



Chemical processing of lithium can be a major environmental problem in Serbia

In order to convert lithium to lithium carbonate, a chemical treatment is needed, which is planned to be applied in the future lithium mine that Rio Tinto wants to open, and this can be a huge problem for the environment in Serbia.

The main environmental problem of opening a lithium mine near Loznica will be the chemical processing of that ore, said the head of the Center of Exceptional Values for Chemistry and Environmental Engineering at the Institute of Chemistry, Technology and Metallurgy in Belgrade, Dragana Djordjevic, for Beta.

“The ore will be ground and treated with concentrated sulfuric acid, which is aggressive even at a temperature of 250 degrees Celsius, and will most likely use fossil fuel or electricity, which further complicates the problems in environmental protection because 70 percent of electricity in Serbia is from ecologically bad coal, lignite “, said Djordjevic from that institute of national importance.

The Government of Serbia has signed an agreement with the company Rio Tinto on the opening of a lithium mine near Loznica, and that mineral would be used for the production of batteries for electric vehicles.

Djordjevic said that the water for ore processing will be taken from the river Drina, and the polluted water with toxic substances that accompany lithium ore, among which may be arsenic, will be returned to the river Jadar, so it will become a “dead river”. During the floods, and the Jadar often overflows, with that waste water, according to her, extremely fertile land in that part of western Serbia will be contaminated. She pointed out that 40 percent of the total damage during the floods in 2014 was caused by pollution that came from the antimony mine in Stolice near Krupanj. Djordjevic said that there is a lot of lithium ore in South America, in the surface layer, but that environmental movements there also hinder exploitation precisely because of environmental problems due to the chemical treatment of lithium in order to convert it into lithium carbonate. According to her, the lithium deposit near Loznica is 700 meters deep and below groundwater and thermal waters.

The representative of the Association of Citizens, Jadar Development Center Radomir Filipovic from the village of Brezjak, which is planned to be in the center of the mine area, told Beta that Rio Tinto rejected the request of the locals to jointly make a formula for compensation for material values and non-material damage.

“Rio Tinto is holding a sword over the heads of locals who need to move out, because the amendments to the Mining Act from 2014 allow that if no agreement is reached on compensation, the state can carry out expropriation for the needs of that company at below market prices. values, “Filipovic said.



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Rio Tinto, according to him, offers compensation for non-material damage, which includes the risk of sustainability, mental pain and suffering, and lost the benefit of 5,000 euros per family, regardless of the number of members.

“That amount is shameful in relation to the damage we will have in case we move out, and maybe it will only come in handy for the owners of the weekend houses,” said Filipovic. He added that the locals no longer have anyone to complain to because they do not believe that addressing the Constitutional Court to evaluate the Law on Mining would bear fruit, because no law has been assessed as unconstitutional so far.

Farmer Zlatko Kokanovic from the village of Gornja Nedelica said that it was planned to take away four hectares of land from him, and that the house would remain outside the mine area, 200 meters from the well.

“At the end of September, the company Rio Sava, a subsidiary of Rio Tinto, sent us decisions on the conversion of agricultural land into construction land, noting that it would pay taxes, without us even requesting the conversion of the land,” said Filipovic.

He added that it is planned to relocate 80 households, take away 300 hectares of land from 335 owners and build a landfill on the most fertile land, 2,000 meters long, 500 meters wide and 40 meters high.

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