



Serbia has to explore the deposits of mineral resources in order to know how much of the natural wealth is at its disposal, it was said at a Meeting regarding nickel in Belgrade. But first we must take care to protect the environment.

At the debate, "Nickel: economic benefits and environmental risks", organized by the Center for Democracy and the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation, it was said that the mineral resources are strategic raw materials and that is how they must be considered, but we must put them above economic freedoms.

Representatives of local governments in whose territories exploration of nickel should be carried out, expressed concern that the process would pollute the environment, adding that "the exploration is just an introduction to the exploitation of nickel by the back door."

They wondered whether the economic benefits from the exploitation of nickel is so great that it pays off to destroy the health of people and the beautiful scenery of Serbia - Bukulja, Oplenac and Rudnik.

Representatives of Arandjelovac, Vrnjacka Banja and Trstenik municipalities said that spatial plans of these territories do not provide extraction of nickel, but are directed to development of agriculture and tourism instead, as well as healthy ecological environment. They said that it was only after a few months since the issuance of permits for the exploration of nickel on their territory that they were informed about it and requested complete transparency from authorities in all decisions about the exploration and exploitation of nickel.

Professor Vitorović Dragomir said that the greatest treasure of 21 century is the untouched nature, and that, when it comes to nickel debate turns to the toxicity that is indisputable, since heavy metals are toxic in substance, but no mention of the environmental risk of potential processing of ore.

It was said at the debate that practice of safe exploitation of nickel exists nowhere in the world, and that there is insufficient information to consider all environmental aspects of the mining and processing of nickel ore in Serbia.

The owner of the company Serbia nickel, Radoslav Vuckovic said that the company, which already has a concession to research 100 square kilometers in the vicinity of Topola, Arandjelovac and Kragujevac, around Trstenik and Vrnjacka Banja would determine in stages whether nickel is there.

According to him, they would do exploration drilling first, and then if it turns out that the ore exists they would have to do a feasibility study to see if mining is profitable and the third phase is the construction of factories and opening of the mine.

He said that the nickel deposits in Serbia appeared after the decomposition of rocks, and it is estimated that the production, proposed by this company in 25 years period would provide 45,000 tons of nickel and 5,000 tons of cobalt, annually and it would employ 5,000



Serbia questions nickel exploration, public hearing on benefits and environmental risks

workers.

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