

Last year, Bor was at the top of the cities with the most polluted air, so the protests of citizens continued on the streets, and recently the city administration filed a criminal complaint against Zijin Bor Koper in the Municipal Public Prosecutor's Office. The mayor of Bor, Aleksandar Milikić, did not want to reveal the details of the report for ours. Two days after the criminal complaint was filed by the city administration, the company Zijin issued a statement stating that they were stopping the operation of the smelter and starting the overhaul that was otherwise planned for November.

Arsenic pollution during August in Bor reached 323 times higher level, which suggests that the profit won the victory over ecology, according to ETF professor Dr. Slobodan Vukosavić. According to the Center for Investigative Journalism, the Commercial Court in Zaječar passed a verdict blaming the company Zijin Bor Koper, the successor of RTV Bor, and one of its managers for air pollution in Bor. Because in a couple of days in 2019 and 2020, the concentration of sulfur dioxide was eight times higher than allowed, they are obliged to pay 450,000 dinars. Since both parties have filed an appeal, both the Chinese company and the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Zaječar, which is conducting this procedure upon the report of the Ministry of Ecology, the final word will be given by the Commercial Court in Belgrade.

Filip Radović, the director of the Environmental Protection Agency, did not want to talk about the worrying quality of the Bor air.

While the authorities avoid talking about this problem, the data show that the concentrations of sulfur dioxide repeatedly exceeded the allowed 350 micrograms. For example, on August 28, a record of 2,285 micrograms was recorded.

Professor at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Dr. Slobodan Vukosavić, warns that the level of suspended particles measured in Serbian cities has a negative impact on human health, reduces resistance to respiratory infections and reduces cognitive intelligence. Only a couple of years ago, the media reported that the situation in Bor was better, because RTB "Bor" put into operation a new copper smelter. The latest news about criminal charges, protests, show that this is not the case.

The solution for better air quality in Serbia is in the money – clean air in euros costs us around 2.4 billion. So much needs to be invested to correct the consequences that the prolonged transition of the economy, poor business operations of state-owned companies and low level of awareness have left on the environment. And most investments are expected from the state because the biggest polluters are state-owned companies – EPS, RTB "Bor", "Azotara", "Petrohemija", city heating plants... And as the cold weather follows, this invisible problem will become more visible.

- The most important cause of air pollution is excessive emission of suspended particles. The biggest polluters are small heating plants and individual furnaces that use outdated equipment and fuel of poorer quality. Air quality is additionally endangered during the winter months due to the influence of temperature inversion and low temperatures, which can force weaker standing households to burn everything that can burn - notes Dr.

Vukosavić.

Our interlocutor adds that environmental pollution is closely related to other problems and often indicates an unfair distribution.

- Wild landfills and excessive emissions are less often the result of negligence and more often the desire to make money at the expense of the environment. Stakeholders who profit from violations of the regulations use their media influence to cover up the real causes of pollution. The ignorance, passivity and pliability of the population also contribute to the problem. Equally harmful are the reckless demands to close all industrial plants. Effective defense is a vigilant and informed community ready to invest time and effort to protect its air, water and land in a sustainable way, rejecting the offered narratives and relying on their own judgment - our interlocutor concludes.

Source: politika.rs