

The British company Mineco Ltd is suing the journalists and the editor in chief of the Serbian Centre for Investigative Journalism (CINS) for libel, on the grounds that the charity's continued negative campaign against the company was harming its business reputation and creditworthiness.

The Serbian Centre for Investigative Journalism has published three articles about Mineco and its representatives on its website. First, in July 2013, it published two articles with particularly bombastic, sensational headlines. Then in November 2014, in collaboration with BIRN Serbia, CINS published another article referring in one part to Mineco, linking it to the previous two.

Mineco initially complained about CINS's continuous reputation-damaging reporting to the Press Council, a self-regulatory media body. As the members of the Council's Complaints Committee could not reach a consensus and make a decision (which, according to the Council, is not binding anyway), Mineco, having exhausted all legitimate out-of-court means, is suing CINS. Seeking to protect its reputation and business interests, Mineco announced that it would take anyone who had participated in the negative media campaign to court. The controversial articles allege that Mineco is responsible for bad privatization in Serbia in which the company did not take part, and that some of Mineco's representatives were guilty in cases still under investigation, influencing the judicial authorities.

"The effects of CINS's actions and reporting are felt not only in Serbia but in every country where Mineco does business", said Bojan Popović, Director of Mineco Limited. "We regret that it has come to this but, considering the situation, we were forced to sue CINS to protect ourselves. We intend to use all legal means to defend ourselves against anyone who has participated in the negative campaigning against us."

Mineco understands the public interest and appreciates the role of investigative journalism, but only if it is with full and correct information while taking account of human rights and freedoms and relying on clearly defined standards of professional journalism.

Mineco Limited is a British company, part of the Mineco Group. Its core business activities are trading in non-ferrous metals and ore concentrates and investing in mining and geological research. In cooperation with its partners, Mineco manages lead and zinc mines in Serbia and Bosnia & Herzegovina: Rudnik near Gornji Milanovac, Veliki Majdan near Ljubovija and Gross (Sase) in Srebrenica. So far, Mineco has invested over 30 million euros in mining projects. It plans to invest in the preparation and opening of a Cerussite mine near Olovo (Bosnia & Herzegovina), in a lead and zinc mine near Bosilegrad and in other research projects. Since 2011, Mineco has planned to invest in renewable energy in the Balkans, primarily in mini hydropower plants, making use of the great hydro-potential of

## Mineco sues Serbian centre for investigative journalism (CINC) for defamation

small watercourses in the region and of local experts. Mineco employs around 800 people in Serbia and 1,400 in the region, independently or with its partners.