



The next step towards the mineral exploration in Europe – project INFACT - Innovative, non-invasive and fully acceptable exploration technologies

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Exploration is the crucial first stage in the raw materials chain and has the goal of discovering economically viable deposits of raw materials. Periods of significant discovery directly follow innovations that either change the geological targets of exploration (fundamental theories), the physical places that are reached (regions and depths), or the manner in which they are explored (techniques and methods). Despite its rich history of mining and residual mineral wealth, current conditions within the EU present a number of social, political, legislative, cost and physical barriers to raw material exploration: barriers to be overcome by innovation, dialogue and reform. The goal of the Innovative, Non-invasive and Fully Acceptable Exploration Technologies (INFACT) project is to drive innovation in cost-effective and sustainable exploration techniques that are relevant to the particular conditions and strategic raw material targets of Europe. Its aim is to facilitate access to prospective locations that have remained under-explored due to technical, physical, social or cost restrictions. Recognising that the future of sustainable exploration requires a reduction in environmental and social disturbance, the INFACT project focuses on innovative exploration techniques that are 'non-invasive' (airborne geophysics and remote sensing). The project includes investigation of the social aspects of raw materials exploration by integrating technological innovation and stakeholder engagement (encompassing local communities, wider society and industry) in order to encourage best-practice exploration conduct, measure public perceptions and improve relevance to industry and society alike. INFACT is comprised of the following main components: • Development and test of innovative, environmentally and socially 'acceptable' exploration technologies and processes - in an industrially-relevant environment, • Foundation of three reference sites in Europe for demonstration, benchmarking and certification of new technologies and analysis of public awareness and opinion in the south, middle and north of Europe, and • Stakeholder engagement and education: exploration practitioners, policy-makers and wider society.