



Establishing a R&I Raw Materials Stakeholder Portal

Feasibility study

D1.2 – Results of the feasibility study to establish a R&I
Raw Materials Stakeholder Portal

WP1 – Management and coordination



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List of Acronyms

EC	European Commission
EIP RM	European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials
EIT RM	European Institute of Innovation & Technology Knowledge & Innovation Community on Raw Materials
ERA-Net	European Research Area Network
ETP	European Technology Platform
EU	European Union
EURMKB	European Union Raw Materials Knowledge Base
DG GROW	European Commission Directorate General Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs
JRC	European Commission Directorate General Joint Research Centre
M4EU	Minerals Intelligence Infrastructure for Europe / Minerals4EU Foundation
RM	Raw Materials
RMIS	EC JRC Raw Materials Information System
VERAM	Vision and Roadmap for European Raw Materials

1. Introduction

In an effort to improve coordination and cooperation, the VERAM feasibility study to establish a “Raw Materials Research and Innovation Stakeholder Portal” set out to examine the most viable approach to systematically providing the latest results and information on raw materials research and innovation projects, allowing the research community to interact and discover for themselves where the gaps lie.

During the first year of the VERAM project, the VERAM Project Portal was launched (www.veram.eu) and goes some way towards achieving the objectives of a wider stakeholder portal. This web-based research and innovation portal provides a dedicated database and powerful search engine, allowing users to filter content based on their interests or specific information they are searching for. The portal offers detailed information on the status and results of research projects on raw materials or on the relevant research programmes in operation at EU, national and regional level. It allows users to register by creating an account and thus enables them to also become a provider of information on raw materials research.

While the VERAM project portal will remain active after the end of the project, the development into a fully maintained stakeholder portal remains open. The portal would need regular updates and a management structure with sufficient resources to ensure the relevance and usefulness of the project results and create a dynamic, open and proactive platform for the entire stakeholder community, aiming to facilitate the coordination of the European research and innovation on raw materials. The feasibility study considered the potential models and routes for such a portal to be established and endure after the project termination.

2. Feasibility Study

Well established systems to improve communication and cooperation in the research community are already in use, a prime example being the social media tools such as ResearchGate, LinkedIn, or others. However, none of these provides a specific focal point for the raw materials community offering both the ability to interact and discuss research priorities, as well as the ability to review ongoing research projects, access to information or data currently being produced and the general trends in the sector – an EU Raw Materials Stakeholder Portal.

In order for such a comprehensive portal to succeed, it would need to be part of a widely used system to ensure there are enough users, while also providing the possibility for users to also become providers of information, to make it more relevant to the whole raw materials community. A standalone portal that could fulfil this role would need a large amount of investment in order to be

developed and maintained, therefore the most obvious solution would be to integrate a platform into a well-established portal that is known and already in use by the research community. The VERAM project targeted two possibilities in this regard: the EU Raw Materials Information System and the Minerals Intelligence Infrastructure for Europe.

EU Raw Materials Information System (RMIS)

The European Commission Directorate General Joint Research Centre (JRC), in collaboration with Directorate General Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), developed the EU Raw Materials Information System (RMIS) in support of the development of the European Union Raw Materials Knowledge Base (EURMKB) and responding to a specific action of the 2015 Circular Economy Action Plan (EC Communication COM(2015) 614). The RMIS is the EC's reference web-based knowledge platform for non-fuel, non-agricultural materials from primary and secondary sources.

The RMIS provides a structured repository of knowledge related to non-fuel, non-agricultural raw materials from primary and secondary sources. It focuses on both abiotic and biotic materials, covering the entire value chain, therefore was seen as the ideal platform to enable further development of the VERAM portal. The main goal of the RMIS is “to facilitate: the availability, coherence and quality of knowledge required by specific EU raw materials policies and EC services; and access to key raw materials information from knowledge bases within and beyond Europe.”

Of particular interest to VERAM, the RMIS includes a ‘Raw Materials Knowledge Gateway’ (RMKG), which is a virtual space for providers for consolidating, expanding and increasing the visibility of raw materials-related knowledge. It was thought that this would be the most suitable setting for a comprehensive raw materials stakeholder platform, in which the users could access the knowledge being created and provided by the research and innovation projects related to the EIP on Raw Materials, while at the same time interact via a service maintained by the RMIS to support development of new project ideas and partnerships.

The JRC Land Resources Unit (D.3) responsible for RMIS was approached with the proposal and it was discussed in more detail with the relevant personnel at a side meeting to the Second International RMIS workshop, 14-15 May 2018, at the JRC in Ispra, Italy. The end result was unsuccessful in that the JRC were unable to develop the product further, given the restrictions of their mandate in relation to the RMIS and not having the remit of activity in helping to coordinate research and innovation cooperation in raw materials. However, it was agreed that a page would be added to the RMKG describing the capabilities and information available within the VERAM portal and providing a link to the current website.

Minerals4EU Foundation

The Minerals4EU Foundation was established in 2016 following the successful conclusion of the Minerals4EU Project, funded under the EC 7th Framework Programme. It was set up by the partners of the Minerals4EU project as a not for profit Foundation, under Belgian law, to serve as the Minerals Intelligence Infrastructure for Europe (M4EU). It was set up as a network of key stakeholders, open to new members, that would conduct studies and research and will collect, collate, integrate, produce and maintain a European Minerals Yearbook, a web portal to be the European Raw Materials Knowledge Base and foresight studies to assist stakeholders (the EC, governments, industry, civil society, non-governmental organisations, researchers, etc.) develop mineral raw materials policy on an evidence basis for the good of all citizens. This was developed as a direct response to the EC’s Raw Materials Initiative, which recommended that a minerals intelligence capability be set up for Europe. The purpose of the M4EU Foundation is “to maintain and update the outputs of the Minerals4EU Project beyond the Project lifetime and to provide a one-stop-shop contact point through which stakeholders can easily and transparently access its products and the underlying expertise.”

Although M4EU has a specific focus on mineral raw materials, it was thought that it could be a suitable partner to develop a wider raw materials stakeholder platform. If combined with the VERAM project portal, adding the possibility for stakeholders to interact via the system and to continue to update their own research activities, the joint initiative could develop into an extremely productive network, as well as acting as a major source of information and data for the raw materials stakeholder community. M4EU was designed to integrate and maintain the products from other projects – apart from VERAM it is also interacting with other projects such as the ProSUM project (Prospecting Secondary raw materials in the Urban mine and Mining wastes) and the GeoERA mineral resources projects (ERA-Net on Establishing the European Geological Surveys Research Area to deliver a Geological Service for Europe). It is hoped that, with the amalgamation of VERAM and other projects, this could develop into the main source of EU raw materials data, knowledge and information.

The initial idea was discussed late in the VERAM project lifetime, following the unsuccessful attempt to establish the stakeholder portal with the RMIS, and so it still in its early stages. However, the response was positive following discussions between the ETP SMR and EuroGeoSurveys, who provide the administrative operation of M4EU. As a permanent body, M4EU is seen as a more stable structure that could provide the necessary basis for the VERAM portal to develop further into a fully functioning stakeholder platform.

3. Conclusion

A major issue in the sustainability of EU-funded projects that develop portals and services is how to maintain such services or update informative portals after the project ends. Combining services, such as those developed by M4EU and VERAM, could certainly reduce the burden by involving more partners, however it would still not abate the need for investment in order to maintain open access to free, up to date information or data.

The relevance of a portal can quickly be lost if the information held within is not kept up to date. The VERAM portal tried to address this by allowing all users to register and enter data about their own projects and research activities – this proved somewhat useful in expanding the capacity of the portal, however it depends largely on the continued engagement of the community. In a similar fashion, M4EU designed itself in a way that it could incorporate data being produced by other projects and now depends on the network that joined the Foundation to use their portal when developing future projects on EU mineral raw materials data. Encouraging future projects to continue to use readily available portals seems to be the most successful model so far in efforts to maintain products in the post-project phase. With such a large network of stakeholders having been engaged in VERAM, it is our hope that this initiative takes hold and those engaged in further work on identifying research and innovation priorities for the European raw materials sector will continue to make use of the VERAM portal and a wider stakeholder platform.

What is certain, the collaboration generated between different sectors across the raw materials value chain via the VERAM project will continue to develop independently, with the ETPs involved already looking to continue discussions on cross-cutting issues and potential partnerships, ensuring a high level of coordination in EU raw materials research and innovation activities for some time to come.