

In Zrenjanin, the Chinese tire factory Linglong is being built just two kilometers from Carska Bara, a nature reserve. This is just one of the potential environmental risks that the Linglong factory, the “future of Banat”, will bring to Zrenjanin, a city that has not even had drinking water for 13 years.

In addition to accusations of heavy pollution, Linglong also found itself in a patent theft scandal in 2010 from a rival company. According to the Texas Tribune, American inventor Jordan Fishman, who designed the mining tires, discovered that his patented designs had been stolen, only to end up with two international tire distributors, one of whom was Shandong Linglong, China. The affair eventually ended before a U.S. court, where Linglong and another distributor had to pay as much as \$ 26 million for stealing someone else’s patent.

Most of these Chinese companies operating in Serbia have a couple of common denominators: they are responsible for environmental disasters that have banned them from operating in all European countries, are on the blacklists of the World Bank and European pension funds “due to suspicious business practices”, and have temporary a ban on participation in any project financed by the World Bank, the British IDB Group, as well as the European Group for Reconstruction and Development.

Since the establishment of the national development strategy “Belt and road initiative” (BRI) in 2103 with the aim of economic and market renewal of the former Silk Road, Chinese companies have been generously investing in production, infrastructure and domestic companies since 2014. Although every new Chinese investment in Serbia is announced by the authorities as an “investment of the decade” and “the beginning of the future”, no official can hear that most of these companies are banned from doing business in European countries due to severe disturbances and environmental pollution. . Also, due to their “suspicious business practices”, most are on the World Bank’s blacklist with a temporary ban on participation in all World Bank-funded projects and tenders. Some, such as the company “Hebei Iron and Steel Group” (Hesteel), which manages the Ironworks “Smederevo”, were forced to remove their dirtiest plants from their native China due to causing severe pollution. Despite all the above, all of them are welcome in Serbia, where they do not even need a formal study on the impact on the environment, before they hit the cornerstone.

On the territory of the city of Zrenjanin, the Chinese company “Shandong Linglong” started the construction of a car tire factory in March 2019, without any previous study on its impact on the environment. The cornerstone of the “Shandong Linglong” factory was laid by Aleksandar Vučić personally on March 3 of that year, claiming that at that moment the

“history and future of Zrenjanin, Banat and Serbia” began to be written.

“This is a great day. “You live for this, you work for this,” the president said at the time, adding that it was the largest investment in northern Serbia, the only country in which, besides Uzbekistan and Thailand, a Chinese tire manufacturer was welcome. As a sign of welcome, Serbia donated 130 hectares of the most fertile Vojvodina arable land worth 7.5 million euros to Linglong, and in October last year, the State Aid Commission of the Republic of Serbia approved 83.5 million euros in aid for the construction of a Chinese tire factory. While Linglong has four production complexes in China, this factory is the first such investment on European soil. According to “Concord Monitor”, Chinese state institutions and local authorities have made several reports on violations of “Linglong” and severe pollution caused by its companies on domestic soil. In 2018, the Chinese Ministry of Ecology and Environmental Protection accused the company of violating environmental pollution control measures.

According to the Environmental Impact Assessment Study, the process of applying a copper coating used in the production of steel belts leads to the evaporation of lead gases, the formation of ash containing lead. In addition to these violations, “Linglong” was accused of knowingly polluting the environment, because the factory sewage was treated only in a septic tank, after which it would mix with cooling water from production plants and discharge into the Luoshan River. According to Concorde, some local communities near the factory plants in China have accused Linglong of extreme air pollution, as a result of the release of chemical fumes.

“Even if the production of tires is carried out according to the highest environmental standards, indirect pollution is inevitable. Annual production of 13.62 million tires per year is planned. In order to distribute them, simple mathematics leads to the calculation that 250 trucks are needed for that, which will produce 35 tons of carbon dioxide in just one day “, says activist and mechanical engineer Gojkan Stojinovic.

Source: nova.rs