

EELF 2023

European Environmental Law Forum Conference 2023

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW IN TRANSFORMATION –
LEGAL IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPACTS
OF THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

30 August – 1 September 2023, Leipzig

Book of Abstracts

IV D: External Effects / Greening global value chains

Responsible mineral sourcing for green transition – legal perspective to the local social acceptance in exploration

Saara Österberg

University of Eastern Finland

The subtheme of Session A focuses on the role of law in societal transformation. The theme is crucial in the sourcing of the Critical Raw Materials for the value chains of the green industry in EU. Currently, European industry is dependent on the import of raw materials from third countries. It is problematic both from the perspective of material autonomy of the EU and the responsibility of green value chains. That is why the EU aims to increase and boost the internal sourcing of Critical Raw Materials. The local acceptance is not only important for mining projects but also for early mineral exploration. The experience of injustice may rise a criticism not only towards the companies, but also towards the authorities and national mining legislation. In order to secure their (local) operating conditions, the companies have developed their responsibility practices.

This study is a case study in Finland, including two different target areas in exploration: Savukoski (in the Eastern Lapland) and Sotkamo (in Kainuu region). There have been several decades exploration activities in both areas. In Sotkamo, it has led to large-scale mining operation with multiple local impacts. The meaning of social awareness of the critical raw materials will be analyzed in this study of SEMACRET project for developing the local acceptance of mineral exploration. What is the significance of the revised legislative procedures in terms of awareness and how does it affect people's attitude towards exploration projects of critical minerals? Exploring the key factors and their interconnections enables developing the framework of social acceptance for the sourcing of Critical Raw Materials in EU.