



## Local people's perceptions about mineral exploration. Tentative results from NEXT-project interviews and survey in Ylitornio and Rovaniemi

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Adjunct Professor Leena Suopajärvi | 19.5.2020 | Tukes and GTK briefing: Overview of exploration, mining and licensing in Finland | Webinar



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# The NEXT Project



New Exploration Technologies for a More Efficient, Economic and Environmentally Friendly Ore Exploration

## NEXT key figures

- ✓ Call: H2020-SC5-13c-2016-2017  
- New solutions for sustainable production of raw materials
- ✓ Duration: 01.05.2018 – 30.04.2021
- ✓ Coordinator: Geological Survey of Finland
- ✓ Consortium: 16 partners from 6 EU countries



This project is funded by the European Union

May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020

# The NEXT Project



New Exploration Technologies for a More Efficient, Economic and Environmentally Friendly Ore Exploration



*16 partners from leading EU research institutes (3), academia (3), service providers (5) and industry (5)*



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# Social License to Explore (SLE)



New Exploration Technologies for a More Efficient, Economic and Environmentally Friendly Ore Exploration

- A **Social License to Explore** refers to local acceptance of mineral exploration. An SLE is especially important in the green fields, i.e., areas where mineral exploration companies are newcomers and often the first representatives of the industry.
- The term SLE originates from the concept Social License to Operate (SLO), widely used in the mining sector, usually referring to local acceptance of operations earned by a company through its performance.
- There is very little evidence-based knowledge about the SLE, for example the factors that shape local attitudes, the importance of early interaction, the nature of impacts and the role of technology. It has not been prioritized in research, nor by industry, as the social impacts of exploration are considered less intrusive than those of mining.
- To gain an SLE, the important issues are (1) early communication and interaction with the local community; (2) to know the local context is a precondition for the SLE; (3) national legislation sets the frame for the SLE. SLE is also influenced by people's attitudes towards mining.



# The data: interviews and a postal questionnaire



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- The data: 21 interviews (n= 35), mostly among local organized groups (associations, political parties etc.) during May 2019 and March 2020.
- The data: A postal questionnaire based on a representative random sample sent to Ylitornio (n= 600) and southern parts of Rovaniemi (n= 300) in March-April 2020. Response rate 28.5% (n = 257).
- **Note!** The survey results are biased: male respondents and elderly, retired people formed the clear majority of the respondents. The survey cannot be regarded as the “general opinion”. At this stage, results are not reported by using exact %-numbers as we may still get more answers.
- A second, web-based survey is planned to reach younger residents and summer cottage owners, for example.



# Tentative results: Attitudes towards mineral exploration in southwestern Lapland (Ylitornio and Rovaniemi, southern parts)



- **Social license to explore:** Organized local groups in Ylitornio mainly accept and support mineral exploration. In the survey, around 3/4 of the respondents had a positive attitude towards mineral exploration in their home-area and in general. Around 2/3 welcomed mining. Around 1/5 were critical towards mineral exploration and mining. Context matters: need for employment and economic development.
- **Assessment of the impacts of mineral exploration:** Environmental impacts were considered minor and limited (almost 2/3). In the interviews, exploration was often compared to forestry that has much wider environmental impacts. More than half stated that exploration has created employment opportunities and supported the local economy, and the majority (around 2/3) argued that mineral exploration is important for the future development of the municipality (Ylitornio).



# Tentative results: Attitudes towards mineral exploration in southwestern Lapland (Ylitornio and Rovaniemi, southern parts)

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- **Permit and monitoring:** In the survey, around 2/5 could not evaluate the permit process, while around 1/3 argued that the role of the local people should be stronger in the process. Also, around 2/5 said that monitoring and regulation should be stronger, but 1/5 could not answer. Two-fifths of the respondents did not accept mineral exploration in nature conservation areas, but almost 2/3 did. In the interviews, there was criticism towards the role of “outsiders” when permitting or making decisions about mineral exploration; often referred to as “greens” or “southern environmentalists”.
- **New exploration technologies:** Over half of the respondents said that new exploration technologies make exploration more acceptable; taking samples from trees and shrubbery and using drones were accepted by more than 4/5 of the respondents. Deep drilling was accepted by almost 3/4 of the respondents.



# Next steps and contact information



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- **Next steps:** In the following months, there will be more nuanced analyses of the quantitative and qualitative data and a comparison with the Swedish case. Also, a web-based survey is made, if possible. The project report is made latest by April 2021. Scientific articles will also be written.
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