

Macedonian Mining Association (MAR) Wednesday said the metal prices fall is causing serious effects on the country's mining industry.

MAR, part of the Macedonian Chamber of Commerce, called for government intervention to improve the situation, especially in the Macedonian Toranica and Zletovo mines, where about 1,000 miners are left jobless for months.

"These are underground mines and the longer they are left idle, the harder it is to restart production," Nikolajco Nikolov, president of MAR, as well as owner of Bucim copper mine, said. "It is necessary to stop experienced workers from leaving the country to find jobs elsewhere, otherwise we will face serious problems once the crisis is solved."

According to Nikolov, the price of copper has fallen to 4,600 U.S. dollars per tonne compared to 8,250 U.S. dollars per tonne in 2013, whereas the price of lead and zink has fallen to 1,500 U.S. dollars from 2,200 U.S. dollars in 2013.

Nikolov predicted a difficult start of 2016 for all the mining and metallurgical companies in Macedonia. "We expect support from the Ministry of Economy to overcome the difficult situation, which will continue throughout 2016, at least during the first half," added Nikolov.

During the press conference, Nikolov also called for action against unloyal competition in the exploitation of sand used for construction.

Macedonian International Agency reported that Macedonia exports about 150 million euro (around 159 million U.S. dollars) worth of metals and ore each year, in an industry which employs 13,500 people. The industry contributes nearly to 12 percent of the total industrial production.

source: globalpost.com