



Ideas for an EU-US Raw Materials Partnership

DIHK Policy Paper

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DIHK Policy Paper – Ideas for an EU-US Raw Materials Partnership

A reliable supply of critical raw materials – vital for numerous sectors of the economy, particularly future technologies and the defence industry – is becoming a key issue for German companies. The EU is heavily reliant on secure, affordable and sustainable imports of raw materials. Europe shares this challenge with the US. The United States imports 21 mineral raw materials, predominantly from China, including over 70 percent of its demand for rare earths. Germany and Europe, too, are heavily dependent on a small number of suppliers for critical raw materials – primarily from China.

To reduce dependencies and build resilient supply chains, the US is pursuing a consistent, comprehensively funded and proactive raw materials policy. Government support programmes, state stockpiling and direct investment are intended to secure global access to critical raw materials. These US industrial policy measures are simultaneously increasing pressure on the EU not to fall behind in the global competition for raw materials. Although instruments and processes to improve raw materials supply already exist, such as the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA), ReSourceEU or national programmes like the German government's Raw Materials Fund, the intended procedural simplifications and financing options have so far had little practical impact. In a special report on raw materials supply and EU measures, the European Court of Auditors also criticises the fact that many of the European Commission's projects fail due to its own bureaucracy and conflicting objectives.¹

Against this backdrop, the EU-US raw materials partnership signed on 24 April could offer significant opportunities. The aim of this initiative is to implement coordinated trade measures, including cross-border price floors, standards-based markets, price differential subsidies and off-take agreements. Strategic transatlantic cooperation in these areas could bring significant improvements for the European economy. However, the transatlantic partnership has recently come under pressure as a result of aggressive US trade policy. Economic coercive measures on the part of the US, particularly in the wake of the Greenland crisis, have severely strained relations and undermined the reliability of the US. Care must therefore be taken to ensure that a new EU-US raw materials partnership does not create new dependencies for Europe.

The action plan announced at the signing ceremony should take the following points into account:

Partnership on an equal footing

A transatlantic raw materials partnership must be structured on an equal footing. European and US companies require non-discriminatory access to supply contracts, projects and financing. Unilateral preferential treatment of US companies must not disadvantage either German or European suppliers. This applies to supply contracts as well as to public procurement. What is needed are binding, transparent and uniform framework conditions for both sides – ranging from award and access criteria, through sustainability and due diligence obligations, to financing and state aid rules. The German Government should act consistently in the European interest in order to speak with a strong, united voice as part of the EU and to secure reliable market and investment opportunities for European industry. Trade and safeguard instruments (e.g. against unfair subsidies or economic coercion) can be coordinated within EU-US bilateral and plurilateral frameworks. At the same time, the EU must continue to safeguard its trade policy autonomy. The automatic or forced adoption by the EU of US restrictions, tariffs or trade defence measures must not form part of any agreement – such decisions must be taken independently, in accordance with the rule of law and guided by the EU's interests at EU level.

Underpinning the raw materials partnership with concrete projects

A functioning partnership requires a clear pipeline of concrete, industry-driven projects. Many German companies are already investing in the US and strengthening the resilience of supply chains there. These projects should be specifically promoted and supported by policy measures. At the same time, European projects must receive equivalent support.

A key focus should be on building processing capacities in alternative markets to China – for example, in the separation and refining of rare earths, battery and defence raw materials, and in recycling. This will create market and

¹ [Special Report 04/2026: Critical raw materials for the energy transition | European Court of Auditors](#)

technology opportunities for companies on both sides, whilst also ensuring robust supply chains resilient to geopolitical risks.

Price floors as a last resort

Price floors should apply exclusively to security-relevant raw materials where the state itself acts as the end customer. For other critical raw materials, they may only be used as a last resort. Whilst price floors increase planning certainty for new projects, they initially lead to higher procurement costs without increasing global supply in the short term. Priority should therefore be given to improving the regulatory and economic framework conditions in the US and Europe.

Joint financing & investment simplifications

A resilient raw materials partnership requires a joint financing architecture and simplified investment conditions. German and European instruments (e.g. the German government's raw materials fund, ReSourceEU, Global Gateway, raw materials loans) should be pooled, opened up to transatlantic co-investments and linked to US initiatives such as 'Project Vault' or FORGE. US instruments such as those provided by the EXIM Bank, the US Department of Energy or the Defense Production Act should also be opened up where possible. The aim is a joint financing package covering the entire value chain – from exploration and extraction, through refining, to recycling.

Key components should include a transatlantic project pipeline mechanism with a digital "OneStopCoFinance Desk", mutual recognition of equivalent ESG, due diligence and reporting obligations to avoid duplicate checks, as well as risk guarantees. In addition, there is a need for accelerated, predictable approval procedures for strategic projects, uniform documentation standards and unbureaucratic access for consortia comprising SMEs and large enterprises. Joint financing of projects in third countries should be facilitated and industrial policy measures coordinated. In third countries such as Australia, Brazil or Canada, the EU and the US (and other partners) should set their activities, local value creation, sustainability and transparency as common guiding principles.

Deeper cooperation in research, recycling and geological exploration

Long-term security of supply requires a coordinated transatlantic research and innovation agenda – for exploration technologies, efficient separation and refining processes, material substitution and the circular economy. Furthermore, closer cooperation between geological surveys should be explored and promoted, including data exchange, analyses and risk reports.

WTO-compliant partnership

The raw materials partnership should be strictly in line with WTO rules. No export restrictions or new non-tariff barriers must arise within the partnership. Transparency and structured consultation mechanisms are essential. Legitimate exceptions – such as those relating to national security or acute shortages – must be narrowly defined, proportionate and time-limited. Building on the EU-US Framework Agreement of 21 August 2025, a zero-tariff regime for all critical raw materials and intermediate products should also be sought. Furthermore, both sides should advocate within the WTO and in bilateral negotiations to ensure that export restrictions, particularly in the raw materials and energy sectors, are not used as economic coercive measures.

Welcome the plurilateral initiative

The EU and Germany should play an active role in shaping a plurilateral initiative on critical raw materials, such as the *Agreement on Trade in Critical Minerals* (ATCM) promoted by the US. A secure supply can only be achieved with reliable partners. However, this requires WTO compliance, non-discrimination and the preservation of the EU's trade policy autonomy. The integration of existing raw materials partnerships can make an important contribution to security of supply and the diversification of supply chains.

Who we are:

The German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) is the umbrella organisation of the 79 Chambers of Commerce and Industry (IHKs) in Germany. Together, they represent the interests of more than three million companies from industry, trade and services – from small local businesses to globally active corporations. Their shared objective is to ensure the best possible conditions for successful business.

At the national level, the DIHK consolidates the positions of the IHKs through a formal, statutory-based process. It represents the overall interests of the German business community vis-à-vis policymakers, public authorities and the wider public. At both the federal and European levels, the DIHK advocates for competitive framework conditions, including reduced bureaucracy, open markets and modern infrastructure.

The DIHK serves as a platform for the diverse perspectives of its member companies. Its analyses and statements reflect a broad range of views, including minority positions, in order to provide policymakers with a comprehensive and balanced picture. In this way, the DIHK contributes to informed and credible economic policy debates in Berlin and Brussels.

Entrepreneurs play a central role in shaping the DIHK's positions through their engagement in statutory and voluntary bodies such as general assemblies and committees. Their work is supported by more than 200 staff members in Berlin and Brussels. The DIHK's Chief Executive Officer, appointed by the General Assembly, is responsible for day-to-day operations.

In addition to its national role, the DIHK coordinates a global network of more than 150 German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHKs), delegations and representative offices in over 90 countries, supporting German businesses worldwide.