

## Citizens have the elements to file a constitutional complaint due to lithium exploration in the vicinity of Valjevo, Serbia

Zvezdan Kalmar, president of the Coalition for Sustainable Mining in Serbia (KORS), describes what the land around the deep wells looks like and warns what must be paid attention to from the experience he gained in the field in the Jadar Valley, where no mine has yet sprung, but where a couple of square kilometers drilled 580 wells. He has already pointed out that the project in Jadar essentially endangers not only the people of Loznica and Šabac, but also us Valjevo citizens, but he emphasizes that a special project to build a lithium mine in the Kolubara valley near Valjevo would mean that this entire region of Western Serbia would be destroyed for centuries. Kalmar points out that the research of lithium itself, which sounds completely “painless” compared to the exploitation of this ore, is also very harmful and that the test drilling carried out by the company Euro Lithium in the Valjevo area has already had a negative impact on our environment. “We have already seen in the vicinity of Jadar, in the villages of Nedeljice, Brezjak and Draginac, what the situation is on the ground where those test wells are. Water flows around them from the underground part, for which there is no standard, because it is not planned to come to the surface from the underground part and destroy agricultural land. Reclamations must already be carried out there. You just have to find out how drilled it is. It must be seen what the wells are like, how they have been repaired, what the pressure measurements on them are, whether those wells are flowing and what is the impact of those wells on the groundwater, whether the drinking water has been treated. Also, in Jadar, we saw on the field that some people are already collapsing their houses and shooting, because because of those wells, the ground is collapsing “, Zvezdan Kalmar reports from the field. Apart from the fact that these investigative actions have a negative impact on the environment, Kalmar points out that it is very important that citizens know that they have the right to be asked, because that is the heritage of the Aarhus Convention, to which Serbia is a signatory. He believes that the Valjevo region is completely incompatible with mining and that the construction of a lithium mine is completely unacceptable until the citizens declare whether that mine will exist at all or not. He says that it was unacceptable to conduct research of potential ore deposits without the consent of the citizens. According to him, Valjevo residents who, as citizens, are encountering potential mining in their area for the first time, must know that they are threatened by a potential open surface mine of 4 x 4 square kilometers, plus an exploitation plant, water abstraction from Kolubara, infrastructure relocation, huge transport movements. He especially emphasizes that the terms “economic profitability” and “future of Serbia” are not acceptable and that they are just excuses. Even if there is no surface lithium mine in Valjevo, the mine in Jadro will also affect the health of the people of Valjevo.

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“Apart from the people of Loznica and Šabac, the Jadar project also affects you, Valjevo. I’m afraid tons of sulfuric acid will pass through your city on the way to Jadra every day. Since there is a watershed between Valjevo and Loznica, it will affect through traffic, it will affect by branching. The threat of tailings must not be ignored. The problem is that there is silicate in the tailings, heavy metals, and that dissipates easily. When we talk about silicates, we (KORS) have been working for more than a decade in Kostolac, where many miners there are dying from silicosis. It is a disease where silicate sand enters your lungs directly and causes cancer. That is why we demand that, as citizens, everything about the process of exploitation be explained to us. We want a study, we want to see analyzes “, explains Kalmar.

A new law on mining was recently adopted, which KORS claims is even worse than the previous one, and will file an appeal to have such a law rejected. He decisively says that Serbia does not have good laws and bylaws that would protect the country from excessive pollution during the exploitation of lithium.

He argues that the mining company must pay 100% of the estimated value of the damage caused by digging ore, that it must bear the costs of each gram and milliliter of pollution, then to establish environmental monitoring, health monitoring and insurance billing, because when things are set up, companies will give up mining and will not say out loud how lithium is “white gold”.

“Companies that come here to dig count that they will never have a bond and that they will not have to pay damages. The legal-institutional system is organized in such a way that they see that there is no insurance collection, no guarantee for damage, and they leave behind poisoned tailings. I am from Subotica, but I consider myself an absolutely named mine in Jadar and a potential mine in Valjevo. If you dig here, you will have an increase in the number of chronic diseases and cancers, and my children and I will have to pay into health funds to treat you. That’s why we have to take care of each other. This is our country. As I am a soldier of this country when it comes to defending itself in war, so I am a soldier of this country when it comes to deciding on mining and its future “, explains Zvezdan Kalmar, President of the Coalition for Sustainable Development and Mining of Serbia.

According to Kalmar, there is no excuse that can justify the construction of a lithium mine. “There will be no profit for the local community, no new jobs, only damage. Mining is necessary, that is why we are called the Coalition for Sustainable Mining, but lithium is an outdated substance. Sodium batteries have already been brought to that level to replace lithium. There is no story that lithium is a “gold ore”. Research has been done, I followed that, sodium is far more environmentally friendly, and as far as the efficiency of batteries is



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concerned, they have been brought to that level as lithium “, says Kalmar and especially emphasizes that lithium is the same as coal - non-renewable ore.

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