

Stakeholder engagement practiced by the Geological Survey of Finland in its mineral potential mapping in Southern Finland

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A good company-community relationship is important in earning a social license to operate (SLO) in mining. Communication and stakeholder engagement are part of the social corporate responsibility (CSR) and they should be started already at the very beginning of mineral exploration. Here we present a methodology of stakeholder engagement used by the Geological Survey of Finland (GTK) in its mineral potential mapping in Southern Finland.

The GTK's stakeholders in local communities are landowners, residents, media, schools and the municipality representatives. Direct contacts in the field, press releases, and conferences, as well as open and public meetings and lectures are the approaches to engage with these groups. Leaflets informing about the upcoming field work and associated contact information are delivered to local people or in their mailboxes.

The stakeholder engagement is performed by geologists and assistants working at the region. This activity has been practiced and developed since the early 2000s. So far the stakeholder engagement has not been a systematic or standardized activity, but largely a polite and respectful approach towards the local communities. However, since the new mining act requires informing the landowners, and because public resistance towards mining activities is growing in Finland, such approaches and methodologies were recently systematized and standardized in the GTK's updated field work manual. It was made by reflecting the local conditions and stakeholder groups in different regions.

Several on-going social science projects that study, develop, and promote CSR of mining offer possibilities for cross-disciplinary cooperation between geologists and sociologists. Cooperation could involve studying the impact of GTK's stakeholder engagement in order to receive feedback to develop and improve the social performance of its field activities. Nevertheless, the GTK's stakeholder engagement has until now been a very productive and effective activity in Southern Finland, resulting in SLO.