



EU names 14 critical minerals

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Rare earths, graphite and fluorspar among minerals deemed a supply risk

A report released today revealed 14 “critical mineral raw materials” that the European Commission considers a supply risk for EU economies, including rare earths, graphite and fluorspar.

A group of experts chaired by the Commission reviewed 41 minerals, finding 14 for which supply insecurity and economic impact were significantly high compared with other raw materials.

The results will be used for drafting a strategy on securing access to raw materials, which the Commission plans to publish in autumn 2010.

The Commission’s full list of 14 critical minerals includes: antimony, beryllium, cobalt, fluorspar, gallium, germanium, graphite, indium, magnesium, niobium, platinum group metals, rare earths, tantalum and tungsten.

The significant supply risk is mainly due to a high share of global production coming from a small number of countries outside the EU, namely China, Russia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Brazil.

The Commission’s vice president Industry and Entrepreneurship, Antonio Tajani, said: “Today’s report provides very valuable input for our efforts to ensure that access to raw materials for enterprises will not be hampered.”

“We need fair play on external markets, a good framework to foster sustainable raw materials supply from EU sources as well as improved resource efficiency and more use of recycling,” he added.

The concentration production sources, the Commission said, was compounded in many cases by a lack of possible substitutes and low recycling rates.

Rare earth minerals were seen as by far the largest supply risk for the EU, with over 95% of present supply in the hands of Chinese producers.

Out of the 41 minerals studied, barytes, diatomite, talc, “clays”, perlite, feldspar, gypsum, bentonite, lithium, silica, limestone and borates did not make the cut due to their relatively “low economic importance” to the EU.

On the other hand, bauxite, magnesite and chromium, deemed of relatively high importance, were left off due to the perceived high availability of supply.

While metallurgical bauxite might be widely available, refractory grade material can only be sourced from China and Guyana, with the latter's mining operations owned by China's Bosai Minerals Group.

"It is our aim to make sure that Europe's industry will be able to continue to play a leading role in new technologies and innovation and we have to ensure that we have the necessary elements to do so," said Tajani.