

In November 2020, the public was informed that the Chinese Serbia Zijin Copper received the approval of the Government of the Republic of Serbia to double production in the mine near Majdanpek without a study on the impact on the environment. In addition to the fact that the majority of the profits from these projects will flow out of the country, we will be left with heavy and permanent pollution, the consequences of which we will pay for with the health and money of taxpayers.

Amendments to the Law on Mining and Geological Research from 2018 in Serbia have opened the door to mass opening of new mines through loose procedures. This is a consequence of direct lobbying of foreign capital on domestic decision makers.

Numerous examples justify the fear of people from the Jadar Valley, and that is their own experience with the lead and antimony mines in Zajaca and Stolice. Mining companies promised thousands of jobs for the residents of that area, and apart from a modest income for a few, they left behind only a tailings full of heavy metals and toxins that have been polluting the environment for years. There are terrible examples of analyzes that children from this area found lead in their blood, and in the floods of 2014, all the poison from 1.2 million tons of mining waste was poured through 100,000 m³ of sludge into the wider area, so the latter are far-reaching and inconceivable.

Four significant facts that we believe have been ignored by decision makers:

-According to Article 6 of the Law on Mining and Geological Research, it is prescribed that in an area that is a protected area of nature, a unit of cultural, historical and architectural significance, a tourist unit, a source of special importance for regional water supply and other protected areas, geological exploration and exploitation of reserves of mineral raw materials and geothermal resources may be approved only under conditions issued in accordance with a special law by the competent authorities and organizations for issuing conditions for spatial planning, nature and environmental protection, cultural heritage and other authorities and organizations responsible for appropriate area related to protected area.

-The village of Brezjak and the site of Paulje are the most important archaeological site from the Late Bronze Age in Serbia and one of the most important in the wider region of the Central Balkans. It is in this area that the opening of mines and the construction of tailings are planned. There are 50 large tumuli at this place, of which only 27 were explored by 2019. The site could undoubtedly, with certain investments, be a great tourist attraction of international importance.

-Water is not a commercial product like others, but a natural heritage that must be preserved and respected as a significant resource. In river basins where water use may

have transboundary impacts, the requirements for achieving environmental protection objectives are established by the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. In that sense, all programs of measures should be established for the entire river basin district. The Republic of Serbia has ratified the said convention, and in November 2010 it became a signatory to the Convention. The opening of the jadarite mine would lead to a significant increase in the use and pollution of surface and groundwater. We do not know whether an agreement has been signed with Bosnia and Herzegovina, ie whether the neighboring country has been informed about a possible significant transboundary source of pollution?

-Jadar is a small but unpredictable river that often floods. Floods and heavy rainfall can lead to tailings and other accompanying environmental disasters. This is exactly what happened to Jadar in 2014, and the locals are justifiably worried about their safety. As floods and other weather disasters have become more frequent in recent years, the formation of a large tailings pond in the Jadar Valley would be a real environmental time bomb. What solutions does the investor offer?

Has anyone done long-term socio-economic research:

- 1) total profit currently generated by agricultural and other activities in the Jadar Valley on an annual basis;
- 2) total profits of the Republic of Serbia realized from the use of jadarite ore during the entire exploitation period;
- 3) the total profit from agriculture (eg organic) and other activities that would be realized if the state would invest the same amount of funds for that purpose as it plans to invest in support of the opening of the mine?

The opinion of experts indicates that the ore rent in Serbia is very low, and the profitability of such projects with the use of limited ore resources is questionable. If we take into account the estimate that the value of lithium at this deposit is around 10 billion dollars, that according to the law, the ore rent is 5% and that the state takes an additional 15% profit, it is clear that this is not a saving project for our exhausted economy. In fact, that profit will not be enough to repair the consequences of soil and water pollution, especially not if the pollution of the Drina reaches other basins such as the Sava and the Danube.

Of particular concern are hidden dangers in the form of long-term threats to public health and safety that are difficult to predict and prevent. According to the Republic Directorate for Waters, and in the light of modern world aspirations, the largest investments in Serbia in the near future must be related to the collection, disposal and treatment of wastewater throughout the country.



Exploitation of jadarite in Serbia is a profit for someone and a
damage for everyone

Source: pticesrbije.rs