

Volkswagen Group joins the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA)



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The Volkswagen Group goes electric. With its ambitious electrification strategy, the car and truck manufacturer has set itself on the path to becoming a future climate-neutral mobility provider. The battery-electric vehicle is the most efficient way to combine climate protection and individual mobility. However, electrification also places new demands for responsible sourcing, especially in the extraction of battery raw materials such as cobalt, lithium, nickel and graphite.

The Volkswagen Group's Code of Conduct already obliges all its business partners to comply with environmental and social criteria, including the strict exclusion of child labor. But corporate responsibility goes further: the Volkswagen Group therefore puts a strong focus on the implementation of rigorous and comprehensive standards in mining. Joining the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) is an important step in this direction.

"The path to transparent and sustainable supply chains leads directly to the mine. That's why we welcome the establishment of clear rules. Such standards are all the more effective the more consistently they are defined and the more partners adhere to them. IRMA brings together all the important players: The raw material suppliers, the raw material buyers, workers' representatives, civil society forces, investors and independent experts," explains the Volkswagen Group's Board Member for Purchasing, Murat Aksel.

As a globally recognised initiative, IRMA has pioneered the implementation of best practice social and environmental standards in the mining sector since 2006. "It is encouraging to witness the momentum of companies joining IRMA, supporting the initiative's commitment to multi-stakeholder governance and transparency," said Aimee Boulanger, Executive Director of IRMA. "We welcome the Volkswagen's Group membership and look forward to working with them as they leverage their significant global reach to advance more responsible mining practices."

IRMA standards include the protection of human and community rights,

the exclusion of corruption, health protection measures for workers and affected communities, work place safety and environmental protection: "The criteria range from groundwater protection to age checks on workers at the entrance to the mines," says Murat Aksel. The focus is on industrial mining as well as the mineral processing industry. By joining, the Volkswagen Group commits itself to gradually applying the IRMA standards in its battery supply chains.

For the Volkswagen Group, joining IRMA complements its own measures to bring light to the raw materials supply chain. Since 2019, all relevant direct business partners of the company have to undergo a mandatory sustainability ranking. It assesses environmental and social standards on an equal footing with other criteria such as costs or quality. Since 2020, the Volkswagen Group has required full disclosure of the supply chain all the way to the mine for all new contracts for battery raw materials. Also in 2020, the Group introduced a new standardised raw material management system.

It covers battery raw materials such as cobalt, nickel, graphite and lithium, as well as conflict minerals such as tantalum and other raw materials such as aluminium, natural rubber and leather. Since 2021, Volkswagen Group has been the first automotive company to report publicly in a separate report on the group-wide measures for responsible sourcing of 16 raw materials.

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