



NamiRo-Report

„Sustainability Schemes for Mineral Resources: A Comparative Overview“ – Insights into a growing ‘standards landscape’

Background

Mineral resources are extracted and processed across the globe under various legal settings and degrees of voluntary corporate responsibility. Reported cases of human rights violations or environmental degradation led to a poor reputation of mining and further processing in some parts of the world. In order to demonstrably improve production conditions along the supply chain, various societal actors, such as mining companies, manufacturers and multi-stakeholder collaborations, developed individual sustainability initiatives and certification systems. The study presented in this leaflet was published within the German research project ‘NamiRo’ in 2017. The study aims at informing (inter)national stakeholders on 19 selected sustainability initiatives and to support a process of mutual learning and harmonization among sustainability schemes.

Varying Initiatives’ Scope

Regarding their supply chain scope, schemes can be broken down in to four broad groups (Fig. 1): 1. Exclusively addressing the mining level with minimum up to extensive requirements, 2. Promoting due diligence of ‘conflict minerals’ and traceability in the upstream supply chain, 3. Certifying conflict-free smelters and refiners (using schemes from group 3.), 4. Ensuring traceability of minerals across the entire supply chain with a varying spectrum of sustainability issues being addressed. Over the

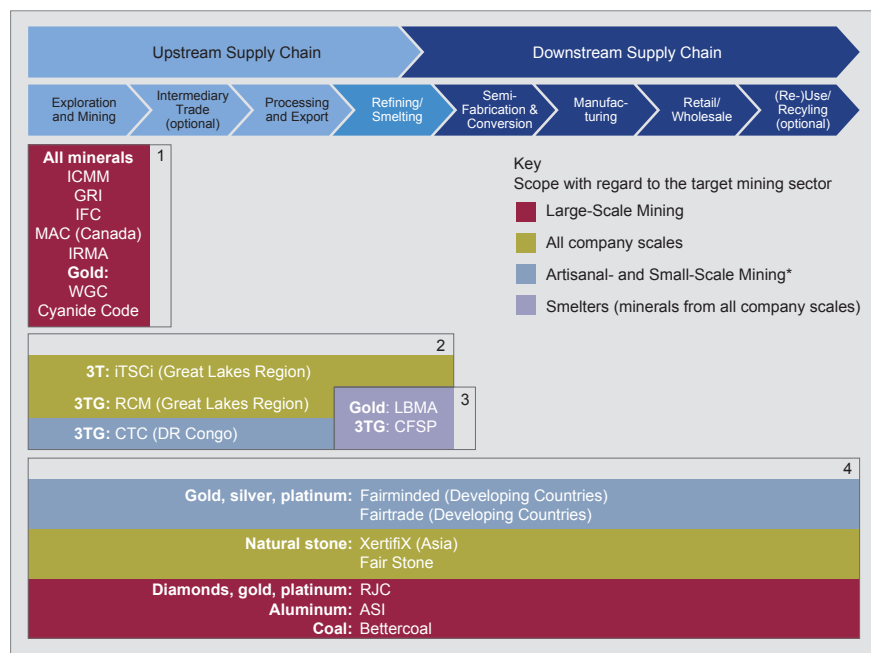


Figure 1: Grouping of sustainability initiatives and standards according to supply chain coverage, commodity focus and target region. Colored indication of target groups. For abbreviations access full NamiRo-report.

past decade, the number of systems and associated standards has steadily increased as new minerals, countries, issues or organization sizes have been addressed. Although taking action is generally approved, consumers and downstream companies feel overwhelmed by the number of initiatives. Call for better orientation, higher transparency and improved credibility is growing.

Framework for Sustainability Issues of Mining

Despite their various target commodities and regions, standards comprise similar issues, such as child labour, work safety, living wages, protection of water bodies, biodiversity, tax transparency and corruption. Some sub-issues get less attention, such as local workforce, support of good governance, water and energy use. Unfortunately, the aggregation and degree of detail of requirements vary across standards, making comparisons difficult. Therefore, a consolidated framework for sustainability issues of mining was established (Fig. 2), based on the analysis of 19 standard documents. In a second step, the number of sub-issues per scheme was identified and extent of requirements estimated (Fig. 3). Differences stem from each scheme being ‘tailored’ to the intention to its initiators and its target group, e.g. artisanal and small-scale miners or industrial mining. Furthermore, there is diversification due to minimum requirements, incremental requirements allowing stepwise improvements or best practices. Nonetheless, harmonization within groups of similar initiatives and schemes comes as a conclusion from the study – be it through cooperation or ‘constructive competition’.

Human and Workers' Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious Human Rights Abuses • Terms of Employment • Occupational Health and Safety
Societal Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Rights • (Local) Value Added
Use of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use & Biodiversity • Water Use • Energy Use • Material Use
Emissions and Land Reclamation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure & Land Rehabilitation • Mine Waste & Waste Water • Air Emissions & Noise
Company Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Practices • Management Practices

Figure 2: Excerpt from the consolidated framework of sustainability issues for mining (5 categories and 14 issues) based on 17 sustainability schemes. Furthermore, 86 sub-issues were determined in the full “NamiRo” report.

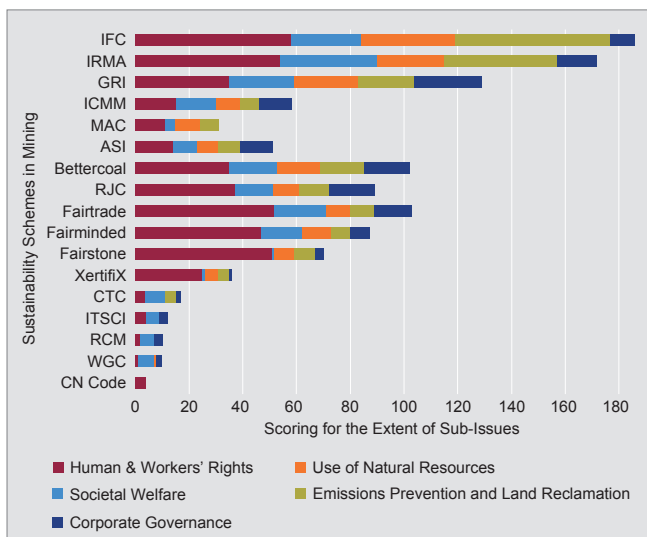


Figure 3: Estimated extent of requirements of seventeen sustainability initiatives for mining shown by coverage of five major sustainability categories. For abbreviations access full NamiRo-report

Contact and further information:

Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (BGR)

Karoline Kickler,
Tel.: 0511 643 3242
E-Mail: karoline.kickler@bgr.de

Gudrun Franken,
Tel.: 0511 643 2370,
E-Mail: gudrun.franken@bgr.de

Websites: <https://www.namiro-projekt.org/>,
<https://www.bgr.bund.de/EN>