



The Macedonian government still refuses to state which strategy it will apply for the southeast part of the country, where several concessions for geological explorations have already been granted, and there is a big chance that gold-copper mines Kazandol and Ilovica-Shtuka will be built. The citizens of Dojran and Gevgelija have already declared themselves to preserve the environment and against the new mines, and the citizens of Valandovo and Bosiljevo are also against the new mines and they fight for the possibility of declaring. Environmentalist and activists warned long ago that mines have a huge impact on the environment and possible effects on air, water and soil.

Mines do not represent a viable economy, when exploitation is completed and resources are spent there are no prospects for the future, miners will lose their jobs and soil and environment will be out of use for decades, for which there are many examples from the past in Macedonia. South-East Macedonia is mainly a farming region, and in particular Strumica and Valandovo region are well-developed, which have higher incomes, and it is not clear who would ask to work in the mine for a lower salary.

When in the interview for Faktor.mk experts were asked what the opening of the mines in Southeast Macedonia means and whether this type of heavy industry could endanger the agricultural production and the existence of thousands of people, they replied that mining is an outdated industry, which does not bring important benefits for local communities, on the contrary, it brings more problems. If it is hypothetically considered that modern mining has no impact on the environment, only the presence of mines in the agricultural area brings a negative PR (publicity) for sustainable agriculture and sustainable development of the region. However, within the United Nations Environment Programme, mines are marked as "ecological black spots". Another thing is that three development strategies of southeastern Macedonia have been adopted, which do not mention mining in this region, experts say.

When it comes to economic benefits, they believe that neither the state nor the local community will notice some important local economic development due to the opening of mines, and negative effects on the environment can cost local communities more than economic benefits. Only investors will benefit and their motives are reasonable, say experts, who are skeptical that an adequate staff will be provided to work in the mines.

They add that there are numerous examples of families and individuals who earn much more from agriculture in relation to how much they would earn in the mine. They are wondering whether 200 to 250 jobs in the mine are more important if the existence of 30,000 to 40,000 people who live directly from agriculture is endangered in this way.

Responding to question whether it is better for the region to develop green ecology, taking into account natural characteristics and demographic parameters, experts say that the

region has good predispositions for alternative forms of tourism, taking into consideration the natural wealth, which in combination with food production offer the possibility for provincial and rural tourism. Also, there is a potential for the use of solar energy for the electricity generation. Small and medium enterprises that offer different types of production and services make more sustainable jobs in different sectors, unlike mining.

When it comes to what the mine means for the environment, especially when it is about open pit mines that use strong chemicals, experts say that treatment with sulfuric acid solution, one of the most corrosive compounds, can be very dangerous, regardless it is a water solution, given that during transportation and storing of concentrated sulfuric acid there is a risk of affecting the wildlife in this area ... from natural immigration to death due to disturbed ecosystems.

When it comes to impact of the mine on the well-being and quality of life of the citizens, experts say there is a risk of accidents that cannot be foreseen, and they can lead to severe consequences for the environment, material resources and even human health. The example of slag overflowing due to flood is recorded in the last few years, due to short-term but abundant rain.

When commenting the impact on natural resources, they say that there are several impacts, starting from the alteration of topography and landscapes... It is necessary to construct pits, remove overburden, and make landfills, so this is a huge area that will be covered by mines. This will lead to destruction of forests and plants, which will have negative effects and cause soil erosion and the so-called deforestation. There will be dust from the excavation and overburden removal and this will affect the quality of the air. The excavation itself will have an impact on the water regime of streams and the rivers whose flows are affected by excavations. Groundwater disruptions can occur due to mining and excavation of soil, warn experts.