

EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF GEOLOGISTS (EFG)

Position Statement on

EUROPEAN TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM SUSTAINABLE MINERAL RESOURCES

Societies in many nations have faced political or economic short time natural resource scarcity (mostly oil, nowadays gas as shown by recent events) scarcity, but never so far has the scarcity been due to physical constraints. Short time scarcity is expressed in irrational prices in world markets, but in the mid-term society can either adapt to higher prices or find the resource replacements or supplement. Mid-term planning usually helps to avoid potential natural resource scarcity.

Unlimited access to resources from outside Europe from one side and a social model of global application of the market economy on the other are questionable. Supply disturbances are mostly followed by commodity price rises with unpredictable consequences. The price rise encourages dynamic activities such as intensive exploration, commodity replacement possibilities and other changes. For such dynamic response, the extractive industry and institutional structures need to have both available information and research/expert capacity. These are closely linked to the availability of a skilled work force.

The European Technology Platform on Sustainable Mineral Resources (SMR), Strategic Research Agenda, is a comprehensive discussion of all relevant mineral resource issues. In Strategic Research Agenda focus areas are logically selected with regard to raw material flow where mineral economics and societal issues cover all the stages. In all Focus Areas should be more stress on the importance of information transfer. This includes research capacity (to provide information) as well as a skilled technical and managerial workforce.

EFG Comment:

The Strategic Research Agenda should include research linked to minerals supply planning and minerals availability. This research should be mostly focused with in Europe, but should also include global aspects. Other research to this end is also valuable, including the research in the business structure / environment, but this should be clearly distinct from attempts to harm open market and free trade postulates.

The Strategic Research Agenda should include points dealing with the business structures which make the identification, exploration, and development of “strategic reserves and resources” feasible. This is the key element to reduce the exposure of Europe to mineral resources supply problems from outside its territory. Other solutions, like improvement of technology and application of improved exploitation methods will provide partial and limited solutions in response to this challenge. This is clearly demonstrated in the energy sector (in spite of monotonously rising oil prices) by the fact that in recent years nothing happened to provide wider application of enhanced oil recovery methods worldwide on a scale which would have eased the tension of the market.

EFG Contribution:

EFG has the expertise in resources supply, technology leadership and provide added value. The challenge also for EFG is to provide a sufficient and skilled workforce by attracting young talent to the sector that would fit into competent person concepts in their respective areas.

EFG has very limited resources to participate in ETP SMR activities due to the character of the organization (NGO). On the other hand EFG can widely expose the support and give advice regarding the ETP SMR content.

EFG and its Working Group on Mineral Resources in particular support the elements related to exploration and to providing a skilled research and work force. To a smaller extent EFG can help within exploration and exploitation focus area and societal issues focus area with concept of competent persons (education and training).

Conclusion:

EFG strongly support the efforts with regard to European Technology Platform on SUSTAINABLE MINERAL RESOURCES to become one of the official European Technology Platforms. This would lead to inclusion the mineral resources into the EU research agenda for the forthcoming 7th European Research Framework.

Accepted by EFG Board in March 2006 and to be adopted the EFG Council members by April.