

EN
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Answer given by Mr Breton
on behalf of the European Commission
(8.4.2022)

1. The Commission has not performed an assessment of the energy costs that an increase in mineral extraction will entail. Raw materials extraction being energy-intensive, increased use of decarbonised energy for production process is a priority in order for the sector to meet the climate neutrality objective, in line with the EU climate and environmental policies such as the recent proposal to revise the EU Emissions Trading Scheme¹.

Circular economy and, in particular, innovation to replace scarce materials on which the EU is dependent by less critical ones and to use lesser quantities of such materials as well as recycling, is another way to decrease the environmental and carbon footprint of minerals extraction while strengthening the resilience. Among the relevant initiatives in this regard is the Commission proposal for the Batteries Regulation² in which it proposed ambitious targets for recycling efficiency and recovery of lithium, cobalt, nickel and lead. The other initiatives that support the shift towards more circular raw materials are the proposal for a new Regulation on Waste Shipments³, the upcoming Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR) and the Action Plan on Critical Raw Materials⁴.

2. The Commission published ‘Critical Raw Materials in Strategic Technologies and Sectors in the EU – a Foresight Report’⁵ in September 2020, detailing raw material needs according to the Commission’s decarbonisation scenarios for relevant technologies. For example, according to the report, the EU renewable and e-mobility sectors alone would need up to 18 times (2030) and 60 times (2050) more lithium and 5 times (2030) and 15 times (2050) more cobalt compared to the current supply.

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52021PC0551>

² <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020PC0798>

³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/publications/proposal-new-regulation-waste-shipments_en

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/42852>

⁵ <https://op.europa.eu/s/vRLr>