

According to the official information of the Institute of Public Health, Dr. Milan Jovanović Batut, in 2019, out of 43 tested water supply systems in Vojvodina, only 10 had correct drinking water. The water, they say, was cloudy, it contained ammonia, iron and bacteria. In addition, water in some parts of Vojvodina also contains toxic arsenic, and there is also methane, which is exploited in Vojvodina.

Methane gas, arsenic and other harmful substances flow through the taps of citizens in some parts of Vojvodina. While CINS interlocutors say that the poor quality of drinking water is largely facilitated by oil and gas wells that “sprout” every year in this part of Serbia, there is still no clear strategy on how to manage these wells in relation to groundwater.

At the beginning of October 2020, a video of flammable water, which contained methane, appeared on social networks. Namely, the author of the video demonstrated how a lighter ignites a jet of water from a tap in the bathroom. The recording was made in the village of Stajićevo not far from Zrenjanin.

After the publication of this video, JKP Vodovod i kanalizacija Zrenjanin announced that the problem with methane in the water in Stajićevo, but also in Beli Blato, has existed since the water supply in these parts.

Two months later, an explosion occurred in a water factory in Zrenjanin. The incident in which two workers were injured, according to information from the factory, happened precisely because of the presence of methane in the water.

During drilling, say the interlocutors of CINS, there can be a change in the pressure in the groundwater and mixing of methane with water from different underground layers.

### **The impact on the environment is (un)important**

The Provincial Secretariat for Urbanism and Environmental Protection is responsible for controlling and monitoring the state of the environment in Vojvodina. In this institution, they say for CINS that they have no information that tests have been performed regarding the impact of oil and gas wells, among other things, on drinking water in this province.

There is no strategy or plan for the management of wells in Vojvodina and their impact on groundwater is confirmed in the Provincial Secretariat for Energy, Construction and Transport.

The example of a test well in Palic, near the house of the Mikovic family, also shows how to avoid assessing the impact of wells on the environment.

Namely, according to the Law on Environmental Impact Assessment and the accompanying Regulation, for projects related to drilling for exploration and exploitation of oil and gas, it is

not necessary to prepare a study on environmental impact assessment. This study should assess what damage an activity will have to the environment and human health, as well as how to prevent or reduce it. The study is mandatory only in the case of the extraction of oil and gas.

However, as stated in that law, even with test wells, the project holder, in this case NIS, is obliged to ask the Provincial Secretariat for Environmental Protection to assess whether it is necessary to make a study or not.

After the citizens reported, the provincial inspection for environmental protection first determined in July 2020 that NIS had not asked for it until then, and then, eight months after the beginning of the works, the Provincial Secretariat ordered the company to do a study.

NIS has not done that so far.

### **Fracking - Undesirable in the EU, without restrictions in Serbia**

In Serbia, the method of so-called hydraulic fracturing or fracking is also used in the exploitation of natural gas and oil. It is a technology that injects large amounts of a mixture of water and other liquids under high pressure into the layers of underground rocks that contain fossil fuel reserves. The rocks break in this way, releasing oil and gas. This technique can contaminate drinking water, because the toxic liquids used can return to the surface and reach streams or rivers, and can also mix with groundwater.

In recent years, a large number of countries in Europe have temporarily stopped or completely banned fracking. Among them are France, Germany, Ireland and Bulgaria. However, in Serbia, there are no restrictions for such methods, as they say in the Provincial Secretariat for Energy for CINS.

While NIS says that fracking is applied to only a few oil fields, they also say that the environmental risk has been reduced to a minimum. The oil company claims that this method is applied only after it is determined that the well does not leak liquid into the ground.

Source: cins.rs