

I4-GREEN Leads Strategic Debate on Critical Raw Materials in Madrid

Madrid, 14 April 2025 – In the face of rising geopolitical tensions and growing concern over Europe's strategic dependencies, Madrid hosted a high-level Strategic Breakfast focused on securing access to critical raw materials. The event, held at Club Financiero Génova, was **jointly organised by the Iberian Sustainable Mining Cluster (ISMC), the ICAMCyL Foundation, and the Madrid Mining Club**, under the umbrella of the European project **I4-GREEN**.

This international forum brought together leading figures from the mining sector, analysts, and diplomatic representatives from countries such as Uzbekistan and Canada to address the challenges and opportunities involved in securing a sustainable and resilient supply of raw materials for Europe.

Dr Santiago Cuesta López, General Director of ICAMCyL and ISMC and coordinator of I4-GREEN, opened the discussion by emphasising the **strategic importance of investing in the exploration, extraction, processing, and recycling of raw materials within European borders**.

“Critical raw materials are no longer just an economic or industrial issue – they are about security, sovereignty, and Europe's future,” Cuesta stated. “We must reinforce innovation ecosystems and industrial cooperation to avoid creating new strategic dependencies.”

I4-GREEN: A Pillar of the Green Transition

The **I4-GREEN project**, funded through the EU's Interregional Innovation Investments (I3) programme and coordinated by ICAMCyL, was presented as a leading model of **cross-border collaboration in sustainable raw material value chains**. With pilot initiatives underway in Spain and Portugal, the project supports SMEs and regional clusters in fostering circular mining practices and reducing reliance on imported materials, while aligning with the European Green Deal.

Milena Stoyanova, Project Officer at the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA), underlined the importance of the I3 funding instrument in boosting industrial transformation. Together with Cuesta, she highlighted that I4-GREEN can mobilise up to €10 million per initiative to develop green industrial ecosystems and facilitate cooperation between businesses, innovation hubs, and public institutions.

Panels: From Raw Materials to European Resilience

Two expert panels were held during the event. The first, moderated by Cuesta, explored the **geopolitical implications of critical materials**. It featured:

- **Nodir Ergashev**, Consul of Uzbekistan in Spain, who highlighted his country's role as a reliable supplier of strategic resources;

- **Eugenia Pérez**, Commercial Attaché at the Embassy of Canada in Spain, who showcased Canada's responsible resource extraction model;
- Experts from the **Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies (IEEE)** and **EsadeGeo**, who examined raw materials as a foundation of Europe's technological and energy autonomy.

The second panel, moderated by **Raúl Fernández Abad**, President of the **Madrid Mining Club** and CEO of Leonore Development, tackled **investment and logistics in the raw materials sector**. Speakers included:

- **Álvaro Serrano**, CEO of SALORO and President of ISMC, who stressed the strategic importance of tungsten sourced from the Barruecopardo mine in Salamanca;
- **David Niknejad**, CEO of Visco Orinoco;
- **Ignacio López-Bachiller**, Director of International Relations at Grupo Nogar;
- **Jaime Beltrán**, Commercial Director of the Port Authority of Huelva, who focused on the role of maritime logistics in securing supply chains.

Strengthening Alliances Through I4-GREEN

The event concluded with dedicated **networking and business synergy sessions**, promoting new collaborative opportunities between companies, investors, and institutions across Europe. These efforts, supported by **I4-GREEN**, aim to scale up EU-aligned industrial initiatives in the field of critical raw materials.

The I4-GREEN project is coordinated by ICAMCyL Foundation, please contact us for further information: projects@icamcyl.com or i3.i4green.eu@gmail.com