

During the panel “Does Serbia need a lithium mine”, organized by the New Economy in cooperation with the Heinrich Boell Foundation, representatives of the Ministry of Mining and Energy announced that a referendum on lithium exploitation in the Jadar Valley will most likely be organized.

On the other hand, part of the professional public believes that the project should be abandoned or postponed. Both sides agree, however, that it is important to discuss such an important project, that the conversation must be conducted on the basis of arguments, not emotions.

“What is below the earth cannot be more valuable than what is above it. Agriculture and population are more important than that. The realization of the Jadar Project should be postponed or abandoned, “said Vladimir Stevanovic, a regular member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) in the Department of Chemical and Biological Sciences.

He thinks that it is good that there is a dialogue in the society on such topics, but he notes that they are “rare or late”, and that the Jadar Project is non-transparent.

He added that the research of lithium in the Jadra valley started much earlier, and not four years ago, as the representatives of the competent ministry claim.

“Ore tailings will remain permanent. Water is also a problem, but not its purification. How will we deal with atmospheric waters? Will those tailings be released under the pressure of water, as was the case with the tailings in Stolice “, says Stevanović.

He added that the construction of the mine would endanger the water supply of Macva, as well as that we do not care enough about the protection of the environment.

“We don’t have a tidy environment, if we took care of it, then Rio Tinto would take care of it. We have to look to the future, lithium batteries are current now, what will happen in 30 years, if the vehicles run on hydrogen “, adds Stevanović.

Secretary of State: No trust in the state has been sent

State Secretary at the Ministry of Mines, Jovanka Atanackovic, said that she believes that the trust in the state has not been shaken, because the state is talking to all parties and inviting them to enter into a dialogue on the lithium mine. She estimated that a referendum will most likely be organized in Serbia regarding the exploitation of lithium. If the citizens decide positively on that, Serbia, as he says, should not only export lithium, but should also use it in production, which would achieve greater benefits in the value chain.

“We believe that the current energy transition should be seen as a chance for our people and country to become a leader in the region, using all the principles that apply today in

ecology,” Atanackovic emphasizes.

She pointed out the fact that people often use the energy obtained by the devastation of the environment, while at the same time dealing with ecology, and therefore represent “hypocrites”.

We have committed ourselves not to increase the share of degraded areas

“We don’t need a lithium mine, and I agree with acceptable environmental damage in cases where there is a clear public interest in it,” says Ratko Ristic, dean of the Faculty of Forestry.

He adds that he is against the lithium mine, because Serbia has ratified the conventions of the United Nations on climate change, biodiversity and land degradation.

“We have committed ourselves not to increase the share of degraded areas,” Ristic emphasizes.

Ristic estimates that the planned mine and the Jadarit ore processing plant will destroy 533 hectares of land, of which about 240 hectares are forests in the basin of the Štavica stream. According to him, that land is already contaminated, because the floods broke through the landfill of the former mine. Ristic assessed that Serbia can be successful in agricultural engineering, production of software and furniture, not only in the field of mining.

“It’s called guild autism, they easily distribute licenses for lithium research in Serbia. “No one should be surprised if there is a great outburst of popular discontent,” Ristic added.

Possibility of sustainable mining

Regarding that issue, Assistant Minister of Mining Dejan Milijanović did not agree with him, saying that he believes in the possibility of sustainable mining that will not leave great consequences on the environment.

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