

Public opinion is generally negative towards surface coal mining, primarily based on the views of many environmental organizations that mining operations have negative environmental impacts.

Arguments of such organizations are often not based on facts.

In recent years, there is growing concern about climate change caused by the use of coal, while this is the energy source is treated by the public, especially among environmental organizations, as dirty and inefficient source of energy. Therefore, people usually have a feeling that there is no fair compensation for the consequences of surface mining and that this sector must increase its efforts to protect the environment.

As a result, the mere mention of surface mining causes public concern. The first thing that comes to people's minds are big machines altering the landscape, relocation of settlements, population displacement, and destruction of natural habitats. Such negative thinking may in the future be a significant obstacle to the development and implementation of the surface coal mining projects.

Constant pressure is already felt by planners and local governments to reject projects even when they do not involve any social and environmental impacts. There is constant pressure on the government for stricter legal solutions, together with considerable pressure by the population seeking satisfaction of their often unrealistic wishes. If encouraging the protests, blockades and preventing operations on already active open cast mines are added to this, it is clear that all this may adversely affect the development of open cast mines or stop new mining projects, and thus the overall economic development of the country.

Stable energy generation is the mainstay of any society. Total suspension or restrictive electricity supply would result in huge financial losses and negatively affect the population. Yet despite massive investments in RES energy generation, coal and other fossil fuels will in the long run remain principal sources of energy inside the domestic and global energy systems.

Today Serbia produces between 70 and 80 percent of energy from fossil fuels, and this trend will continue for decades to come. Given the importance of energy in our economic system, the state needs to ensure continuous development of energy based on domestic fossil sources.

Coal plays a unique role in economic and energy systems, both in Serbia and internationally, because it is relatively inexpensive and easy to transport and store. To continue to remain the primary energy source, it needs to be mined in a responsible way, with the use of clean technologies.

Coal is increasingly presented to the public as an energy source responsible for the largest

environmental pollution and the main cause of global warming, although science has not brought it into direct contact with this phenomenon. This mainly implies the devastating processes involving complicated operations, limited technical possibilities, with little concern for the environment and local population.

However, in the last 30 years, little has been invested into the development of surface coal mining, while the main development goals focused on sustainable operations, and balancing between social, environmental and economic interests. However, new technologies have been applied, together with preventive planning, reducing potential environmental impacts to a reasonable level. Modern approach to the development of surface coal mining offers significant socio-economic benefits for the environment especially in poor areas.

There is no doubt that domestic mining companies involved in coal mining will invest greater efforts to eliminate or at least significantly reduce adverse environmental impacts of their mines.

Coal as an energy source and its surface mining are highly misunderstood by the public. Lobbyists for environmental protection and the use of other energy sources are allowed to voice their opinions and continuously convince the public that coal has no future.

To change this negative image of surface coal mining, the state and representatives of the companies need to work together to promote benefits brought by coal as an energy source. Efforts in adopting new technologies are essential, gradually facilitating efficient operations and environmental protection.