

## The public session for the spatial plan of the Kolubara B power plant in Serbia was interrupted due to procedural omissions

The reason for serious public concern is not only the obvious economic and environmental consequences of the construction of Kolubara B, but also the fact that public authorities are grossly and increasingly endangering the rights of citizens to participate in the decision-making process and be informed about possible environmental impacts of bilateral agreements between the Chinese and Serbian authorities.

Despite obvious organizational shortcomings, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure tried to hold a public session of the plans commission within the public insight into the draft Plan of the special purpose area for the construction of the Kolubara B thermal power plant and the report on strategic environmental assessment. After the insistence of the representatives of the interested public to show them the minutes, which no one kept, after more than an hour of discussion on procedural issues, the representatives of the Ministry of Construction left the hall of the Municipal Assembly of Lazarevac, without any explanation.

The public session of the commission for plans was supposed to be held on July 15, but the Ministry of Construction postponed the session due to the epidemiological situation.

Although the conditions have not changed, the Ministry has scheduled a new public session for September 14 at 10 am, in the assembly hall of the municipality of Lazarevac.

Already before 10 o'clock, there were more than 40 people in the hall and about 20 people were standing in front and they were not allowed to enter. Despite the clear Order banning gatherings in the Republic of Serbia in public places indoors and outdoors, which prohibits the gathering of more than 30 people indoors, and the request of the interested public to adjourn the session immediately, so that citizens are not exposed to health risks, the chairman announced the beginning of the session at 10.13. Then there was another precedent and a serious violation of the public's right to participate in the decision-making process. Namely, the representatives of the Ministry of Construction put pressure on the citizens, trying to convince them to leave the public session. Several citizens succumbed to these pressures.

Although there were still more than 30 people in the hall, as well as a large number of citizens in front of the hall, the chairman, an official of the Ministry of Construction, continued the session, despite warnings from RERI's legal team and lawyer Sreten Djordjevic to violate regulations. Despite the warnings, the session continued, but the representatives of the Ministry, who are in charge of conducting this administrative procedure, did not keep minutes at all, nor did they make any remarks to the interested public. Mirko Popović from RERI insisted that the chairman answer his question about who keeps the minutes and why the minutes are not kept. Lawyer Sreten Djordjevic requested

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the disqualification of the presiding judge, as well as for his request to be entered in the minutes. However, there were no minutes, and the chairman refused to answer citizens' questions.

After more than an hour, the representatives of the Ministry and the processor of the plan left the hall without informing the public whether the session was interrupted and when it would be resumed.

The construction of the new Kolubara B thermal power plant, financed by Chinese investors, has been accompanied from the very beginning by illegal actions of public authorities, hiding information from citizens and denying the public the right to participate in the decision-making process. The attempt to hold a public session in conditions in which citizens are exposed to health risk and denial of the rights guaranteed by the law, is just one in a series of attempts by public authorities to accelerate the construction of Kolubara B thermal power plant, a project that distances Serbia from the European Union.

RERI reminds the public that the greatest danger to the environment in Serbia is not polluters, but corruption and irresponsible government.

Source: [reri.org.rs](http://reri.org.rs)