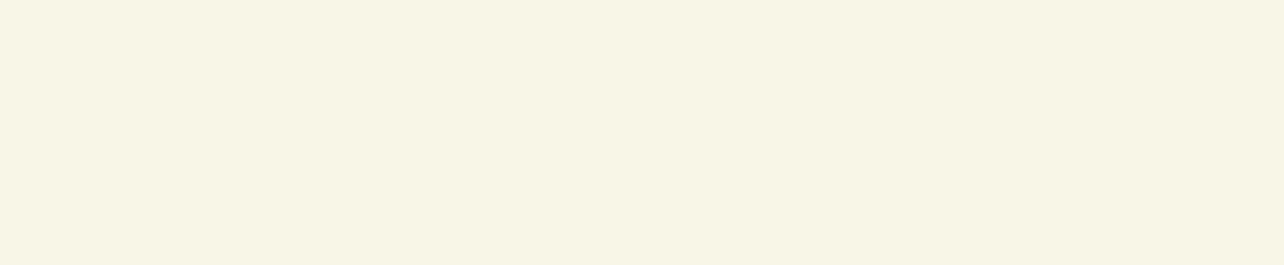


Arctic Frontiers Third Roundtable Discussion

Accessing Critical Minerals for Accelerating the Green Transition

DATE: August 28-29th, 2025





ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Arctic region is at a critical juncture, facing both unprecedented challenges and opportunities. The impacts of global warming, which are four times faster in the Arctic than in the rest of the world, underline the urgency of transitioning from a fossil fuel-dependent economy to a sustainable, renewable energy-driven future.

This green transition is not just an environmental necessity but an opportunity to redefine economic structures and foster resilient communities across the Nordic Arctic. Simultaneously, green transition in the Arctic requires consultations and coexistence between industry and traditional livelihoods.

This project seeks to address these pressing needs by creating a structured platform for dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and actionable policy recommendations. Through a series of moderated roundtable discussions, we aim to bring together key stakeholders to address the multifaceted challenges of the green transition.

The project is generously funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and will focus on three key themes:

→ Economic and Investment Needs

How to attract and secure sustainable investments while managing risks, fostering innovation, and ensuring the equitable distribution of resources.

→ Energy Security and Resource Management

Addressing the transition to renewable energy, the secure supply of critical minerals, and the development of place-based production systems.

→ Balancing Growth and Conservation

Navigating the complex interplay of economic development, environmental stewardship, and the rights and traditions of Indigenous and local communities.

OBJECTIVES AND DELIVERABLES

The primary objective of this project is to define what the green transition looks like in the Arctic by producing a comprehensive policy roadmap for sustainable development. This roadmap will guide policy-makers and stakeholders in implementing strategies to achieve economic resilience, energy security, and environmental sustainability across the region.



Rapporteur from the notes only: **Marja Helena Sivonen**, researcher, Finnish Environment Institute

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KEY ACTION POINTS:

Integrate climate and environmental safeguards into mining policy.

Ensure biodiversity protection and commit operations to no damage.

Protect the waters.

Actively seek less destructive mining methods and improved post-mining land restoration.

Require comprehensive planning for ethical mining operations.

Improve traceability across the whole value chain throughout the long mining processes.

Target research financing for the area.

Strengthen the status of all stakeholders for just transitions.

Respect human rights.

Create memorandum of understanding between all stakeholders.

Ensure collaborative monitoring of the whole project.

Compensate the time used for all stakeholders.

Support local businesses and societies to increase social acceptance and to develop the region through for instance taxing and business cooperation.

Promote cross-border and cross-sector collaboration.

Develop places of non-competition for knowledge sharing and developing mutual good for the region.

Create cross-border governance mechanisms including regulatory frameworks that ease the flow of people, materials and services for the development of the whole region.

Mandate inclusive participation and trust-building measures.

Respect FPIC.

Involve a neutral party in consultation processes.

Ensure companies compensate for stakeholders' legal assistance.

KEY THEMES (FROM THE DISCUSSIONS):

1. Climate change drives all action as it threatens life on Earth

- Climate mitigation through the energy sector increases demand for mineral and material extraction.
- Sustainability, nature protection and biodiversity must be safeguarded in mining.
- Freshwater resources require strict protection.

2. Thorough planning is essential for all mining operations

- Planning must enable local dialogue and participation, inclusive labour procurement, local business development, infrastructure provision, legal support for stakeholders, financial safeguards for disruptions, and strong consultation rights.
- Improve traceability of materials and end-products to ensure ethical production.
- Deep sea mining must be thoroughly investigated and carefully planned, with caution as a priority to protect biodiversity

3. Public policy and governance are essential for just transitions

- Human rights must be upheld in all activities.
- Legislation should be strengthened to reflect regional needs and include broad social impact assessments.
- Regulation must ensure to going beyond minimum standards to ensure just mining practices.

4. Borders hinder regional cooperation on shared challenges

- Competitive dynamics between North–South and East–West should be recognised, and find solutions to overcome them.
- Developing borderless approaches to just mining, including knowledge sharing, RD&I and best practices for justice are vital.
- Fund inter- and transdisciplinary approaches tailored to the region.
- Fostering cross-industrial, non-competitive dialogue in areas such as social development, sustainability and logistics is important.

5. Trust must be built, maintained and strengthened in all activities

- Respect and support traditional livelihoods and ways of life, including those of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
- Acknowledge how socially constructed borders disrupt Indigenous ways of life.
- Ensure FPIC and genuine opportunities to say ‘no’.
- Reduce polarisation through education and media.

SUMMARY

Summary to answer the first-round questions:

- ➔ In what ways can businesses address justice issues to enable fair and meaningful participation of indigenous and local knowledge in critical materials projects?
- ➔ Is the current legal and regulatory framework pertaining minerals and materials suited for enabling a just transition in the Arctic context?
- ➔ Can local value chains or financial benefits contribute to social acceptance of projects? What other ways to improve just outcomes can you identify?

Businesses can address justice issues through thorough project planning from the outset, enabling inclusive participation of those most affected by mining activities on the ground. The legal and regulatory framework alone is insufficient and often inaccessible to those who need it most. Strengthening local value chains can enhance project acceptance. Openness, dialogue, and meaningful participation—rooted in respect for local contexts—are essential. Concrete action is needed, as much has already been said.

Summary to answer the second-round questions:

- ➔ What are the current and future key social, environmental, ethical, and economic considerations and challenges related to the increased need for critical minerals and materials? Are they different on land and in waters?
- ➔ What are good examples of overcoming these challenges and why? For example, best practices related to co-existence, social acceptance and positive ripple effects.
- ➔ How do we balance competition and collaboration between the Nordic countries and regions, but also between regions nationally?

Key issues related to mining concern the well-being and future prospects of both people and non-human life in affected areas. Without thorough and comprehensive planning in regions where critical deposits are located, justice cannot prevail. Societal planning must ensure that everyone has a fair chance to live, including the protection of human rights such as language, culture, education, and employment. Nordic countries should recognise the value of cooperation and work towards a shared path for just transitions. Challenges are already shared, solutions and benefits should be too. Strengthened regional governance is essential to guide these major developments, which carry long-lasting impacts on people, land, and the environment.

