

Mirko Popovic, program director and president of the assembly of the Regulatory Institute for Renewable Energy and Environment (RERI), assessed that Serbia has been in economic and social transition for too long. He stated that economic, industrial and economic resources were sold slowly, at the best price, and the consequence of such relations is that the political and economic elites captured this country.

Health in Serbia cannot be part of the account in undercutting with foreign investors who cannot make investments in countries where EU regulations are strictly respected and can make them here, said Mirko Popovic in the online show of the Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina entitled "What are our rights?" Biology teacher and civic activist Zorica Radisic said that the plans, in her opinion, are made according to the needs of investors.

"I always remind that the European Commission said in 2018 that we are a captured state. That elite is conducting two-way bilateral negotiations with large investors, some of whom have a dubious past and cannot boast of leaving behind a clean trail of environmental protection, such as Linglong and Rio Tinto. You conduct bilateral negotiations with them, which are placed in a framework that is not provided by our regulations. Very often we do not have agreements that have been ratified, but these are agreements signed by the executive power with large investors. The result is lawlessness, destruction of the environment and taking of natural resources from the citizens", says Popovic.

When it comes to environmental protection, Zorica Radisic mentioned that the needs of citizens have been ignored by those who make decisions. She says that by presenting the information to the public, it is not expected that questions will be asked about them.

"Those who make decisions experience public listening as if we need to hear them, not that they recognize our needs. These global, planning documents should be adopted so that lower-level plans can be made within them. We are faced with making plans according to the needs of investors. "Then it is expected that by playing blindfold, cumulative influences on various environments will be hidden," said Zorica Radisic.

RERI has filed close to 10 applications for revocation of building permits and has initiated several administrative disputes over the process of assessing the impact of the future Linglong tire factory. Mirko Popovic said that one of the last activities of that agency was to file criminal charges, this time against investors and contractors, because the construction of the factory does not take place in accordance with the regulations governing planning and construction without an adequate building permit, which is criminal work in the opinion of RERI.

"The latest law on general procedure introduces a provision that gives civil society

organizations and associations the right to appear as a party in court proceedings and to review the decisions of public authorities in cases where they protect the general interest.” However, this right has not been sufficiently used in practice. RERI constantly refers to that member. However, it usually happens to us, especially in the case of Linglong, that the Provincial authorities and the city administration of the city of Zrenjanin deny us that active legitimacy. But to get our right, we must actively use it. If we give up, what have we done. We do not hand over institutions or rights to those who have captured institutions and rights, “said RERI’s program director.

According to Zorica Radisic, the people of Zrenjanin did not hear the details of the idea itself in an organized and legally prescribed manner when it comes to the Linglong factory. “Apart from that information that it is about some friendship, that they are some brothers and so on. Then the cornerstone, and the next thing we saw was a huge fence. It’s a matchbox with that fence. At that time, no one knew the details of the whole event, and it was obvious that something was sprouting there. There was no procedure of influence, because one sentence is written in a building rule that a building permit is not required for the fence. It is not just about the fence, but what that fence is a part of, “Radisic explained. Mirko Popovic referred to the public debate on the study of the impact on the environmental protection of the Linglong factory. In his opinion, systematic work was done to hide the public debate from the public. He assessed that the absence of a public debate led to unimaginable situations, to the issuance of construction permits without the necessary conditions or to the approval of projects that could not be approved if there was an adequate public debate and public insight. After ten years of applying the law in the field of environmental protection, the situation has never been worse, our interlocutor believes. “The money will be given by the citizens of Serbia. The Republic of Serbia has approved about 80 million state aid plus 96 hectares of agricultural land, which are estimated at seven and a half million. So, the citizens of Serbia will give something close to 100 million euros to that investor. It seems to me that many of us could be big investors if it all worked that way. Thus, environmental degradation and resource abduction are often carried out under the guise of national interest. The Government of the Republic of Serbia still does not want to publish the conclusion by which it determined the national interest in Linglong. Why? What is so secret in that document? We sought a conclusion stating the session at which the subject of that conclusion was adopted and the date. The government said that we should specify the conclusion. Such a procedure is not, I would say, worthy of serious and responsible people, “said Popovic.

Zorica Radisic also referred to the decision of the councilors of the Assembly of the City of

Zrenjanin to name the municipal road through the work zone Southeast in that city “Linglong Avenue”. “I would recommend people to find out what the avenue means. It was pushed through at some point in a parliamentary session, during the undertaking of sharp epidemiological measures, so that it cannot be seen. But we saw which people voted there and that is a shame “, says Zorica Radisic.

Popovic believes that citizens are in a position to see such investments as gifts begged by great world powers, and that the practice used in Serbia is conditioned by the lack of the rule of law.

“They could have been anywhere in the world, but we succeeded with some political skill. Well, it’s not true. Why didn’t they realize it in the European Union? There is something else behind it. We are shown as a gift the environmental pollution that is happening in Bor and Smederevo. It is a favor from investors who have come to produce steel and copper. It is also produced in other countries of the world, but this practice that we are looking at is one that is characteristic of the lack of the rule of law, captured institutions and the weakness of society to resist such disastrous projects. The decoration on one such unsustainable canvas is, among other things, Linglong Avenue and similar plays to which politicians expose us, convincing us that it is in our favor. Lungs and health cannot be put on the table, and a salary of 30, 40 thousand cannot be put on the other. “Health in Serbia cannot be a part of the account in undercutting with foreign investors who cannot realize investments in countries where the regulations of the European Union are strictly respected, and they can realize them here,” concluded Popovic.

The initiative Air is not a commodity from Zrenjanin, in cooperation with the Zrenjanin Youth Development Organization and the Independent Association of Journalists of Vojvodina, is realizing a series of online shows “Zrekologija - you are wondering!”. The project is implemented within the “Strong Green” program, and is funded by the European Union.

Source: voice.org.rs