

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-004282/25
to the Commission
Andreas Glück (Renew), Axel Voss (PPE)
(31 October 2025)**

Subject: Price setting and potential market power in the market for high-purity vacuum salt

In its response to Written Question P-002226/2025 ⁽¹⁾, the Commission acknowledged the importance of high-purity vacuum salt for European industry, but did not suggest that it would be classified as a ‘critical raw material’. There is currently growing evidence of a highly concentrated market in which a small number of suppliers, like the Dutch company Nobian, have considerable pricing power.

This market situation has led to a significant increase in the price of high-purity vacuum salt in recent years. In the light of this development, the following questions arise:

1. Does the Commission have data on recent price developments in the European market for high-purity vacuum salt, particularly with regard to the possible dominant market positions of individual suppliers?
2. How does the Commission assess the risk of an abuse of market power within the meaning of Article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union in this sector and what legislative measures are available to take action if necessary?
3. As part of its internal market strategy and the upcoming review of the Critical Raw Materials Act ⁽²⁾, does the Commission intend to systematically examine competition and price formation aspects in oligopolistic raw material markets in order to identify and prevent potential market failures?

Submitted: 31.10.2025

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Ribera on behalf of the European Commission
(30 March 2026)**

As the Commission has previously indicated, salt is an important industrial input.

While the Commission does not collect data on recent price developments for high-purity vacuum salt, it examines supply concentration in its assessment of the criticality of raw materials ⁽¹⁾.

If the thresholds established in the Critical Raw Materials Act ⁽²⁾ are met, the Commission will consider the material critical and can take measures aiming at supply diversification.

In case of high supply concentration within the EU, competition policy may be relevant.

Competition rules, in particular Articles 101 and 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), apply to the sector of high-purity vacuum salt.

As regards any abuse of dominance, the Commission would apply its standard criteria under Article 102 TFEU ⁽³⁾. It would first define the relevant market.

Next, it would evaluate whether a firm holds a dominant position. If dominance is found, the Commission examines whether the dominant company’s conduct constitutes an abuse of dominance.

If a violation is found, the Commission may order the concerned company to cease the conduct and may levy fines or require remedies.

If they suspect that a specific practice restricts competition, citizens and companies can lodge a formal complaint to the Commission ⁽⁴⁾.

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-10-2025-002226_EN.html.

² Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials, OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj>.

⁽¹⁾ The Commission plans to update the list of critical raw materials by 24 May 2027 in line with Article 4 of the Critical Raw Materials Act. See for background also the latest https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/publications/study-critical-raw-materials-eu-2023-final-report_en.

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amending Regulations (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020, OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024.

⁽³⁾ See for further information on the Commission’s assessment under Article 102 of the Treaty the draft guidelines on the application of Article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to abusive exclusionary conduct by dominant undertakings (‘the draft Article 102 Guidelines’), https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/antitrust-and-cartels/legislation/application-article-102-tfeu_en.

⁽⁴⁾ See for further information: https://competition-policy.ec.europa.eu/antitrust-and-cartels/procedures/complaints_en.

If relevant, this could include information about developments related to high-purity vacuum salt. In addition to public enforcement (under Regulation 1/2003 ⁽⁶⁾), private damages actions remain available in national courts.

⁽⁶⁾ Council Regulation (EU) No 1/2003 of 16 December 2002 on the implementation of the rules on competition laid down in Articles 81 and 82 of the Treaty, OJ L 1, 4.1.2003, pp. 1-25.