

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT EVENT SUMMARY

MINERALS FOR STRATEGIC AUTONOMY AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOOSTING CRITICAL RAW MATERIALS ACT IMPLEMENTATION

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1 SUMMARY

[CIRAN](#) (**Critical RAw materials extraction in enviroNmentally protected areas**) is an EU-funded Horizon Europe project focused on developing policies that balance the need for critical raw materials with the protection of sensitive ecosystems. The project aims to reconcile these societal goals where they may diverge, by exploring sustainable extraction policies and leveraging social contract models to inform local communities, industry, and policymakers. Since inception in January 2023, CIRAN has brought together research, industry and policy-making partners from thirteen Member States, further ensuring diverse and complementary knowledge- and experience-sharing with dynamic external expert groups and a community of practice that includes local authorities, environmental managers and industry.

In anticipation of its conclusion in December 2025, CIRAN convened these actors and other thought leaders in policy making to the European Parliament in Brussels on 13 October 2025 for a lively session on “**Minerals for Strategic Autonomy and Regional Development - Boosting the Critical Raw Materials Act Implementation**”. This event was hosted by [MEP Hildegard Bentele](#), who played a leading role in the development of the Critical Raw Materials Act, continues to monitor its implementation closely as the Parliament’s Representative on the EU’s Critical Raw Materials Board and advocates *inter alia* for strategic autonomy and sustainable resource governance in Europe.

2 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT SESSION

Context

The Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) works to the EU’s energy transition and climate-neutrality goals but also to rising regional and economic security concerns. It establishes ambitious targets of 10% domestic extraction of CRM, 40% domestic processing and 25% of domestic recycling by 2030, expedites permitting for strategic projects and enhances supply disruption monitoring, while upholding rigorous social and environmental standards. Without domestic processing, the recycling goal is not achievable.

Rebuilding European minerals capacity however faces a fundamental challenge: finding the right balance between European public interest priorities of access to minerals and societal concerns about environmental impacts and community interests. This tension is exacerbated by rising Euroscepticism, institutional distrust, concerns about equitable distribution of benefits and burdens, and a questioning of current socio-economic development trajectories. Traditional approaches relying predominantly on technical assessments, expert consensus, and promises of economic development have proven markedly insufficient in addressing these legitimate societal concerns.

These tensions pose a significant risk to European cohesion and resilience, as resource-rich regions (often located in undeveloped areas) may feel they carry a concentrated environmental and social burden of serving broader EU strategic objectives. Without meaningful engagement towards reliable employment opportunities, benefit-sharing mechanisms and integration with regional development frameworks, implementation of the CRMA could inadvertently deepen territorial disparities and undermine the solidarity that underpins the European project.

Compounding these challenges is the striking spatial reality revealed by CIRAN’s research: more than 85% of known EU critical raw material deposits are located either below environmentally protected areas or within 5 km proximity—creating an apparent conflict between resource security and nature conservation objectives that conventional extractive models may not adequately resolve.

CIRAN was designed to not only address these challenges, by developing, testing and validating processes to arrive at systemic policy-making, sound decision-making and sustainable consensus-building, but also spotlight and realise the **opportunity of responsible mineral operations in Europe** on the basis of a system-oriented assessment and the co-creation of knowledge with and by communities located in or nearby environmentally protected areas.

CIRAN

CIRAN is structured around seven interconnected work packages complementing each other towards a shared goal of efficient policy making (WP6). [Notable findings](#), which were briefly presented on 13 October, include:

Good Practice Case Studies

[Extractive activity projects](#) were assessed, from exploration to post closure, all located in or proximity to or interaction with protected sites across the EU: all demonstrate **good practices in spatial, mineral and environmental governance, attention to whole project lifecycle management including end of mine or project life provision, and continuous stakeholder engagement and communication**. Although specific to a time and place, these cases offer invaluable insights to enhance and maintain project acceptance over time. This resulted *inter alia* in [comprehensive guidelines](#) for conducting rehabilitation activities on mine sites located in environmentally protected or sensitive natural areas, whether on an ongoing, progressive basis during operations or at End of Life of the mine.

Nexus of Societal Vulnerabilities

Most Member States assessed for [fitness-for-purpose of regulatory frameworks](#) apply a balanced approach to reconciling mining and environmental protection, with some moderately favouring environmental protection. As the CRMA and other European frameworks, such as the [Nature Restoration Regulation](#), are implemented, it is expected that both requirements will increase. **Faster and more effective balanced decision-making is and will be needed, currently hindered by governance frameworks, resource identification, spatial planning and designations, administrative procedures, stakeholder engagement and social acceptability and spatial data, reporting and expertise**. This analysis will be contextualised by the CIRAN Scenarios for 2035, four narratives of possible futures for the EU, integrating drivers, trends, uncertainties, CRM outlooks and actions needed to materialise. This will foster forward- and critical-thinking, allowing Europeans to reflect on short- and long-term implications of daily practices and the relevance of CRMs to our society.

Performance Appraisals

The mid- to long-term environmental and societal impacts of extractive activities in protected areas were reviewed, looking at real-case performance gaps to compare what was expected from technologies, processes, and strategies at the design and permitting stage with what communities and ecosystems experience at the implementation stage. The dimensions considered in the assessment included nature conservation goals and constraints, mining processes and technologies used, and the given geological settings (type and characteristics of CRM deposits). Analysis of technical feasibility revealed that deep mining operations employing advanced automation, underground processing, and precise drilling techniques can significantly reduce surface impacts, though effectiveness remains highly site-specific. This resulted in a structured [three-tier decision-making protocol](#) using the DPSIR (Drivers-Pressures-State-Impact-Response) framework to balance competing societal needs, beginning with policy-level evaluation of critical raw material needs, proceeding through technical and economic feasibility assessment, and concluding with site-specific environmental impact evaluation.

The protocol establishes that **extraction beneath protected areas may be justified where demonstrable critical raw material need exists, geological conditions permit minimal surface impact, appropriate technologies can be implemented, environmental values can be adequately protected, and stakeholder concerns can be effectively addressed.**

Inclusion and Knowledge Co-creation

[Public debate narratives](#) in five Member States about the exploration and extraction of CRMs in Europe in general, and particularly in environmentally protected areas, were studied and tested with focus groups and in public meetings. Narratives are often divided along two main cleavage lines: security of supply, mostly held by politicians and businesses arguing that Europe needs to increase its own production of critical raw materials in order to reduce its reliance on imports from China and other non-EU partner countries; and environmental protection, from populations and environmentalists focusing on (adverse) impacts. Despite commonalities across Europe and amongst stakeholders, narratives are influenced by economic and energy development levels and social perception of climate change risk. Beyond the environmental aspects, a clear need emerged for early, genuine, and inclusive public participation in decision-making processes related to mining projects. Resulting from this analysis, guidelines for public engagement and dialogue are forthcoming.

*“What these narratives show, in essence, is the mismatch of expectations or, if you like, the misalignment of interests. That is, we have managed to find, above all, **what divides Europeans and not what unites them**. They also display a contradiction in itself between both sides of the ‘barricade’. On the one hand, European leaders are committed to the development of Europe as a community and the global policies that they consider to be the best for our collective future. On the other hand, the populations are also concerned about their future, but with different beliefs, since they often prefer to position themselves as the last guardians of the regions’ status quo, preserving ‘nature’ as it is and preventing its destruction by the so-called economic interests. In this antagonism, the fact is that none of the sides holds the truth or have reason on their side. Likewise, **the problem seems to boil down to how European leaders are leading**, particularly on how they are implementing top-down politics.”*

Towards Efficient Policymaking

Engagement on mineral priorities must shift from polarised debates to nuanced discussions aiming to balance economic, environmental and societal objectives. As the EU strengthens its efforts to secure critical resources to achieve strategic policy objectives, building public trust through transparent governance, inclusive active engagement and sustainable mining practices are essential. Stakeholder co-creation processes – bringing together industry (with innovative business models and technologies), governments (with robust governance, permitting and grievance mechanisms backed by a sufficient number of experts and administrators), and communities (with co-created visions for the future) – offer the most promising path towards harmonising EU resource security with environmental stewardship and social equity. A promising approach lies in the development and implementation of novel social contracts, such as **Community Development Agreements (CDAs) – a tool that can help bridge the gap between EU or national strategic priorities and regional or community needs while strengthening European cohesion and resilience**. CDAs are binding agreements between local authorities, mining companies, and communities, requiring no change to national legal frameworks whilst adapting their application to each area, including in terms of environmental protection and socio-economic development.

Debate

MEP Hildegard Bentele anticipated the CIRAN findings in framing the discussion to focus **on trust and legitimacy**. Whilst directly impacting mineral stakes and industrial policy, the difficulty for Europeans of reconciling strategic ambitions and societal expectations is much broader. In fact, mineral and legitimacy deficits show similar dynamics and likely require common solutions to overcome the distance between European goals and the communities that must be ultimate beneficiaries of these approaches. These communities, across the EU and in a variety of circumstances, are exercising the democratic rights that found the European ideal, and must be embraced as legitimate partners in designing and realising a European future.

The value of engagement, citizen participation and co-design shone through all panel interventions.

Antonella Valmorbida, Secretary General of the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA), a CIRAN partner, demonstrated that for citizen participation to be properly orchestrated and produce results, trust-building is required. This entails appropriate information-sharing, encompassing all dimensions of the issue to address and stakes to consider, embracing the complexity of these elements to build durable, multi-level partnerships.

Well-informed citizens can be fully contributing partners in any development process, rather than simply beneficiaries – and they certainly should never be enemies...

Päivi Ekdahl, Director of the Regional Council of Lapland in Finland, underlined the need to consider each stakeholder group for its own needs and expectations: even where positive sentiment towards mining and mineral operations is prevalent, some stakeholders – particularly indigenous groups – require consideration of specific, legitimate concerns linking *inter alia* to livelihoods or cultural heritage.

Local approval is a condition, not an obstacle – making permitting a collective effort of all stakeholders, from operators to regulators and communities.

Jean-Pierre Kucheida, President of the *Association des Communes Minières de France*, acknowledging the burden still borne by legacy mining regions and municipalities, resulting from then-prevalent colonialist and extractivist approaches, emphasized the need to focus engagement on a shared vision for the future, embracing the transformation of both landscapes and mentalities and requiring implementation of better/best practices. At a time when Europe must focus on the mines of tomorrow to avoid being left behind by systemic rivals and allies alike, responsible operations are the key: creation of value at local levels, mitigating and balancing adverse impacts, is how we can avoid past mistakes to forge better options for the future.

There are significant issues, but they can be addressed with goodwill, when parties engage in good faith: beyond legacy, present and future options are what matter for mining regions.

But such engagement cannot happen in a vacuum, and CIRAN findings demonstrate the necessity of robust governance frameworks to foster such participation: from policy vision to regulatory coherence and administrative capacity, public authorities remain the lynchpin of successful engagement strategies towards constructive partnerships.

This was clearly acknowledged by **MEP Hildegard Bentele**, with the ‘trustworthiness’ of local authorities a key factor for constructive dialogue. This is closely linked to their capacity to acknowledge and draw lessons from past experiences, and to recognise the imperative, opportunity and challenges of transformation. EU and national authorities also play a critical role, defining the vision for transformation and empowering local authorities with the tools to take ownership of their role in a wider dynamic – rather than see it imposed on them and the communities to which they are accountable: goodwill, good faith engagement rather than ideological positioning, are also founded on democratic decision-making and prioritisation.

Policy shapers are accountable for the “big picture”, which must be based on facts, transparency, and respectful of democratic decision processes.

Tension between global and local goals (and constraints) is frequent, echoed **Antonella Valmorbida**: it may be more visible with regard to mineral development, but the fundamental dynamic is the same across various sectors – energy, transport, any infrastructure – and requires local authorities balance all perspectives. The EU should not unilaterally impose mineral development in regions or localities where it is not willingly accepted, without contradicting its own values and weakening its democratic foundations. Defining and scoping legitimate European interests, a new facet of *raison d’Etat*, necessarily entails adopting and implementing compensatory measures at least, and ideally shaping true local benefits for affected communities, to build lasting acceptance.

We must engage in complexity, creating the conditions for real dialogue – or continue to face conflict, which may ultimately lead to the collapse of communities; acknowledging tension and engaging transparently to build consensus is how we live up to our European values and shape our shared future.

Understanding the source and specificities of local concerns is paramount to correctly address expectations and/or opposition, underlined **Päivi Ekdahl**: for example, it would be easy to consider Finnish Lapland, a huge (3 times the size of Belgium) and sparsely populated (population 176,000) land area “empty”, but a third of that territory is already a no-go zone for extractives as it is Sámi traditional land, most of the region is in fact used for traditional activities (reindeer husbandry) and 30% of it is subject to environmental protection. Understanding these specificities allows more nuanced and effective decision-making towards co-usage of land, correctly balancing the needs of stakeholders and the stakes at EU, national and local levels.

The role of local authorities can be further complicated when opposition to projects can be driven from local concerns as well as external actors pushing a wider agenda.

At the heart of purposeful engagement is information, agreed **Jean-Pierre Kucheida**: its quality and accessibility are essential factors, but also acknowledging the risk of disinformation – whether from external sources driving a separate agenda, or from small groups of interest holders overlooking collective, or even local, interests. Sound information for effective decision-making is the responsibility of all actors in the partnership.

Civil Society Organisation positioning can evolve with public opinion shifts over time or in different locations: holding ourselves and other actors accountable for consistency is important to credibility and trust.

Audience Reactions and Questions

It was pointed out for example that mineral operators themselves tend to overlook or underestimate the compatibility of mineral operations with nature protection, perhaps positioning for conflict where they could be alignment from the start.

The process of consensus-building was also discussed, including the necessity of mindful planning, systematic transparency and constructive negotiation approaches.

The opportunity of focusing EU efforts towards mineral development in new regions, requiring investment in local competence and know-how for what would be a new economic activity, was questioned; in some Swedish regions for example there is high acceptance of mineral development around existing operations, because the dynamics of value creation, the evolution of modern mining and the reality of risks are well understood; whereas in regions where mining and minerals are just appearing, local specificities can make it more challenging to build trust.

The consensus was that trust is fostered *inter alia* by improving local knowledge, providing local authorities with increased support from national authorities and agencies including geological surveys providing the scientific backing for sound decision-making – whether in new or legacy regions, this is an urgent imperative across the EU. Policy shapers at all levels must now ensure, and demonstrate to the public, the validity of robust permitting systems across the EU, with well-resourced and empowered authorities and agencies managing risks jointly with operators. Policy impulse must come from Brussels, and be followed by the support of national and local authorities in their permitting and monitoring roles.

In this regard, the value of formalising the outcomes of engagement or negotiations was discussed, with examples from Finland of local agreements driving robust accountability of local authorities, for their decisions and use of fiscal resources generated by mineral operations.

3 SALON DINNER

Discussion Framework

Following the European Parliament session, a select group of policymakers, regional leaders, researchers and industry experts came together for a deeper exchange on the social dimension of the CRMA. Building on the day's discussions, they explored how new social contracts could bridge EU strategic priorities with local aspirations for environmental stewardship, economic opportunity, and trust in governance.

Ludivine Wouters and Vitor Correia summarised the European Parliament discussion, emphasising the strong consensus around the idea that the biggest challenge for CRMA implementation is social opposition. Considering the current geopolitical landscape and the EU's strong dependence on imports of mineral raw materials, the lack of public acceptance of mining projects threatens European cohesion and undermines strategic autonomy objectives. As pointed out in the European Parliament session, novel social contracts such as Community Development Agreements (CDAs) can be used to articulate and formalise expectations amongst local government, mining companies, and affected communities. They could be a pragmatic solution to build acceptance "from the ground up".

Following this brief, participants were asked to share examples of initiatives that have successfully and constructively brought local stakeholder perspectives to bear in key projects or developments in Europe—with the aim of ensuring that mining and minerals can leverage successes and lessons learnt from other sectors.

Participants were also invited to discuss, at each table, the following questions to build on the CDA concept:

Who, what, where? Europe presents a complex landscape for large-scale projects: densely populated, with existing economic activities across territories, and significant areas designated for nature protection. CIRAN project results demonstrate *inter alia* that protected areas cover more than 24% of the EU and neighbouring countries and approximately 85% of CRM occurrences are less than 5km away from one of them. In this context, **how would relevant stakeholder groups and representatives be selected for CDA participation ? What would their respective role and contributions be in the negotiations and implementation of a CDA be ?**

Worth the effort? What would be criteria to evaluate the adequacy of proposed social contract elements? Initiatives integrating public, private and civil society actors tend to be assessed on procedural or formal criteria (timelines, format or structure). But the goal of a CDA approach would be effective actions and on-the-ground impact. With that in mind, **what could be suitable indicators of success, or on the contrary red flags to avoid ? To what extent would these need to be adapted to local specificities ?**

In context? No development happens in a vacuum: **how can European policy shapers create a conducive environment for mining and mineral development, foster public acceptance and support the emergence of constructive engagement initiatives** ? What would be the conditions for CDAs to fit into the regional, local and national setting ? How can other policy influencers, including civil society and industry organisations, support the emergence of supportive frameworks?

Discussion Results

European Examples of Constructive Stakeholder Engagement

Participants highlighted several compelling cases across Europe and beyond where proactive stakeholder engagement helped mitigate opposition to industrial and energy projects. In sectors such as wind farm development, oil and gas extraction, fertiliser production, wastewater treatment, and energy transitions, resistance was significantly reduced through innovative social contract models—such as shared ownership, community benefits, participatory planning frameworks, and compensation mechanisms.

Wind Farm Development: In Scotland, Denmark, and Germany, developers have adopted community benefit schemes and co-ownership models to foster local support. For example, [Danish wind cooperatives allow residents to invest directly in wind turbines, whilst Scottish projects often include community funds that support local infrastructure and services.](#)

Fertiliser Production: The [Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture](#)—endorsed by the European Commission—brought together industry leaders, farmers, NGOs, and policymakers to co-develop inclusive strategies for sustainable fertiliser production and use.

Wastewater Treatment: The EU's ULTIMATE project exemplifies [constructive engagement in water management](#). Its nine case studies involved local governments, industries, and civil society in co-designing wastewater treatment solutions, demonstrating that knowledge exchange and co-learning amongst stakeholders led to successful adoption of wastewater technologies.

Energy Transition Compensation: [Germany's energy transition compensation funds, established to support regions affected by the phase-out of coal](#), represent another significant model. Each federal state (Land) developed its own principles for fund management and allocation, tailored to local governance structures and socio-economic conditions. These funds not only compensated for economic disruptions but also empowered communities to shape their own transition pathways.

Oil and Gas Extraction: [Norway's Resource Management system](#) was cited as a model of inclusive and effective governance. The country's approach integrates environmental assessments, public consultations, and long-term regional planning, ensuring that local voices are considered through parliament approvals in decision-making processes. In Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, TotalEnergies has implemented a multi-tiered stakeholder engagement strategy in response to social and security challenges. This includes a \$200 million foundation for community development, [a \\$10 million MoU with Mozambique's Agency for the Integrated Development of the North \(ADIN\)](#), and an [independent human rights assessment led by Jean-Christophe Rufin](#) to guide future engagement and humanitarian support.

Participants also emphasized the importance of local development levels in shaping stakeholder responses. Anecdotal evidence suggests that communities in less developed regions tend to be more receptive to projects that promise tangible improvements in infrastructure, employment, and social services. This underscores the need for tailored engagement strategies that reflect regional disparities and aspirations.

Who, what, where?

It was agreed that correctly understanding stakeholders, their relationships, agendas and connection to local, national or other stakes, is paramount to effective engagement. In consultation processes no groups should be entirely ignored, even if some seem to be of less immediate relevance to local stakes – all voices must be heard. In formalising the outcomes of engagement, particularly in a context where reciprocal commitments and rights are set which could define the relationship of an operation with its stakeholders for years to come, the approach may be different: legitimacy of parties and credibility of their commitment is a key factor. Examples from regions where CDAs have been tested show that local authorities play a key role, jointly with the operator, in scoping the agreement. Contributions of each stakeholder group or CDA party are generally the result of their core interest – and expectations from the other parties. In this regard national agencies can play a key role, supporting all parties in correctly identifying the means to exercising their rights, as a neutral provider of scientific or technical knowledge. It is notable that in regions where there are implemented CDAs, they often include provisions for their review as projects evolve and operational impacts on landscape, livelihoods and social structures evolve.

Worth the effort?

Participants emphasised that evaluating CDAs requires moving beyond traditional procedural metrics to focus on long-term tangible outcomes and sustained impact. Key success factors include sustained local benefits, long-term commitment with provisions for regular review as projects evolve, genuine stakeholder empowerment, transparent benefit-sharing mechanisms, and investment in local capacity that persists beyond the project itself. Participants also identified critical red flags: procedural compliance without substantive engagement, imbalanced power dynamics where companies or governments dominate negotiations, vague or unenforceable commitments lacking clear monitoring mechanisms, one-size-fits-all approaches that ignore local specificities, and short-term thinking that fails to address closure planning or post-mining futures.

The group agreed that success metrics must be co-developed with affected communities and adapted to regional contexts. Communities in less developed regions may prioritise immediate improvements in infrastructure and employment, whilst more developed regions might emphasise environmental protection or quality of life. The key is ensuring indicators reflect local priorities and aspirations rather than being imposed from outside—requiring both flexibility in implementation and clarity in defining meaningful progress.

In context?

Though some participants expressed doubts that CDAs could fit into the European legal framework and queried the impact of CDAs on permitting – both as a prior condition and in terms of cross-default, potentially affecting the validity of permits in cases of non-compliance by the mining operator – the consensus was that the diversity of legal orders which have adopted CDAs worldwide demonstrates the adaptability of the concept. The necessity of clear political priorities was widely acknowledged: as demonstrated in the recent State of the European Union speech, the EU sets itself so many “priorities” that arbitrating them becomes impossible – resulting in a lack of focus on the mineral stakes foundational to European industry, ambitions and sovereignty. In this regard, clarification, and alignment of actions with stated priorities, are urgently required in the European space. This is how European leaders can give national and local authorities the signals needed to coordinate their action – and expect that in turn these national and local authorities be fully resourced, empowered and capable of facing these new and vast challenges.

4 CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Whilst both the European Parliament session and salon dinner brought together valuable perspectives from policymakers, researchers, industry experts, and some civil society representatives, a critical limitation must be acknowledged: **the EP session and the salon dinner struggled to achieve the stakeholder diversity essential for the inclusive dialogue they aimed to promote.** This challenge manifested at multiple levels:

Political representation: Despite extensive outreach to MEPs from diverse political families—including the Socialists & Democrats (S&D), Renew Europe, and the Greens/EFA—invitations were declined across the political spectrum. Even when the invitation explicitly framed the discussion around finding a balance that protects nature whilst advancing EU competitiveness and resilience, these groups chose not to participate. This political absence is particularly striking given that these parties frequently advocate for both environmental protection and European strategic autonomy in other contexts.

Community voices: Efforts to include mayors from regions across Europe facing pressure from mining projects—notably from France and Spain—were similarly unsuccessful, even though travel costs were fully covered. These are precisely the voices most needed to ground policy discussions in lived experience and local realities, yet they remained absent from the conversation.

Environmental NGOs: Representatives from several environmental NGOs also declined invitations to participate. Their absence was particularly notable given that environmental concerns featured prominently in the discussion, yet without their direct input to challenge assumptions, propose alternatives, or engage constructively with other stakeholders, the conclusions will remain partial.

This pattern of refusals suggests that discussing mining and mineral extraction has become such a politically sensitive and polarising issue that many stakeholders prefer to avoid engagement altogether—even in forums explicitly designed to find common ground. The irony is stark: **an event focused on social contracts and inclusive governance proceeded with limited community representation and without key political and civil society voices that claim to champion these very principles.**

This experience underscores a fundamental challenge for CRMA implementation: **if stakeholders cannot even come together to discuss how to balance competing interests, how can we expect to achieve the on-the-ground cooperation that CDAs and other social contracts require?** Understanding this reluctance to engage requires examining three critical aspects:

- Does the refusal to participate indicate that some stakeholders view mining as inherently incompatible with their values, making dialogue futile for them?
- Are there structural barriers—political risk, institutional mandates, or resource constraints—that prevent participation for fear of becoming compromised in the eyes of their peers, even when stakeholders might personally see value in engagement?
- How can future dialogues create conditions where participation feels safe, productive, and aligned with diverse stakeholders' interests?

The difficulty of assembling diverse stakeholders for this event serves as a microcosm of the broader challenge facing European minerals policy: **building the trust, creating the conditions, and demonstrating the value of inclusive engagement in a context where positions have become entrenched and dialogue itself has become contentious.**

5 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The European Parliament session and the salon dinner on 13 October 2025 demonstrated that constructive dialogue on Critical Raw Materials Act implementation is both essential and achievable—but only when diverse stakeholders are willing to engage. The discussions revealed strong consensus that social acceptance, rather than technical or economic feasibility, represents the primary challenge to CRMA implementation. Community Development Agreements and similar social contracts offer promising pathways forward, drawing on successful models from other sectors and regions.

However, the stakeholder participation challenges experienced in organising these events underscore the complexity of European minerals policy dialogue. When invitations to discuss balanced approaches to CRM extraction are systematically declined across political families, civil society organisations, and affected communities, it reveals how polarised the discourse has become. This polarisation—where engagement itself is perceived as compromising or futile—represents perhaps the most fundamental barrier to CRMA implementation. Addressing it requires not just better policies or technologies, but a rebuilding of the social infrastructure for constructive dialogue on contentious issues.

The technical solutions, policy frameworks, and governance models discussed at these events—however well-designed—will remain theoretical without the broad-based participation needed to legitimise and implement them.

Priority Actions

European institutions, national governments, and local authorities must now demonstrate the political will to:

- **Provide clear, consistent signals about mineral development priorities** aligned with climate and industrial objectives;
- **Resource and empower local authorities** to manage complex stakeholder engagement processes;
- **Support** geological surveys and technical agencies in providing **independent, trustworthy information**;
- **Pilot CDA approaches in willing regions/projects to generate evidence and build confidence**;
- **Invest in capacity-building for all stakeholders**—communities, authorities, and mining operators—to participate effectively in co-creation processes.

Moving Forward

The CIRAN project has provided evidence, frameworks, and recommendations. The next phase requires translating these insights into action, beginning with the most challenging task: creating the conditions where all stakeholders—including those who declined to participate in these events—feel that engagement offers value rather than risk. This means **demonstrating through early pilots that inclusive dialogue can produce outcomes that respect environmental protection, advance strategic objectives, and deliver tangible local benefits**. Only then can Europe move from discussing social contracts to implementing them.

6 APPENDICES

EP Session Details

Date: 13 October 2025, 15:00-17:00h.

Venue: European Parliament, room 6Q1.

Audience: 97 invited guests, representing diverse groups of stakeholders.

Aim: Discuss how to balance environmental protection and local community rights and expectations with the urgent need to secure critical raw materials for the clean energy transition.

Background documents distributed:

- Policy Brief [Community Development Agreements: A legal framework for balancing critical raw materials development with local community interests](#);
- Position paper [Geosciences Supporting the EU Competitiveness Compass](#);
- Position paper [The Critical Role of Geoscience in EU Defence and Security Policy](#).

Run of Session

15:00 – 15:15 Welcome and introduction (Hildegard Bentele, Eberhard Falck).

15:15 – 15:45 Presentation of key findings, insights and suggested approaches to support the implementation of the CRMA (CIRAN project).

15:45 – 16:20 Panel Discussion – Novel Social Contracts for Critical Raw Materials Development.

16:20 – 16:55 Q&A from the audience.

16:55 – 17:00 Closing remarks (Hildegard Bentele, Eberhard Falck).

Participants Panel Discussion

Moderator:

- [Vitor Correia](#), International Raw Materials Observatory

Panellists:

- [Hildegard Bentele](#), Member of the European Parliament
- [Antonella Valmorbida](#), Secretary General European Association for Local Democracy
- [Jean-Pierre Kucheida](#), President Association des Communes Minières de France
- [Päivi Ekdahl](#), Director Regional Council of Lapland, Finland

Panel Discussion Outline

Step 1: Moderator's introduction 15:45 - 15:50

- Poll Question 1: **To enable the transition towards clean energy and mobility we need to mine significantly more CRMs.** Agree, Disagree, Unsure.
- Poll Question 2: **The public interest (extracting the CRM we need for Europe's autonomy) should override local interests.** Agree, Disagree, Unsure.

Step 2: Panel discussion: Novel Social Contracts for CRM Development 15:50 - 16:20

Part 1/2 Opening reactions to the poll questions

Part 2/2 Key questions: debate

- **The policy brief highlights successful CDAs in Canada, Australia, and Mongolia, but European contexts differ significantly in terms of legal frameworks, population density, and environmental governance. What do you see as the primary obstacles to implementing CDAs in Europe?**
- **With 85% of Europe's CRM deposits in or near protected areas, how can we ensure extraction serves the public good while maintaining environmental protection and democratic legitimacy?**

Step 3: Q&A from the audience 16:20 - 16:55

- Q&A from the audience (16:20-16:50).
- Closing statements (16:50-16:55).

Speaker Bios

Hildegard Bentele is a Member of the European Parliament representing Germany's CDU party, serving since 2019. She holds positions on the Committee on Development, the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, and the Committee on the Environment, Climate and Food Safety. Ms Bentele has played a leading role in the development of the Critical Raw Materials Act regulation, advocating for strategic autonomy and sustainable resource governance in Europe. Before her election to the EP, she served in the Berlin House of Representatives from 2011 to 2019, where she was spokesperson for school and European policy and later deputy chairwoman of the CDU parliamentary group. Her work spans development policy, industrial competitiveness, water resilience, and the energy transition, with particular focus on reconciling sustainability with economic growth.

Antonella Valmorbida has served as Secretary General of ALDA (the European Association for Local Democracy) since 1999, bringing over 25 years of experience in promoting local democracy and participatory governance. She manages a network of more than 300 members across 40 countries in Europe and beyond, coordinates 15 Local Democracy Agencies in Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and North Africa, and serves as President of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD). Ms Valmorbida holds an academic background from the University of Padova and is the author of two books on citizen involvement at the local level, including "30 Years of Local Democracy" published in 2024. Her expertise encompasses participatory democracy, local governance, decentralised cooperation, and supporting communities in Ukraine, Moldova, and the Mediterranean region.

Jean-Pierre Kucheida is President of ACOM France (Association des Communes Minières de France), a position he has held since the organisation's founding in 1990. A former Deputy and Honorary Mayor of Liévin in the Pas-de-Calais region, Kucheida represents mining communities across France in advocating for the socio-economic development of mining basins, rehabilitation of urban areas affected by mining activity, and proper management of post-mining challenges. He serves as a founding member of the Association of Mining Regions of Europe and is Vice-President of the Mission Bassin Minier, which manages the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Mining Basin. His work focuses on reforming mining taxation, ensuring state responsibility for mining legacy issues, and exploring new opportunities in resources extraction while protecting the interests of mining communities.

Päivi Ekdahl is Development Director at the Regional Council of Lapland, Finland's most northern and geographically extensive region. She holds overall responsibility for programme-based regional development and manages European Regional Development and Just Transition Funds financing. Ms Ekdahl participates actively in networks including the Northern Sparsely Populated Areas network, representing collaboration between regions in Finland, Norway, and Sweden, North Calotte, and several European-level networks related to Eastern Border Regions. She holds a Master of Education from the University of Lapland and management qualifications. Her work addresses the unique challenges of Arctic regions and ensuring that remote, sparsely populated areas maintain their vitality while contributing to European resilience and the green transition.