



Press release – 16/03/2018

The Superpowers of New Critical Raw Materials

In the bid to raise the awareness of new critical raw materials, the European SCRREEN project is launching a multilingual communication campaign on 26 March 2018. This campaign is geared towards informing and educating the European public on the challenges linked to the 27 raw materials classified as ‘critical’ by the European Commission.

Cars, wind turbines, solar panels and smartphones... ‘critical’ raw materials (CRMs) are used in all the technologies that are essential for the energy and digital transition. Through 12 visuals, *The Superpowers of New Critical Raw Materials* campaign aims to make the general public aware of the different forms which critical raw materials take in our day-to-day life. CRMs are raw materials which have economic importance and are subject to possible scarcity. Their exploitation often leads to environmental, economic and geopolitical challenges which the campaign will inform by shedding light on the different initiatives led by Europe to address them. As part of this campaign, a new visual will be published and promoted monthly via the [SCRREEN](#) website and Twitter account [@SCRREEN_EU](#). To ensure the maximum reach of this campaign, visuals and short informative messages will be available in 5 languages - French, English, Spanish, German and Italian.

Why critical raw materials are important

In the Earth’s crust, critical raw materials are often mixed with other plentiful metals such as copper or iron. Most of these CRMs have unique chemical, physical and electromagnetic features which make them costly and of increasing value. Since 2011, the European Commission has published a regularly updated list of these materials. The third list of CRMs released in 2017 comprises 27 raw materials. The criticality of these materials is mainly determined by their economic importance and supply risks. The lack of mining infrastructures coupled with a low number of producing countries amplifies these risks.

European initiatives on raw materials

The European Commission ensures that its Member States have an adequate supply of critical raw materials so that its citizens have access to modern technology. The Commission calls for respect of international trade laws, engages in diplomatic partnerships with producers (as seen in South America among others), finances research initiatives to better the recycling of electronic devices and fosters the creation of European expert networks (such as the SCRREEN project). These initiatives culminate in new policies which strengthen economic competitiveness while boosting technological innovation and job creation. From 2018 to 2020, Europe will dedicate over 250 million euros to raw materials.

SCRREEN: a key project for the circular economy in electronic devices

Launched in 2016, SCRREEN is a European Horizon 2020 which gathers more than 60 experts and 30 partners (CEA, AFNOR, Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft...) from 15 countries across Europe to tackle the different challenges posed by critical raw materials. Among them, environmental challenges – to obtain even a small quantity of critical raw materials, tonnes of rocks are extracted and a great amount of energy and powerful chemical reactants are needed. Over 30 months, the project’s research activities will identify and prioritise the necessary actions to be taken on critical raw materials whilst developing and promoting a European circular economy policy (eco-design, recycling and substitution).





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The SCRREEN project has received funding from the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program under Grant Agreement 730227.