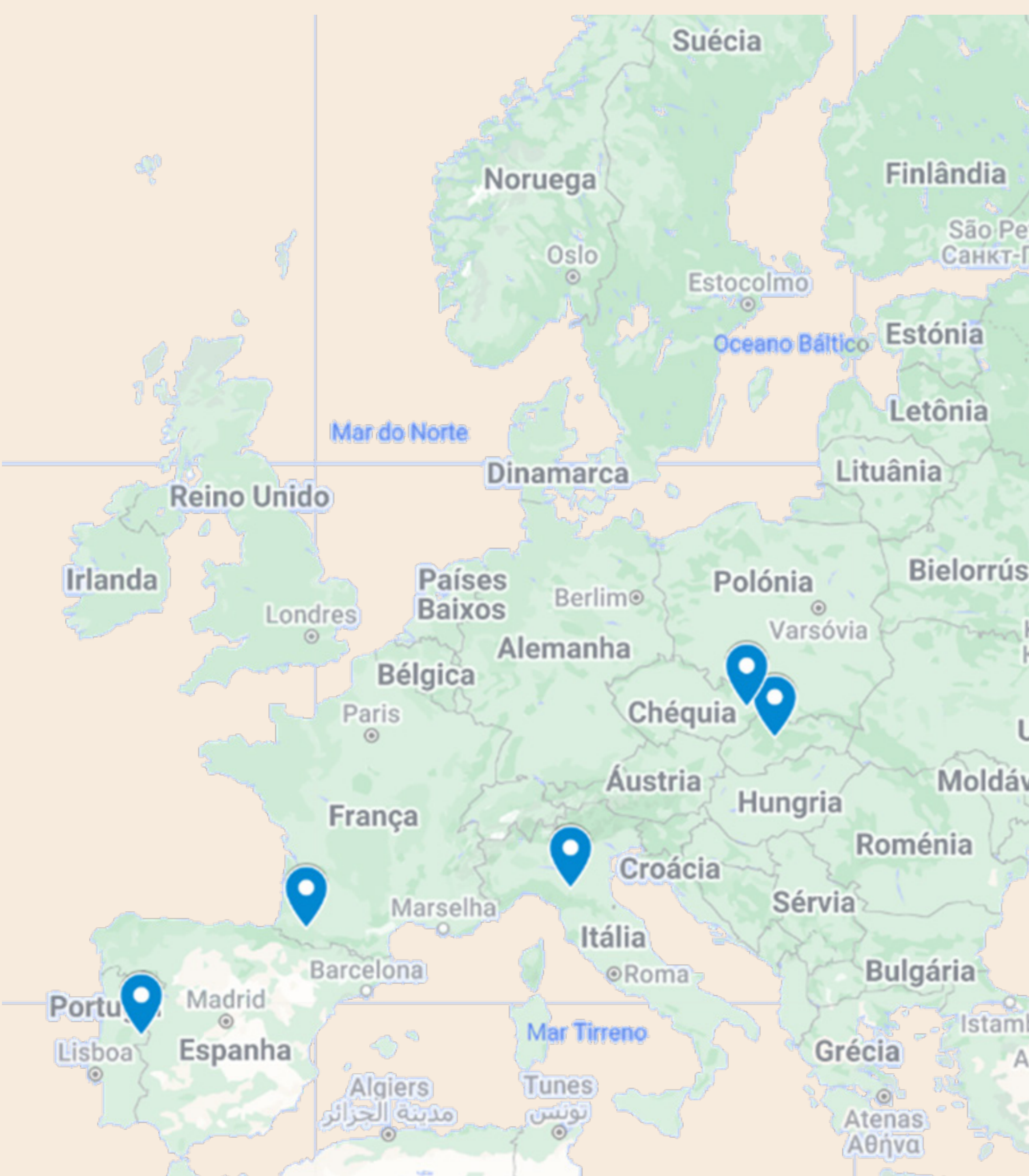


Introduction

WP5 seeks to foster inclusive, collaborative approaches to addressing a complex EU societal challenge: enabling the domestic extraction of CRMs while reinforcing the protection of natural habitats and biodiversity. The activities focus on engaging citizens from five communities located in or nearby environmentally protected areas across the EU in the development of solutions through dialogue and knowledge co-creation.



First activities engaging citizens: Focus groups

- Idanha-a-Nova (Portugal) – implemented October 21, 2023
- Veselí and Moravou (Czechia) – implemented June 20, 2024
- Baiso (Italy) – implemented July 26, 2024
- Bánská Bystrica (Slovakia) – planned
- Poitiers (France) – planned

Preliminary findings from implemented focus groups

Lack of Awareness and Understanding of Critical Raw Materials

- **Limited Knowledge:** Most participants had minimal familiarity with CRMs, although some knew of their widespread use in daily life and their crucial role in modern technology and economic development.
- **Weak Understanding of Regulations:** Awareness of EU-level policies existed, but there was significant knowledge lacking about national and local CRM policies.
- **European Dependence:** Participants expressed concerns about Europe's geopolitical and economic security if it continues relying on external sources for CRMs.
- **Need for Sustainable Production:** Acknowledgement of some participants that Europe needs to invest in domestic CRM production with sustainable practices to minimize negative environmental and social impacts.

Impacts of mining: Economic Benefits vs. Environmental Damage

- **Debate on Impact:** Opinions were divided on mining's effects. However public opinion is generally in favour of environmental protection over mining.
- **Concerns about environmental damage:** Negative effects of

- mining on the environment and communities were highlighted. Long-term environmental consequences, such as landscape degradation and water contamination were emphasized.
- **Potential socio-economic benefits for communities:** Some participants acknowledged economic gains like job creation or infrastructure development but seeing more negatives overall.

Reevaluating EU Development Goals: Emphasizing Sustainability and Reduced Consumerism

- **Questioning Term "Critical":** Participants questioning who determines importance of CRMs and questioning their true significance for current and future economy.
- **Consumerism Critique:** Participants were critical of the consumer-driven society, expressing the need to slow consumption and adopt more sustainable practices.
- **Circular Economy Focus:** Emphasis on the importance of recycling, reusing resources, and reducing the need for new raw material extraction through innovations like the circular economy.

Solutions to CRM Dependence

- **Preventive Approach:** Emphasis on caution to prevent harm to communities and the

- environment before initiating new actions.
- **Avoid New Quarries and Prioritize Alternatives:** Most participants reject new quarrying in any location, advocating for alternatives like minimal use, material substitution, conservation, and recycling
- **Degrowth Strategy:** Support for reducing consumption and systemic changes in the society towards voluntary modesty and humility.
- **Tech-Driven Growth:** Support for sustainable technologies, recycling and innovations recycling to balance economic growth with environmental concerns.
- **Reopen Closed Quarries:** Strong recommendation to reopen closed quarries using improved, cost-effective methods.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Advocates for circular economy, repair initiatives, and policies promoting sustainability and green technology development.
- **Controlled New Mining:** Some participants expressed careful acceptance of new mining areas only after accepting preventive measures and under strict conditions, including state or EU control, community consultation and compensations, and environmental safeguards.

Involving Communities in CRM Mining Decisions

- **Need for Local Involvement:** Strong agreement on involving local communities in CRM mining decisions for better outcomes.
- **Control Mechanisms:** Need for strong state and community control. Proposition of creating local consortia or associations to influence mining negotiations and decisions.
- **Community Role:** Emphasize the importance of local input on compensation, environmental impacts, and regional development.
- **Sustainable Planning:** Use lessons from past mining to ensure proper planning, environmental safeguards, and area rehabilitation.
- **Inclusive Processes:** Demand for transparent, participatory processes to build trust and avoid conflicts between companies and communities.

Mistrust in Environmental Oversight

- **Concerns About Independence:** Participants expressed mistrust in public agencies and private companies, questioning the independence of environmental impact assessments.
- **Scepticism Towards Policies:** Doubts about governmental

- and EU strategies due to fears of corporate influence and ineffective environmental protection.
 - **Call for Business Elimination:** Support for removing business involvement in strategic raw materials to prevent misuse and ensure better control.
- ### Enhancing Public Understanding of Critical Raw Materials

- **Need for Education and Raising Awareness:** Emphasized importance of environmental education and public awareness about raw materials.
- **Clear Communication:** Improve explanations of what critical raw materials are, their significance, and their impacts.
- **Accessible Information:** Ensure strategic materials are understandable to everyone.
- **Balanced View:** Need to present both impacts on environment and economic and technological benefits.
- **Demand for Transparency:** Increase transparency and clarity to support informed public debate and better community involvement in policy discussions.

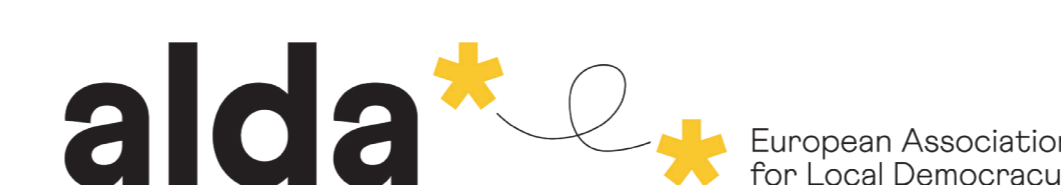
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