

Takeaways of the meeting with the five beneficiary Finnish regions

TSI OECD-DG REFORM project – April 11th

Introduction

After the field visits of the mission in Kainuu, we conducted an inter-regional workshop with representatives from all the five beneficiary Finnish regions: Central Ostrobothnia, Lapland, North Karelia, Kainuu and Oulu. It aimed at sharing preliminary findings of the field visits and identifying common policy priorities, with a forward-looking approach for actionable policy recommendations.

This workshop gathered about 30 people representing diverse sectors from each of the five Finnish regions, including private sector, the Geological Service Institute, universities, vocational education centres, municipal and regional governments. The presentation of this meeting can be found in a separate document at <https://shorturl.at/VbSFU>.

Summary of field-visits

The OECD team along with peer-reviewers representing the government of the other EU region in the project visited a total of 12 municipalities, including capital regions, and 6 mines across the 5 Finnish regions that are part of this TSI DG Reform-OECD project on Enhancing EU mining regional ecosystems to support the green transition and secure mineral raw materials supply.

Common Strengths

The five Finnish regions together are a powerhouse in every stage of the mineral value chain to support EU's goal of mineral self-sufficiency. Main common assets include:

Geology and Mineral supply

- A large number of exploration projects for critical minerals with more than 4 potential new mines (copper, cobalt, and lithium)
- Largest mineral EU suppliers in gold (Lapland), Nickel (Lapland and Kainuu).
- Unique minerals in EU (e.g. Chrome in Lapland)
- Minerals with lower CO₂e/kg than the global average (nickel from Boliden and Terrafame).

Downstream and Value-added projects:

- Integrated mineral projects - from extraction to refinery- in lithium chemicals (Central Ostrobothnia) or nickel and cobalt sulphates (Kainuu).

Leading educational and research in mining.

- Decentralised vocational education with vocational institutions located in mining municipalities,
- Know-how with testing facilities in mineral processing (Oulu), and research in sustainable mining (GTK Mintek in North Karelia, and AWE)

Mining governance

- Some mining municipalities have set local mining governance plans (Sodankylä) and others (Kitiila, Sotkamo) have proven successful in integrating mining and tourism, achieving better population trends than the regional average.
- Efforts to improve communication about modern mining practices and to assess local benefits beyond economics, including social infrastructure and long-term environmental compensation.

Common Challenges

Labour force and Skill availability

- Shortage of skilled workers for private and public sector- e.g. on environmental related skills, specialist, and operators.
- Male dominated sector and education, with lack of gender focus to attract students.

Link of SMEs and Business approaches with Innovation efforts

- Lack of business approach in innovation projects and information gaps for entrepreneurs and SMEs to access to innovation projects.
- Scare and disperse financial support to facilitate SMEs participation in mining-related innovation projects
- Need for business development agencies or other institution to connect entrepreneurs and researchers with circular economy potential business in mining companies.

Permitting and regulation

- Lengthy/ uncertain permitting prevents domestic investment, innovation, efficient closure and valorization of waste mining
- This is mainly a responsibility of the national government and the coordination of the national regulatory and monitoring agencies with presence in the regions.

Community engagement and transparent information

- Past environmental accidents and abandoned mines have affected perception on modern mining in part of the communities.
- Lack of unified communication channels from a public trusted source allow misinformation about modern mining projects.
- Sensible mining projects- e.g. in Natura 2000 or in areas with cumulative environmental impacts from economic activities (Lapland)- require improved information channels with communities.
- Community engagement and information in exploration projects require support and presence of a public actor to further solve questions in the gatherings between communities and companies. The Geological survey of Finland (GTK) has been identified as a trusted actor for this. a public or

Preliminary policy needs at regional level

To be further developed in the regional profiles. The meeting identified some common policy actions:

- **Improving mining governance.** Stronger agreements with mining companies on municipal priorities, better information for community on existing ESG actions, an strategic view to ensure legacy after mining
- **Strengthening communication and community engagement** , with early information since the exploration phase and forward-looking planning for the closure process.
- **Innovation projects with a business approach** and greater links with SMEs
- **Advance skill availability/matching** with greater cooperation between vocational education and Universities to facilitate dual education paths, with a gender lens in the promotion offer.
- **Forward looking infrastructure planning** for road usability and access to green energy.