



The Association of Geological Surveys of the European Union
(EuroGeoSurveys)
in their position as
custodians to their national natural resources
and
guardians of their terrestrial environment

present their contribution to the

"Institutional" Working Group of the Raw Materials Supply Group. (April 24, 2001)

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Tasks and Goals (draft).

The initiative to have a Working Group analyzing the existing structure of the RMSG and its efficiency to collect, analyze and discuss information on issues related to mining, quarrying and mineral activities in the EU, the accession countries and other parts of the world, is considered very positively by EuroGeoSurveys, provided that the future enlargement of the European Union is taken into account in the present evaluation.

The event of enlargement is the perfect moment and issue to analyze the existing structure, as indeed, ways of dealing with a much larger organization will have to be found, both in terms of consultation and discussion and in terms of decision-making. Enlargement will bring along many parties that will have a seat in the RMSG and will have confronting issues and needs to be brought forward.

EuroGeoSurveys therefore welcomes an "institutional analysis", provided that the analysis also plans for the future enlargement and gives input to a future structure that will have to deal with a much slower, therefore probably less efficient organization.

The present draft does not contribute by any means to the reorganization and the possibly new structure that will have to evolve as a result of the act of enlargement.

In order to have the optimum consultation body, the "institutional working group" suggest that the following participants be allowed in the RMSG:

- Representatives of national governments,
- Representatives of EU federations of mining,
- Representatives of NGO's,
- Departments of the European Commission.

However, as no organizational structure has been suggested, the mere fact of having such an extensive list of participants (especially after the event of enlargement) will result in a non-workable situation. EuroGeoSurveys would therefore suggest separating the organization in 2 levels:

- A consultative level with plenary sessions,
- A decisive and strategic level, with national representatives only.

To EuroGeoSurveys, it also seems restrictive to only have representatives of EU federations of mining. This is not in line with the fact that both EU and national NGO's would be allowed in. The risk exists that SME's in the mining industry may be left out of the process of consultation. It could also result in the fact that those countries that are less well organized, or that are less important producers of raw materials, or that are less well structured, may be left out of the consultation process.

The flow of information is one area where, with today's IC Technology, efficiency can be improved. The perfect ICT environment is however a costly and time-consuming operation. The list of information as enumerated in the draft document is very extensive, and likely to cause problems in organizing, in levels of quality of information and in 'regional' representativeness of the information.

Just sending around data by e-mail is not the best way of communicating information, as to the reader, the data is not organized, not integrated, selective and not quality controlled. It would be a far better suggestion to organize one data and information pool, centralized in its operation and management, decentralized in its data gathering, and operating under the auspices of the DG Enterprise that would guarantee its objectiveness and completeness. In the opinion and experience of EuroGeoSurveys, a website is a far better means of communication than the mere e-mail.

Within a general RMSG web site, space could be allocations and partitions made for the communication and discussion areas of the different Working Groups, where accessibility could be organized according to different levels of access, controlled through passwords.

The suggestion of a working party having a signaling function, pointing out, advising, suggesting and recommending to the RMSG, is a democratic one, as it will allow parties involved to assess in a non specialist way (working groups tend to become more or less specialized and biased) the priorities for the present and future work.

However, EuroGeoSurveys has the impression that the fact that standing the meeting new task forces should be formed to work out these priorities is a double up action. The existing Working Groups could very well execute these tasks.

Nevertheless, in case it is considered interesting to spread the tasks horizontally across different Working Groups and Task Forces, EuroGeoSurveys would suggest not to have the task forces formed standing the RMSG meetings, as this will imply that the stronger, better organized groups will in general take the lead. This is not a guarantee for top quality (technical) work, nor is it a guarantee for an unbiased approach across the complete range of priority issues.

EuroGeoSurveys strongly questions the approach of defining the possibilities and resources of participants of the group. Identifying how much members can contribute to the discussion and decisions, and where their "institutional limits" are, is something that should be organized in the rules and regulations of participation of the different members in the Raw Materials Supply Group. Not only for the NGO's but also for all participants involved. This would ultimately result in a right to vote, not to vote, vote under specific conditions only, or in the right to be witness to the meetings, be speaker, be allowed to have contributions in preparing decision, or even in making decisions. EuroGeoSurveys objects to such an approach as it will result in an organization with inner and outer circles, which would be detrimental to all open discussion. Participants should be allowed to contribute or not, the organization and the process will know how to distinguish between what is valuable and righteous and what is not.

EuroGeoSurveys agrees with the intention to have not more than two long/medium term WGs and two short term WGs at the same time, in view of the enlargement process, it may be necessary in the forthcoming 2 to 5 years to have more working groups active in fields of interest specific to the enlargement process.