

Workers identified several serious violations of labour rights guarantees, demonstrating a lack of implementation and oversight of labour laws in the EU's own mining sector. Bulgaria is the third largest copper and fourth largest gold producer in Europe. According to the official data, about 25,000 workers are employed in the mining sector (which includes coal, oil and gas; non-ferrous metals; and construction materials), representing some 5% of Bulgaria's GDP.

However, the testimonies of people employed in the mining and metallurgy companies in the Bulgarian Panagyurishte region reveal the problems with labour conditions in the gold and copper supply chains. A survey conducted in November 2019 included 61 interviews conducted with both workers and local residents. The interviewed workers were employed by Asarel Medet AD, which operates an open-pit copper mine and a gold mine; Aurubis Bulgaria AD, which operates smelters that produce copper, gold, other rare metals and sulphuric acid; and Chelopech Mining EAD, which operates an underground copper mine and a gold mine. Chelopech received support from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in 2005 and 2008. Core issues identified by the research include the lack of equal treatment of workers employed directly and indirectly, lack of independent trade unions, precarious and low-pay working conditions, intimidation and silencing of critics, and the negative health impact on workers and the local communities.

Source: [bankwatch.org](http://bankwatch.org)