

Several environmental problems in Zrenjanin make the city a potential environmental bomb. Namely, the inhabitants of this city have had a problem with air and water pollution for years, and the Chinese tire factory has only contributed to these problems.

While the people of Zrenjanin are trying to solve the problem of air and water with protests and civic activism, after the state has been ignoring them for years, a new potential environmental crisis is waiting for them. In the territory of the city of Zrenjanin, the Chinese company "Linglong" has already started the construction of a car tire factory in March 2019, without any study on its impact on the environment.

"The very fact that the factory is being built only two kilometers from the protected area, that is, the Carska bara nature reserve, was already worrying at the beginning. When asked why building permits are issued without an environmental impact study, the answer is that the realization of the Linglong project consists of several phases, so currently such a study is not needed," says Gojkan Stojinović, noting that the study was finally done, but that it is unlikely that the investment and construction will be interrupted, regardless of its content.

"The study was done only recently, and a public debate on that topic was announced for September 4. However, I am afraid that the outcome is already expected and known to all of us", says Stojinović. Even if the production of tires is carried out according to the highest environmental standards, the people of Zrenjanin are afraid of indirect pollution, ie transport.

"Annual production of 13.62 million tires per year is planned. In order to distribute them, simple mathematics is used to calculate that 250 trucks are needed per day, which will produce 35 tons of carbon dioxide in just one day", says Stojinović, noting that it is already quite certain how much the biggest investment in to the north of Serbia", to affect the environment, but also the health of his fellow citizens. The residents of the nearby village of Lukićevo have the same concern, considering that the tire factory is being built in the immediate vicinity.

A specialist in children's respiratory diseases, Dr. Tomislav Stevanović from Lukićevo, fears how it will affect the health of his fellow citizens.

"How will it be, the question is, but after all that politicians have been preparing for us for these fifteen years, we are afraid that there will be problems there as well and that we will be even more powerless to do anything. We will certainly have a worsening of our health, not only because of Linglong, but also because of the freight traffic that will follow", says Stevanović, who has been fighting with his fellow citizens for years with another local factory. On the outskirts of the village for eight years there is a factory of ethyl alcohol "Vinex ethyl", from which Lukićevo is also flooded with very unpleasant odours.

The same company used to operate in the village of Kostojevići in the municipality of Bajina Bašta, but in 2012 the inspection banned it because of the protest of citizens against the stench, but also the great death of fish in nearby rivers and ponds, because Vinex discharged unprocessed wastewater directly into watercourses. The owner “solved” the problem by moving the company to Lukićevo. Since then, the locals have tried in various ways to draw the attention of the institutions to the unpleasant odours that “choke” them, but without any result.

“We have countless written documents in which we address institutions at all levels. They seemed to go out on the field, but nothing changed. I know many of these people from the City Administration, inspections and beyond. We know each other very well, but they should be ashamed of what they leave to us desperate people to do their job for which they are paid”, says Dr. Stevanović for Nova.rs, announcing that the locals are already preparing documentation for a private lawsuit against Vinex.

“We will hire a lawyer and go to a private lawsuit. Vinex will have to pay huge compensations to everyone who has been a victim of their business for years”, says Stevanović. Although the owner and director of Vinex once told the local portal Zrenjanin “that fumes and odours from our factory can harm people, I certainly would not be in Lukićevo five days a week, my son would not be here with me all summer”, Stevanović claims otherwise.

“It is enough for my patients to just feel this smell and for their condition to get worse. I’m talking about asthma, cardiovascular diseases, autoimmune diseases. They all have a problem with that stench and their condition is physically deteriorating. This type of pollution affects the whole spectrum of health problems”, says the doctor, emphasizing that the WHO has long classified “subjective feeling of unpleasant odours as a relevant data when determining the degree of pollution.

He pointed out that unpleasant odours in Lukićevo, after Vinex recently launched a bioenergy plant, are much rarer, but that this will not stop them from seeking compensation. Another reason is the concern of the locals where and in what way the wastewater from the plant is disposed of, as well as the concern that the polluted water will reach the source from which Lukićevo is supplied by water, which is only 50 meters away from that factory.

The people of Zrenjanin also have a problem with wastewater in the Aleksandrovac Channel. in which the water is so polluted that, according to the Institute of Public Health, “it cannot be used for any purpose.”

All wastewater from industry is discharged into it, but also the sewage system. In addition

Polluted air and water turn the Serbian town of Zrenjanin into an environmental bomb

to the stench and collapse of privately owned land, water from the canal flows directly into the Begej River, and since Zrenjanin still does not have a central water purifier, the city river has practically become an open sewage system.

Source: nova.rs