



Views from North Norway on the Proposal for a regulation: European Critical Raw Materials Act

North Norway European Office

North Norway European Office was established 1 January 2005 and is owned by the two northern most counties in Norway: Nordland and Troms & Finnmark. The office is located in Brussels and serves as a door opener and an arena maker for Northern Norwegian actors in relation to the European Union. The office holds an informational role, with particular focus on the European Arctic policy, regional policy, current industrial policies and Northern European cooperation.

We support the European Commission's initiative on Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) and would like to take the opportunity to welcome the announcement of the Green Alliance and the intention of establishing a Strategic Partnership on Raw Materials and Batteries with Norway.

The need and demand for minerals is increasing and minerals are becoming an crucial part of the regional, national and global geopolitical game. North Norway as a region stand out as a particularly important area for the sustainable utilisation of these resources. It is estimated that the potential in Norway for known and investigated metal and mineral resources to be around NOK 2,500 billion in first-hand value.

A good portion of these resources are located in the northern part of the country. North Norway has a process industry and renewable hydropower, which provides the region a starting point for refining the mineral resources and developing new products in the value chain from raw material to finished product.

In addition, North Norway is part of the North Calotte region which stretches over 3 regions, including North Sweden and North and East Finland. The North Calotte bedrock has the potential to provide with 26 out of the 30 raw materials listed on the European Commission's CRM list.

With this backdrop, the two counties of North Norway decided a joint mineral strategy in 2019. The vision for this mineral strategy is to develop a sustainable mineral industry in North Norway to contribute to the implementation of the green shift. The wider aim is to establish a framework for the mineral industry that stimulates and lays the foundation for a value-creating and profitable industry, where the companies deliver at the highest level of social and environmental sustainability. The following points are extracted from the mineral strategy and considered to provide essential input to the European Critical Raw Materials Act, as well as a couple of examples of great practices in our region.



Land-use and permitting processes

Starting a new mineral business may take a while in Norway and the permitting processes are often considered as a barrier for new mineral projects.

Mineral operations often require large areas and get into conflict with other interests, such as reindeer husbandry, the environment and cultural heritage. The time it takes from an occurrence is detected until it can possibly be put into operation is perceived by many as long and unpredictable. At the same time, it is an industry that requires long-term capital.

The region aims to design a framework that will encourage a larger share of the value creation from mineral activities to be returned to the local community. The CRMA has the potential to help facilitate permitting processes for mining projects in selected prioritised areas with a fast-track regulatory process, such as intended within the European Hydrogen Corridors.

Conflict solutions

In connection with the planning, development, start-up or operation of mineral activities/mining, situations may arise with unnecessarily long processes or decisions that may create conflicts.

Consideration should be given when it comes to establishing a regional emergency response team that can assist in these conflicts. Such a team could consist of representatives from, for example, municipalities, public and private actors and companies, organisations, and so on.

Cooperation with indigenous people

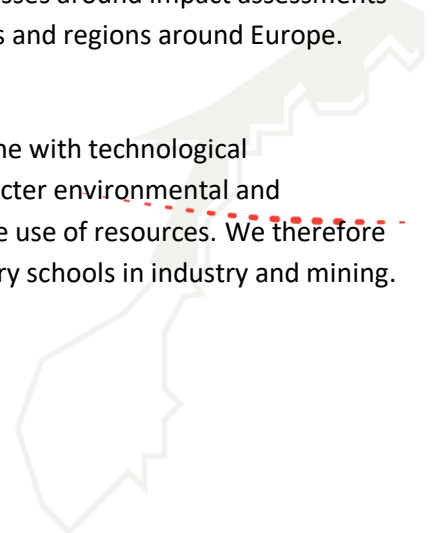
Business activities that are based on mineral resources in traditional Sami areas should benefit and directly strengthen and develop Sami culture and local communities. In our region, an initiative will be used to establish a forum between reindeer herders and the mineral industry with the responsibility of preparing a white paper to deal with the development and establishment of mineral activities in areas with reindeer husbandry. Relevant business organisations should be consulted when creating such a meeting place.

Responsible mining

Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM) is a responsible mining system developed in Canada that has been adopted in Finland. The aim is to get companies to develop internal standards and processes to ensure that conflicts that may arise between mining companies, the environmental sector and the surrounding community, are handled in a responsible manner. Based on experience from other countries on sustainability, it may also be useful to include Social Impact Assessment (SIA) in the work on the mineral industry's social acceptance and in the state requirements for the content of impact assessments. The combination of TSM and SIA and a better implementation of the processes around impact assessments will raise the industry's acceptance and credibility in local communities and regions around Europe.

Strengthen education and R&D

Demands for professional expertise and innovation are increasing in line with technological developments in the mineral industry. The industry is experiencing stricter environmental and competence requirements, requirements for efficiency and sustainable use of resources. We therefore see the need to strengthen education that is offered in upper secondary schools in industry and mining.



This also applies to the expertise at universities and research environments on industrial development based on mineral resources. Allocations for industry-oriented R&D in the field need to be strengthened.

Collaboration across actors

The development and facilitation of the mineral industry is complex, and requires cooperation on several levels, local, regional, national and international. It is important that practical experience can be used to develop good processes and relationships. The CRMA could help facilitate this by developing strong value chains that includes networks and platforms where all interested actors could meet and exchange knowledge and experience that could help strengthen different national policies.

Need for capital

Major establishments in the mineral sector require a lot of long-term capital. Consideration should be given to how the EU, European alliances, organisations and national authorities can contribute to raising such capital.

R & D

The establishment of mineral activities has both positive and negative consequences for the local community where the establishment takes place. Positive consequences include the creation of new jobs, increased activity levels and increased incomes, while negative consequences may be land use and adverse impacts on the environment. The Norwegian Mineral Industry cooperates closely with international players on the development of the mining industry of the future and participates in several ongoing research projects with various R&D environments to increase knowledge about marine landfills. Environmental standards should be developed for landfill on land and sea. Furthermore, research efforts should be increased to look at the consequences of landfill and sea deposits.

Recycling

There is also an increased need to recycle waste to reduce the need for primary raw materials and the negative environmental impacts related to primary extraction. Sustainable social development therefore requires developed countries to contribute to reducing global resource demand through recycling and environmentally friendly production.

On behalf of North Norway,

Nils Kristian Sørheim Nilsen

Director

North Norway European Office

Avenue des Arts 10-111210 Saint-Josse-ten-Noode

Brussels

Belgium

Contact: +32 471 52 02 68 / brussel@northnorway.org

