

The recently published report on air quality for 2019 of the Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) shows that Bor was among the most polluted places in Serbia last year – due to SO₂. Bor also stands out for the intensity of pollution, because the air in the city center was dangerous to human health 13 times.

The company Zijin Bor Koper and one of its managers are responsible for the pollution in Bor, in November 2019 and January this year, the Economic Court in Zaječar ruled, with a total fine of 450,000 dinars, but the verdict is not final, the Center announced today for Investigative Reporting in Serbia (CINS). CINS states that the verdict is not final, because both parties have filed appeals, so the last word will be given by the Economic Court of Appeals in Belgrade, to which the case was submitted on September 21.

The company Zijin Bor Koper, former RTB Bor, and the head of the Copper Smelter and Refinery (TIR) Boban Todorović, according to the court ruling, violated the Law on Air Protection because they led to excessive pollution in Bor on November 21 and 22, 2019, as well as 14 and January 15 this year, according to CINS.

As stated in the verdict, they are responsible for not suspending production at the new smelter and sulfuric acid plant and thus releasing excessive sulfur dioxide (SO₂) into the air during the four disputed days. In those days, in certain hours in the center of Bor, the concentration of SO₂ was up to 8.3 times higher than allowed, concluded the inspection of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, which initiated the court procedure, CINS reminded.

The company Zijin should therefore pay 400,000 dinars, and the manager of TIR 50,000 dinars. However, this decision is not final because the convicts appealed against it, as well as the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Zaječar, which is conducting this procedure upon the report of the Ministry.

While the prosecution is asking for a higher sentence, the lawyer of the company Zijin and Boban Todorović is proposing that they be reduced to a court reprimand or complete abolition.

According to the Law on Air Protection, the fine for Zijin could have been much higher – up to three million dinars, with a fine commensurate with the damage, but the court took into account mitigating circumstances: the company has more employees, has not been convicted so far and is socially responsible and strives to take measures to reduce pollution. According to CINS, the court also noticed that it was old technology and hourly pollution (not all day long), for which it also reduced the sentence. It was also pointed out that through the court process, the defense tried to deny that Zijin is the only polluter in Bor, pointing the finger mostly at the city heating plant. Evidence was submitted to the court

that during the disputed days the city heating plant did not release excessive pollutants into the air, and the inspector who controlled the air pollution in Bor, Emila Tošić, stated as a witness in court that the environmental protection service in the Bor company monitors pollution from minutes to minutes. minute and that in critical days it measured the excess of CO₂ pollution.

Zijin stated that after that they stopped production in order to repair the unit and thus reduce pollution, but also that they submitted a plan to the ministry for solving the problem of air pollution from the plant in the TIR branch.

CINS reminds that after a few years break, with the arrival of Chinese Zijin, which took over RTB at the end of 2018, pollution in Bor became a public topic again, so several smaller protests in Bor culminated last November with a larger rally in front of the Zijin administration building from several cities in Serbia. Bor residents then claimed that the pollution was greater after the arrival of the Chinese investor and asked them to reduce production, and a few days after the meeting, the pollution was noticed by the inspection.

Source: danas.rs