

At the MINEX Europe mining forum in Belgrade, the British company Mineco Limited, one of the largest investors in the mining sector in the Western Balkans, presented the IMP@CT project which is funded by the European programme Horizon 2020. With the joint efforts of science and industry, this project should make great progress in European mining within three years, ensuring a stable supply of scarce raw materials on the European market. Speaking before experts from all over Europe attending the two-day forum, Operations Director of Mineco Ltd Dominic Roberts explained in a presentation “Small is Beautiful” that one of the most important goals of the IMP@CT project is to free the industry of the Old Continent from depending on large mineral deposits outside its territory.

Mineco participates in IMP@CT as a company that invests in the development and application of the latest technology. The project should result in designed and tested new methods of excavation of smaller certified mineral deposits, whose start-up costs would be significantly reduced, said Roberts. He added that it is important that the projects are initiated faster than is now the case and closed down just as quickly after a successful completion of exploitation, without harm to the environment and with benefits for the local community.

Roberts pointed out that European industry has to some extent been lulled into a false sense of security, thanks to large resources available to China and on the African continent. However, events in recent years in international relations have often brought a shortage of raw materials on the market and an almost complete stoppage in the supply of some key minerals.

“It has long been believed that only enormous deposits may be cost-effective for exploitation. Only large infrastructure projects were developed that secured long-term viability. This has to change. Europe should use its resources, even when certified reserves are small according to current standards. Our task in IMP@CT is that together with science we come up with such methods to enable a cost-effective solution that would be beneficial for society in many ways”, said Roberts.

The project coordinator for IMP@CT, Integrated Modular Plant Containerized Tools for Selective, Low-impact mining of Small High-grade Deposits, is the University of Exeter. Other projects in the Western Balkans were also presented at the MINEX Europe Forum, including “Jadar”, with the world’s unique mineral jadarite (near Loznica), which is run by Rio Tinto, and the Rakita project (deposits of gold and copper Čukaru Peki at Bor), a joint venture of the Canadian company Nevsun and the American company Freeport (Freeport-McMoRan).

At the MINEX Europe Forum held in Belgrade on 14 and 15 June, experts and

representatives of mining companies exchanged information on developments in European mining, development of potentials in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, environmental protection in mining and the impact of the global financial market on European mining. Special attention was paid to the ways in which Europe can secure the supply of key mineral resources for its industry.

About the Mineco Group

Mineco Ltd is a part of the Mineco Group. Mineco is an international group of companies whose essential work lies in the international trade of non-ferrous metals and ore concentrates, investment in mining and geological research. Mineco invests in and develops lead and zinc mines in the countries of south-eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where the group takes partial ownership. The Mineco Group works on four continents: Europe, Asia, Africa and North America, with an annual turnover between 250 and 350 million USD.

In the Western Balkans Mineco employs over 1,500 people. Mineco is one of the largest investors in Bosnia and Herzegovina with over €40 million invested. Together with its partners, Mineco also manages the lead and zinc mine Gross at Srebrenica and the cerussite mine at Olovo, while at the same time conducting research of the lead and zinc deposits at Foča. In Serbia, Mineco and its partners manage the Rudnik mine and flotation at Gornji Milanovac and the Veliki Majdan mine at Ljubovija, and is preparing to open the lead, zinc and copper mine Bosil-Metal at Bosilegrad.

In addition to mining, the Mineco Group invests in renewable energy sources in the Western Balkans, primarily in the construction of mini hydropower plants.