

“We are talking about dozens of studies, tens of thousands of pages. Since 2002, the company Rio Tinto has been looking for borates in Serbia because it is one of the key metals we work with, lithium was discovered in 2004, and then it was not crucial, the development of lithium batteries was in the beginning,” director of the company Rio Sava Exploration, Vesna Prodanovic said at an open meeting on the process of issuing permits and making environmental impact studies for the Jadar project.

As she stated, in 2003, the presence of lithium in borate ore was a bigger problem than a benefit.

What is planned?

Prodanovic said that the knowledge base of the Jadar project had been developed by an expert team for more than a decade. Prodanovic stated that there will be an underground mine at a depth of 500-700 meters, into which it will descend with the help of two shafts. She emphasized that the exploitation will be done in such a way that it will not cause the soil to collapse on the surface.

“There will also be a plant for processing concentrate next to the mine – on 80 hectares, as well as a landfill for waste disposal,” said Prodanovic.

“We projected all this in anticipation of Serbia’s entry into the EU, which means according to all required standards. Formally, today we are in the phase of preparing a feasibility study. The construction phase should start next year. We are currently doing environmental impact assessments. We understand that there is concern, we hear inaccurate information every day. An example of such misinformation is that it is claimed that our technology is secret, but it is not – we have shared information about it,” said Prodanovic.

Nikola Sunjic from Rio Sava Exploration explained what the approval process looks like, ie obtaining all permits that need to be obtained before the implementation of the project itself. He pointed out that during the public inspection of the project, a spatial plan will be presented.

Project participants answered questions related to various topics

Numerous participants in the meeting had questions related to this project, through which they mainly expressed their concern about the impact of the project itself on the environment. Answers were given by representatives of Rio Sava Exploration, as well as other project participants. Some of the questions and answers are given below.

Spatial plan and environmental impact assessments

As Dr. Nebojsa Stefanovic from the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism of Serbia, who worked on the project, said, the feasibility study and the study on environmental impact

assessment cannot be done before the spatial plan, according to the law. He pointed out that “environmental green light” is very important.

“The law does not allow us to avoid it at any stage. In the phase when spatial purposes are done, environmental impact assessments are made. All elements from the environmental aspect are considered in the development of the spatial plan. Zones and subzones are formed in the spatial plan. In order to emphasize the importance of the environmental protection aspect. Measures for monitoring all elements of the environment are listed in the plan. In the phase of drafting the spatial plan, an ‘environmental green light’ was obtained,” said Stefanovic.

What infrastructure projects will need to be implemented for the mine to operate?

“When we talk about infrastructure, we are talking about public road infrastructure, especially the bypass around Loznica. Another important item is the railway, the connection to the Valjevo-Loznica railway is planned. As for electricity - the construction of a development plant and transmission line is planned to include Jadar. Jadar is not a large consumer of electricity and will not have to build new thermal power plants. The construction of a gas pipeline is planned. As for the technical water pipeline, it will also be built, it will be used only by Jadar and will be financed by Rio Tinto”, said Nikola Sunjic from Rio Sava Exploration.

What is the planned lifespan of the mine and will it affect the environmental impact assessment?

“It is about 60 years of exploitation. The impact assessment study has the obligation to completely cover the entire century of the mine, from the very opening and the entire preparation and exploitation, to the suspension of mining works in the end,” said Prof. Dr. Nikola Lilic from the Faculty of Mining and Geology, University of Belgrade.

Is a surface mine planned?

“No. The exploitation will be underground,” Nikola Sunjic pointed out.

The open meeting was the first in a series of open meetings that the company will continue to organize every six weeks, on topics related to project development, B92 reports.

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