

## Does the lithium mine in Serbia bring prosperity or pollute the environment?

Local environmental activists are strongly opposed to the realization of the project of building a lithium mine near Loznica because they believe that it is catastrophically bad for the environment.

According to Marnie Finlayson, executive director for boron and lithium in Rio Tinto and general director of the “Jadar” project, the company has been present in Serbia since 2004, when a new unique mineral, jadarite, was discovered in an area 12 kilometers away from Loznica. She added that the “Jadar” project has been in the feasibility study phase since July, when the approval of the board of directors of Rio Tinto was obtained for the company to invest an additional 200 million dollars in the further development of the project. When the project is developed, “Jadar” will be a modern underground mine with a significant use of modern technology.

In the digitally networked mine, there will be remote monitoring of work in real time, from the export of ore to the surface to the construction of mine wells. It is planned to use an almost completely electric fleet of vehicles in the mine, which reduces emissions and energy consumption to a minimum. Two vertical shafts are planned for access to the ore body, one with access baskets for staff, a mine service installation (electricity, water, drainage) and ore export equipment, and the other for ventilation.

Different excavation methods will be used to adapt to the shape and capabilities of the ore body. In order to preserve the safety of the mine during the excavation, supporting pillars are planned. After the excavation, the empty space will be filled with a part of the waste that will not be taken to the landfill.

As Marnie Finlayson points out, a certain part of the total waste, approximately 20 percent, will be used to fill the gaps in the underground facilities. The waste will not be toxic and will not be dangerous. She adds that lithium and boron are necessary for everyday life and for a low-carbon future, to which Rio Tinto is committed with short-term reduction goals, but also with the ambition to reach zero emissions by 2050, as explained in detail in the company climate change report.

Nikola Sunjic, head of corporate affairs and obtaining approvals at the Rio Tinto company in Serbia, points out that water for the needs of the plant in the mine will not be pumped from the Drina River but from its surroundings and only under the condition that there is no drinking water in that area. He added that the teams of the Jadar project are working on a detailed determination of the potential impacts of that project on the environment. A wastewater treatment plant will also be built within the complex. Purification will be performed in several phases, in order to achieve water quality that is in accordance with the applicable regulations which set limit values.

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On the other hand, Miroslav Mijatovic, president of the Podrinje anti-corruption team, told Danas that the local community and environmental activists oppose this project because something like that would be harmful to the environment.

- Climate experts claim that opening a mine in this area would be a very bad solution for the interests of the local community. For the needs of the mine, it is necessary to pump large amounts of water, which could lead to drought during the summer and floods during the rainy periods. Such climatic conditions would be directed against the interests of the local population. The Podrinje anti-corruption team warns that according to currently developed technologies, about 500,000 liters of water are needed for the extraction of one ton of lithium. Such needs for water in local environments also affect farmers, who in this way are deprived of valuable resources for cattle breeding and crop irrigation. In addition, the toxic cocktail of chemicals used to extract lithium from the ground is also capable of infiltrating nearby rivers, streams and water supply - claims Mijatovic.

- Because of that, but also many other things that negatively affect the environment, we are against the construction of that mine. We are not even ready to join the environmental committee that Rio Tinto offers to form because experiences from other parts of the world where the multinational company has its mines show that the promises made regarding its protection are broken, which is why environmental activists who enter these committees very quickly dissatisfied and leave. So far, we have held three protests at which we demanded that the construction of the mine be abandoned and we will continue with that form of our struggle - our interlocutor concludes.

Source: [danas.rs](http://danas.rs)