

To Mine or Not To Mine Critical Minerals in Europe?

From societal concerns to shared solutions?

3 June 2026, Helsinki, Finland - Clustering event & High-level expert panel - Venue: Home Hotel Jugend

“The energy transition cannot succeed without critical minerals. But it cannot succeed without social legitimacy either.”

The poster includes the following elements:

- Logos:** ΠΑΝΤΕΧΝΕΙΟ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ (Technical University of Crete), SIM2, KU LEUVEN, GTK, and the European Union flag with the text "Funded by the European Union".
- Title:** "To Mine or Not To Mine Critical Minerals in Europe?"
- Subtitle:** "From societal concerns to shared solutions?"
- Date:** 3 JUNE 2026
- Location:** Helsinki, Finland
- Organised by:** CICERO, LITHOS, EXCEED, HEPHAESTUS, PLASMARED.
- Supported by:** AVANTIS, ESMIN, CLUSTER HUB.

Europe's path to climate neutrality depends on critical minerals (lithium, rare earths, nickel, cobalt), which are all increasingly being weaponised in today's World of Fortresses (dixit Mark Carney). This situation is further exacerbated as a result of (another) war in the Middle East. While recycling and circularity are essential, they cannot fully meet the scale of the cleantech transition. This is now even more true as AI/digitalisation and defense applications are further boosting the demand for critical minerals. Primary mining and refining of critical minerals will remain necessary. But history shows that mining can bring profound environmental, social and cultural disruption, especially for local and indigenous communities. So the real challenge is not only whether we mine - but under which conditions, and with whom at the table. The organisers of the present event advocate a shift from "top-down-pushing-it-down-your-throat-kind-of-acceptance-approach" to genuine co-creation. We promote community-centric, benefit-sharing approaches where local communities are recognised as active stakeholders in resource governance. Because the energy transition must also be a just transition. Industry, trade unions, NGOs, indigenous representatives and community voices, policymakers and researchers will engage in an open, respectful dialogue where parties should not only speak but also genuinely LISTEN. We do not seek to secure approval, but to build authentic social contracts for responsible mineral/metal production. The programme combines a global perspective (with inspirational non-EU speakers), a European perspective and a Nordic perspective. In the final session we will wrap it all up and see if we have developed more common ground...

Final Programme (subject to final changes)

Time	Session	Speakers/Topic
8.30-8.35	Opening	Moderator of the day: Peter Tom Jones [KU Leuven Institute for Sustainable Metals and Minerals, SIM²]
8.35-10.20	<p>Part I: Global Perspectives:</p> <p>What can Europe learn from non-EU perspectives?</p>	<p>Keynote: Indigenous perspectives on CRM mining and processing in Quebec, Canada Armand MacKenzie [First Phosphate] (tbc)</p> <p>Keynote: Responsible lithium mining in Chile – how to achieve IRMA-75? Stefan Debruyne [SQM]</p> <p>Keynote: Critical minerals and the supply chain: a non-EU perspective Namakau Kaingu [Women in Mining Zambia]</p> <p>Fireside chat: Which lessons can be learned from non-EU perspectives? Stefan Debruyne, Namakau Kaingu, Armand MacKenzie</p>
10.20-10.50	Coffee break	
10.50-12.20	<p>Part II: European Perspectives:</p> <p>Which way forward for multi-stakeholder engagement in European (Strategic) CRM mining projects?</p>	<p>Keynote: Public opposition to lithium mining in Europe: a critical assessment of selected case-studies Toni Eerola [GTK]</p> <p>Panel discussion: Is there a way forward towards community-centric, benefit-sharing, responsible mining models? Sophie Grenade [IndustriALL] Adele Rouleau [Geosyntec] Representative still to be assigned [Greenpeace International] (participation confirmed) Kristiina Jokelainen [European Mining Regions Partnership] Pekka Suomela [Euromines & Finnish Mining Association]</p>
12.20-13.15	Lunch break	

13.15-15.00	<p style="text-align: center;">Part III: Nordic Perspectives:</p> <p>Which way forward for multi-stakeholder engagement in Nordic CRM mining projects</p>	<p><u>Keynote:</u> Stakeholders or rights holders: Who has a say? Local perceptions from Kuusamo and Sodankylä Leena Suopajärvi [University of Lapland]</p> <p><u>Keynote:</u> Mining in Sápmi: The impact of Sámi rights on the legitimacy of CRM projects in the Nordics Kaisa Raitio [Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences]</p> <p><u>Panel discussion:</u> To mine or not to mine in the Nordics, that is the question Sisli Piisilä [Finnish Association for Nature Conservation] Terho Liikamaa [TUKES] Kaisa Raitio [Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences] Saija Luukkanen [Oulu University] Ronald Arvidsson [Geological Survey of Sweden] (tbc) Joanna Kunttonen Van Rien't [Sakatti Mining Oy]</p>
15.00-15.30	Coffee break	
15.30-16.15	<p style="text-align: center;">Part IV: Wrapping up</p>	<p><u>Fireside chat:</u> Bringing it all together: is community-centric, benefit-sharing responsible mining a pipedream or a genuine possibility? Toni Eerola [GTK] Huib Huyse [KU Leuven Institute for Sustainable Metals and Minerals] Elisabeth Gammelsaeter [Sweco]</p>
16.15-17.30	Networking reception	

Tbc: To be confirmed (preliminary confirmation was obtained as of 18 March)