

## Rio Tinto is investing 100m euros in a mine in Serbia, activists say the mine is dangerous for the Jadar area

While Rio Tinto's senior environmental advisor Margareta Milosavljevic states that this company has the necessary permits, and that an investment of 100 million euros in environmental protection is planned, Zvezdan Kalmar from the Coalition for Sustainable Mining and the Association "Let's Defend Jadar and Radjevina" that our country does not need the Lithium mine at all, and that in the case of its construction, the environment in most of Serbia will be endangered. Kalmar assessed that this project is dangerous for the area of Radjevina and Jadar, as well as for the area downstream along the river Drina, the river Sava, and in the final instance it would endanger Belgrade as well. According to him, Rio Tinto has "an extremely bad history of mining activities all over the world."

"By simply browsing the Internet, you will find several horrible places in terms of ecology and environmental protection. "The most serious violations were in Papua New Guinea and Australia, and this project, if it was made, would endanger the environment not only in Jadar and Radjevina, but also beyond," he is convinced.

Milosavljevic answers that the research in that area started in 2004 and that they discovered that there is jadarite in that area, which is composed of pine and lithium, as well as that all investigative works were carried out after the refusal of the permit from the competent authorities. She added that they are working very precisely on the perception of all influences, as well as that they are done by top experts and organizations.

Kalmar replies that this company received a permit from the Government of Serbia for the development of a project on lithium in the Jadra Valley, but that Rio Tinto's documentation on that was not available.

"At the moment when the strategic assessment and the plan were made, that is, the 'planning basis', they were never submitted. At that meeting that we had on December 15, it was only said that the studies existed, but they never came into the possession of activists. The Special Purpose Plan was also adopted on the basis of an unfinished project, "Kalmar underlined.

He states that there was no mandatory assessment of cost-effectiveness and acceptability.

"It is not possible to dimension the project, nor its duration. We should not talk about this project with Rio Tinto either, but representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Mining should sit on the other side, because Rio Tinto was only given the right to develop the project. It is not his property, nor does it decide whether the project will be needed and whether it will be accepted, "Kalmar notes.

"We never got a study that shows how much electricity, how much sulfuric acid, how much hydrofluoric acid, cement and lime will be needed"? Not to mention how much water will be discharged and where the landfills will be, "he pointed out.

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Because of all that, he says that the Government of Serbia is obliged to abolish the Special Purpose Plan and to start with the project from the beginning, ie to verify the reserves, determine the feasibility study and then go to the project.

“It’s actually a political issue, environmental policy. We believe that Serbia does not need lithium, because in fact the renewable energy that would be stored in those lithium batteries would not actually be renewable. “I would like to add that the citizens in Portugal and South America are persistently and strongly fighting against the ‘lithium policy’,” he said.

Milosavljevic stated that the company Rio Tinto has a permit for exploration works, as well as that the Spatial Plan of the special purpose area was prepared by the Institute of Urbanism and Architecture.

“We were only financiers, that’s how it is legally defined. The Technical Commission considered and the Ministry of Construction adopted that Spatial Plan. Everything was done according to the legal regulations. The second untruth is related to the certificate of certified reserves and resources, we received it on January 6, 2021. We are now in the phase of the project that Kalmar is talking about, that is, the Feasibility and Justification Study “, explains Milosavljevic. She indicates that after that, he will start the procedure of obtaining the Study on Environmental Impact Assessment for the mine and the plant. She also states that Rio Tinto has two info centers where locals can view the studies that have been made and the information they need.

Kalmar accused the company that after digging certain wells for testing, wells in some households dried up, as well as that “nothing is growing anymore” on the surrounding land, while Milosavljevic denied that and said that it was not true.

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