POLICY BRIEF

EUROPE'S NEW COBALT STRATEGIC PROJECTS:

Progress towards supply security?

While the selection of 10 new cobalt-related EU Strategic Projects marks progress in strengthening Europe's cobalt processing and recycling capabilities, the limited number of extraction projects underscores the continued role of imported primary cobalt in meeting European demand.

The emphasis on downstream activities may reflect the EU's efforts to strengthen domestic cobalt supply through recycling. In this context, the Democratic Republic of the Congo's introduction of cobalt export quotas further highlights the importance of diversified and resilient supply chains[1].

Ultimately, the success of the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) will require not only expanding and diversifying its Strategic Project portfolio but also ensuring that designated projects become operational and deliver reliable and sustainable cobalt supplies to European industry.

10 PROJECTS ACROSS EU

Extraction · Processing · Recycling · Integrated



FINLAND – 2 projects

- Hautalampi Cobalt-Nickel-Copper Mine Project
- CONIKO - Cobalt and Nickel refining in Kokkola

GERMANY – 2 projects

- Pure Battery Technologies pCAM plant Europe
- EU BEST STRAT: Battery Economical Sustainable Technology

FRANCE – 2 projects

- NEOMAT-PCAM
- EMME

BELGIUM – 1 project

- OREON (Optimal Recycling Of Nickel)

NETHERLANDS – 1 project

- Enabling CRM production in Europe by recovering CRM from end-of-life batteries: a scalable battery black mass refining process

ROMANIA – 1 project

- Establishment of electric battery recycling capacity, Racari city, Dambovita county

ITALY – 1 project

- REW-ITA green HUB - Recovery of Wolfram: Italian Technology Advanced green Hub

Extraction – Mining and raw material extraction

Processing – Refining and material processing (e.g. pCAM)

Recycling – Recovery of cobalt and other critical materials (e.g. from batteries)

Integrated – Combined processing and recycling

OUR ASK:

The EU's next priority should be turning Strategic Project designations into operational capacity. This requires addressing financing and permitting challenges, ensuring secure and diversified feedstock through international partnerships and long-term supply agreements and promoting the commercial competitiveness of new investments.

Ten new cobalt projects across Europe

On 9 October 2026, the European Commission announced the selection of 46 new Strategic Projects across 16 EU Member States, including ten involving cobalt. The announcement marks another step towards strengthening Europe's critical raw materials value chains and reducing its exposure to global supply disruptions. The new designations follow 47 EU-based Strategic Projects selected in March 2025 and 13 projects outside the EU selected in June 2025, bringing the total to 106 recognised projects, including 22 cobalt-related projects[2].

What does this mean for Europe's cobalt strategy?

The current portfolio suggests that Europe is seeking its position particularly through processing and recycling while opportunities for new primary cobalt extraction remain limited. These projects can contribute to supply diversification, but their designation alone does not remove the EU's reliance on imported primary cobalt. According to the European Commission, the combined portfolio of Strategic Projects selected since 2025 could **fully meet the CRMA's cobalt recycling capacity benchmark and reach 89% of its processing benchmark by 2030**, provided the projects are successfully implemented. These figures reflect projected capacity rather than existing production or guaranteed supply. Whether this capacity is available by 2030 will depend on project financing, permitting, construction and commissioning, as well as availability of inputs.

What is an EU Strategic Project?

Introduced under the **EU Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA)**, Strategic Projects aim to strengthen the EU's secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials, including cobalt. The European Commission selects projects based on their contribution to security of supply, technical feasibility and environmental and social sustainability. Designation provides priority treatment, streamlined permitting and support in accessing finance, but does not guarantee funding or approval. The initiative supports the CRMA's 2030 capacity benchmarks: **10% for extraction, 40% for processing and 25% for recycling**, relative to EU annual consumption[3]. Cobalt is among the strategic raw materials identified under Annex I of the CRMA.

1. International Energy Agency, DRC ARECOMS Decision No. 004/2025 – Cobalt Quota System, Policies database, updated 28 May 2026.
2. European Commission, Commission selects 46 new Strategic Projects to bolster the EU's supply of critical raw materials, 9 October 2026.
3. Regulation (EU) 2024/1252, Critical Raw Materials Act, particularly Articles 1, 3, 6-7, 10-11, 15 and Annex I.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions:
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