

Joint Press Release – 24 February 2026



New podcast launched on the global geopolitics of critical raw materials: RAW MATTERS

The KU Leuven Institute of Sustainable Metals and Minerals (SIM² KU Leuven) has launched a new podcast, “RAW MATTERS”, about the global critical metals and minerals that determine our common future. Hosted by Peter Tom Jones (Director SIM² KU Leuven) and Julia Poliscanova (Senior Director for Electric Vehicles & Batteries at T&E), the podcast brings together leading voices from around the world. For this podcast SIM² KU Leuven joined forces with several EU project consortia and T&E. On 21 February 2026, the pilot episode – featuring the two hosts – was officially released on YouTube and Spotify.



Clean energy, electric mobility, digital/AI technologies, and modern defense capabilities all rely on one foundation: critical raw materials. Yet with rising geopolitical tensions, concentrated supply chains, and growing reliance on a small number of producing countries, the world faces a profound challenge: how to build resilient, responsible, and diversified raw materials systems that support our green and digital transitions? Hosted by Peter Tom Jones and Julia Poliscanova, the RAW MATTERS podcast brings together leading voices from around the world — across civil society (environmental movements, trade unions...) academia, industry, and policymaking. Episodes will unpack key topics such as the increasing weaponisation of critical minerals; the future of green steelmaking; the complex supply chains for rare earths, lithium and other critical minerals; the production and recycling of batteries, magnets and EVs; and the search for benefit-sharing responsible mining models.

Pilot episode #1

On 21 February 2026 the pilot episode was officially released. This episode offers a fast and furious conversation between the two hosts of the podcast, exposing multiple dilemmas, paradoxes and elephants in the (critical minerals) room:

- ✓ the increasingly turbulent global geopolitics of critical minerals;
- ✓ the US-China clash for CRM dominance and the collateral damage it is creating;
- ✓ the position of “middle powers” in “a world of fortresses” (Mark Carney’s speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos features heavily while being compared with Greta Thunberg’s “Our house is on fire” speech in 2019);
- ✓ Europe’s struggles to move from words to action when it comes to its critical mineral strategy. Will Europe continue to sleepwalk in the abyss?;
- ✓ Is there still a future for green steelmaking in Europe given the competition with China?

Future episodes will be recorded with, amongst others, Henry Sanderson (author of *Volt Rush*) and Judith Kirton-Darling (General Secretary IndustriALL Europe).

“In a world of great power rivalry, countries in between have a choice. Compete with each other for favour or to combine to create a third path with impact. We shouldn’t allow the rise of hard power to blind us to the fact that the power of legitimacy, integrity and rules will remain strong if we choose to wield them together.” (M. Carney, February 2026)



Raw Matters (pilot) Episode #1 (Feb 2026): "Critical mineral supply chains have become battlefields"

Where to watch or listen to RAW MATTERS?

- ✓ Watch Episode #1 on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GxHOFp6DYHA>
- ✓ Listen to Episode #1 on Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1THwRMNc3PEhYx5FRluPCR?si=TIK34G6mSQuYQbbc53PWlQ>
- ✓ Follow all news about the RAW MATTERS podcast on its dedicated LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/raw-matters-podcast/?viewAsMember=true>

Podcast info, funding & disclaimer

RAW MATTERS is directed by Stijn van Baarle (Storyrunner) (who was also the director of the recent documentaries presented by Peter Tom Jones: “Europe’s Lithium Paradox”, “Made in Europe:



from mine to electric vehicle” and “Not In My Country: Serbia’s Lithium Dilemma”) and filmed at the premises of SIM² KU Leuven's SOLVOMET R&T Centre. The podcast is hosted by Peter Tom Jones (Director SIM² KU Leuven) and Julia Poliscanova (Senior Director at T&E). Funding for the episodes is provided by the KU Leuven Institute for Sustainable Metals and Minerals & Horizon Europe (incl. [H2PlasmaRed](#) [Horizon Europe](#), [Horizon Europe LITHOS](#)...). Disclaimer EU: Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or CINEA/HADEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Supporting organisations



The main developer of the podcast RAW MATTERS is SIM², the KU Leuven Institute for Sustainable Metals and Minerals. This interdisciplinary institute spans fields such as geology, chemistry, metallurgy, engineering, law, and economics. As one of the leading academic institutes in Europe, SIM² is dedicated to advancing the sustainable production and recycling of critical metals through research, education, and wider-society learning. The latter includes the creation of science communication films & author’s documentaries. Notable examples are the award-winning *Made In Europe: From Mine to Electric Vehicle* (2023), *The Sami Perspective* (2024), *Europe’s Mining Renaissance: A Catalyst for Climate Neutrality* (2024), and *Not In My Country, Serbia’s Lithium Dilemma* (2025). For more information, visit <https://kuleuven.sim2.be/>



This podcast is being co-funded through the Horizon Europe project LITHOS. LITHOS directly contributes to the 1st and 2nd CRMA benchmarks (10% domestic extraction; 40% domestic processing). LITHOS processes and refines the ores from three “Strategic Projects” in terms of domestic battery-grade LiOH·H₂O production. LITHOS triggers innovations along the value chain – mineral processing, concentrate pre-treatment & hydrometallurgical refining – making it possible to deal with different levels and types of impurities in non-spodumene Li minerals (lepidolite & petalite). LITHOS gives specific attention to closed-loop water systems in the mineral processing. More information: <https://lithos-horizon.eu/lithos-project/>



This podcast is being co-funded through the Horizon Europe project H2PlasmaRed. The main objective of H2PlasmaRed is to develop a green CO₂-free steelmaking route based on H₂-plasma technology while promoting a circular economy by valorising industrial sidestreams to meet the targets of the European Green Deal for reducing CO₂ emissions in the steel industry across Europe. More information: <https://h2plasmared.eu/>

Storyrunner

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