Chapter 3  Demand and supply of non-energy raw materials in Europe

3.1 Historical development of minerals consumption

The examination (for instance) of a graph of global mine production of copper since 1830, illustrates the remarkable correlation between economic activity and consumption of a basic metallic commodity (figure 27).¹⁰² This graph reflects the electrification of the developed world in the nineteenth century, the two World Wars and the depression periods of the first half of the twentieth century, the post-war reconstruction and the industrialization of Asia, South Africa, and other parts of the world, the impact of rising oil prices in the 1970’s and, most recently, wiring the world for the internet. Figure 28 indicates the very good correlation between industrial production and base metal consumption for the world’s richest countries.¹⁰³

Figure 27: Global copper production 1830–2000 (Data by Petterson et al., 2005)

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Both graphs demonstrate the importance of the products made from raw materials. The rapid and worldwide increase in demand for raw materials in the 20th century, and partially also in the 21st century, is a phenomenon. The 20th century was in many respects a remarkable episode in human history with special effects on the raw materials industry. This period was marked by an explosive growth of the world population and global economic performance, which lead to a rapid increase in demand for mineral raw materials of all sorts.\textsuperscript{104}

Figure 29: Correlation of construction raw materials consumption in proportion with population. (Data by EC, DG Enterprise and Industry, Commission Staff Working Document, 2007 [Consumption data based on BGS data of production, import and export of construction raw materials in 2003])

\textsuperscript{104} Nötstaller/Wagner (2007), l.c., p. 383.