

Press Release | Ljubljana | February 2025

CIRAN Consortium and External Experts meet in Ljubljana, Slovenia: Advancing Discussions on Social Contracts and Project Milestones

The CIRAN Consortium gathered in Ljubljana, Slovenia, for an engaging three-day meeting, combining a field visit, expert discussions, and strategic planning. Organised by the project coordinator, INTRAW, the event provided an opportunity for partners and External Experts to advance key project objectives and set the course for CIRAN's final year. This meeting was held back-to-back with the 2025 International RoundTable for Materials Criticality (IRTC), fostering synergies between CIRAN and broader discussions on Critical Raw Materials globally.

Exploring the Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark

The meeting commenced on the 18th of February with a **field trip** to the [Idrija UNESCO Global Geopark](#), offering participants a first-hand look at the region's geological heritage and mining history. The visit included a guided presentation by the Geopark team, an exploration of the Frančiška Shaft, and a tour of the mine's geological collection. The field visit set the stage for the following day's discussions on sustainable mining and social contracts in protected areas.

Work Package 6 Workshop on social contracts and collective decision-making

On the 19th of February, CIRAN hosted an interactive workshop focused on decision-making in permitting processes for mining in naturally protected areas. External Experts and project partners engaged in simulation-based discussions, exploring pathways toward sustainable extraction and social contract models. The workshop was centered around the Green Valley Mining Project, an **hypothetical case study designed to stimulate discussion** on balancing economic development with environmental protection and community engagement.

Participants worked through two key scenarios:

- 1) **Balancing Growth and Community Needs:** Participants, taking on the role of a lead permitting officer, assessed the social contract proposed by a mining company for a tungsten project in Slovenia. They debated how to ensure



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community concerns were addressed while facilitating responsible resource extraction.

- 2) Transforming Regulatory Requirements into **Value-Creating Opportunities**: Participants stepped into the shoes of a Chief Strategy Officer, tasked with turning strict environmental and social regulations into innovative business strategies that align with the EU's Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA).

Through group exercises and policy discussions, attendees formulated strategic approaches to enhance stakeholder engagement, environmental responsibility, and long-term value creation for mining projects in protected areas.

The day concluded with an apéro-dinner and an avant-première screening of the documentary “**Not in My Country: Serbia’s Lithium Dilemma**”, presented by Peter Tom Jones (Director KU Leuven Institute for Sustainable Metals and Minerals – SIM2) and produced by SIM2 & Storyrunner. This took place within the framework of the IRTC and was followed by a panel discussion featuring industry and academic experts.

Consortium Meeting and strategic planning towards the end of the project

To conclude another successful Consortium Meeting, on the 20th of February, CIRAN partners convened to review the project’s progress, assess milestones, and discuss the **roadmap for its final year**. Discussions centered on the way forward for Work Packages 5, 6, and 7, ensuring alignment with project objectives. The Consortium also confirmed that the next in-person CIRAN Forum event will take place in June 2025 in Rovaniemi, Finland, connected to the [OECD Conference of Mining Regions and Cities](#) – stay tuned for more!



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MacCabe Durney Barnes
Planning | Environment | Economics



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Avant-première of the documentary “Not in My Country: Serbia’s Lithium Dilemma” and roundtable in the framework of the International Round Table on Materials Criticality (IRTC) in Ljubljana (Slovenia). @CIRAN



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MacCabe Durney Barnes
Planning | Environment | Economics



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About: CIRAN is a project funded by the European Union that will develop, test and validate processes to arrive at systemic policy-making, balancing environmental protection and societal needs for accessing critical raw materials (CRMs). This will be achieved through: 1) streamlined permitting procedures in environmentally protected areas; 2) modern policies and social contract frameworks that reconcile the protection of environmentally sensitive areas and domestic sourcing of CRMs in the EU; and 3) the development of a community of practice to support the uptake of the CIRAN recommendation and that will remain active after the project funding period. CIRAN proposes a logical framework that justifies extraction on the basis of a system-oriented assessment and the co-creation of knowledge (i.e. tested and validated by communities located in or nearby environmentally protected areas). It will create novel social contract models identifying rights, obligations and responsibilities of governments (national/regional), communities and mine operators, capable of dealing with transformations and challenges due to climate change. As a distinctive feature, CIRAN brings together 25 external experts on the environmental, political, social, economic, and technological factors that will shape the energy transition responses and the demand for CRMs. These experts, organised in four Expert Groups (EGs), will work with the Consortium, conveying insights on policy-making and -implementation, economic drivers, technologies, mining, local governance, social capital, nature conservation and biodiversity. The EGs will actively engage in CIRAN through synergetic processes combining analysis and deliberation, and participation in project workshops and structured consultations (e.g., focus groups, foresight analysis). The Consortium is geared to develop inclusive policy-making instruments that support the EU Green Deal and UN-led reforms to reach the climate commitments and sustainable development goals.

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Website: www.ciranproject.eu

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Media contact:

Project Coordinator, International Raw Materials Observatory: INTRAW
Vitor Correia - vcorreia@intraw.eu

Outreach and Dissemination Leader, La Palma Research Centre (LPRC):
Ariadna Ortega – ariadna.ortega@lapalmacentre.eu

Helena Robert i Campos – helena.robert.campos@lapalmacentre.eu