targets new concepts for behavioural change of citizens achieving higher collection rates of Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE).

¹ a network of European organisations owning and/or managing research programs on raw materials.

² Action Plan on Sustainable Extractive Industries

³ Mining andalusian portal i.e. displaying a map with all the mining sites and licences given out.

⁴ Raw Material COmmittments are non-legally binding partnerships between actors from the private, public and non-governmental sectors including academia. They are closely linked to the objectives of the European Innovation Partnership.



COBALT - Contributing to building of awareness, learning and transfer of knowledge on sustainable use of raw materials

Achieving a more sustainable management of raw materials requires integrating the expertise and views of a multitude of different actors across the entire value chain as well as life-cycle from exploration, extraction through production and final consumption to re-use and after-use. Discussions and debates on these issues must, therefore, include industry and businesses perspectives, as well as policy making, civil society, science and academia. Thus, COBALT



(<http://www.cobalt-fp7.eu/>) aims to bring together these stakeholder groups and stimulates a joint debate on sustainable raw materials management.



Contact

Andreas Endl & Gerald Berger
Vienna University of Economics and Business
Welthandelsplatz 1, Building D1, A-1020 Vienna, Austria
phone: +43-1-31336-5452,

In case you are interested in taking part in COBALT events (conferences and workshops), please contact us:

Email: cobalt@cobalt-fp7.eu