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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Séjourné

On behalf of the European Commission

(23.12.2025)

Access to raw materials is essential for the EU economy, our clean and digital transitions and the functioning of the internal market. The Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA)¹ that entered into force in 2024, and the recently adopted RESourceEU initiative² aim to ensure access to a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials.

Directives 2000/60/EC³, 92/43/EEC⁴ or 2009/147/EC⁵ set out specific requirements for projects potentially affecting the environment, including proof that the project is of overriding public interest. The CRMA provides that, given the role of critical raw materials in ensuring the EU's security of supply for strategic raw materials, strategic projects shall be considered to be of public interest or serving public health and safety and may be considered to have an overriding public interest. Therefore, strategic projects having an adverse impact on the environment may be authorised if the national permitting authority assesses that the public interest served by a strategic project overrides any adverse impacts on the environment. This is done based on a case-by-case assessment.

To enable a simpler and more harmonised implementation in Member States of the EU law on environmental permitting, including aspects relating to the mining sector, the Commission has announced in the RESourceEU initiative, that it will issue a guidance document in the first quarter of 2026. In addition to the guidance, by the second quarter of 2026, the Commission will review and revise the Water Framework Directive⁶.

¹ https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202401252.

² https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/document/download/01c448d6-dc93-40d7-9afe-4c2af448d00c_en.

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A02000L0060-20141120>.

⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:01992L0043-20250714>.

⁵ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:02009L0147-20190626>.

⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:02000L0060-20141120>.