

Everyone has the right to a healthy environment and to timely and complete notification of its condition. Everyone, especially the Republic of Serbia and the Autonomous Province, is responsible for the protection of the environment. Everyone is obliged to protect and improve the environment.

These three sentences make up Article 74 of the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. And it is not necessary to be a legal expert, so to say that all three sentences from the highest legal act of this country in the case of Bor have been violated.

Years ago, both those who live in Bor and the entire public in Serbia talk about this city in eastern Serbia as one of the most polluted. Now there is an official document that Bor marked as an example of an industrially contaminated site

First time

The Institute for Public Health “Milan Jovanović Batut” prepared a study “Improving the management of contaminated sites in Serbia”, but thanks to the Bor organization “Association for City Development”, this study became available to the public.

“We received this study only after we referred to the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance. Although we were told that it was a public document, we could not get it in any other way. We did not find it on the website of the “Trampoline” Institute, where it should be published “, says Valentina Paunović from the “Association for City Development “, whose activities are supported through the initiative “Citizens have power “which is implemented by Crta in cooperation with USAID.

She states that this study is very important because it speaks precisely about the situation in Bor and what needs to be done.

“It comprehensively analyzes the impact on human health. For the first time we hear that Bor is a contaminated site. And the citizens of Bor still don’t know that. No one informed them. We will have to talk about it so that everyone knows they live in a contaminated site. Those who live here do not know what they are breathing, they do not know that their life is on average 10 years shorter than in some other places “, says Paunović.

Both salaries and clean air can

Although one of the first environmental riots in our country is connected to this area, as Paunović says, the citizens do not show much interest in this problem. Namely, as the journalist and publicist Slobodan Bosiljčić noted in one of his books, in 1934, around 4,000 peasants from this area rebelled against the smelter and pollution. Now, 100 Borans have gathered for protests.

“Not only are those who work in the mine, who are afraid of losing their jobs, and about

5,000 people working there, not interested in the problem of pollution, but also those who are not directly dependent on the mine, such as education, trade etc. Their lack of interest stems from the fact that they are not all sufficiently informed about the level of pollution. Everyone seems to be used to the fact that there has always been a lot of pollution in Bor and that it has to be that way. We want to explain to the citizens that it doesn't have to be that way. That they can have salaries and clean air, if everyone respects the laws ", states Paunović.

In order for as many citizens of Bor as possible to find out how alarming the situation is, as well as that it lasts for years and does not improve, the Association conducted an analysis "How to live in a contaminated area?". Only during 2019, in Bor, the air pollution with sulfur dioxide was exceeded as much as 42 times at one of the measuring stations, and the law allows it three times a year. That the situation is not improving is shown by the fact that the excess of air pollution with sulfur dioxide in 2021 has already happened 14 times

"The main problems are the lack of information of the citizens and the failure of the competent institutions to comply with the law. The law exists, it is good, but it is not applied. We have reports on excessive air pollution from 2019 and 2020, and it seems that the mining inspector does not read those reports at all. And he doesn't react. It says it all. How many days and to what extent the values of hazardous substances were exceeded, and no measures were taken to reduce that pollution. On the other hand, citizens do not even have a way to find out how much the air is polluted, and sometimes it is so dangerous that no one should be on the street for even five minutes. They can find out what kind of air they breathe through the website of the City of Bor, but those results are 24 hours late ", states Valentina Paunović.

That is why, on Wednesday, June 30, at the forum organized by the "Association for City Development" in Bor, in addition to the presentation of the analysis "How to live in a contaminated area?" The signing of a petition for Bor to get a pollution scoreboard on which air quality data would be displayed in real time will also begin.

Source: CRTA