

The president of the environmental protection committee of the University of Belgrade, Ratko Ristic, said that “nothing will happen” to Žagubica and its surroundings if the **gold mine** is opened.

At the session of the parliamentary committee for environmental protection, which was held in Žagubica, Ristić told the citizens that the potential of their region is food and organic food production, eco-tourism, hunting, mountaineering and religious tourism, and beekeeping, and that nothing will come of it if plans to open the Potaj Čuka - Tisnica gold mine come true.

He said that investments in these potentials are now sporadic and that, if the state would direct subsidies to promote some of these activities, there would be much more profit for that area than gold mines.

“With a more organized, professional and maintenance-supported method of operation, it is possible to employ a much larger number of people and generate higher incomes without any encroachment of space, destruction and risk to public health,” says Professor Ristić. He emphasized that Serbia has about 500 tons of gold that could be mined in the next 30 years or so and are worth about 30 billion dollars, and Serbia would have about three billion of that left. “It’s about 100 million dollars a year, with such an invasive destruction of space, they would have terrible pollution and impacts on the health of the population,” says the professor.

He told the citizens of Žagubica to persevere, to preserve nature with its peculiarities and the chance for true development come true.

He also pointed out that the **exploration area** of the planned mine covers almost 300 square kilometers, while the zone of mining activities is about 1,000 hectares, and it is planned that exploitation will last seven years and that in the last year the so-called recultivation and restoration of the space to its original form.

“It’s an interesting concept, we don’t have any mining activities anywhere in Serbia, and after completion, the area is returned to its original form. This stands out as an argument in all promotions of mining activities. I personally stand for mining that is in the public interest, that meets the needs of the majority of people in the country, that mining should be supported, and the state should strengthen all Serbian scientific and professional potential. But I am absolutely against mining, which is the promotion of private interests, the promotion of lucrative goals and enrichment, because as a rule, it means endangering public health,” he says.

He also added that it is planned to extract 19 tons of gold from the Potaj Chuka - Tisnica site in seven years, and that the price of that gold is about 60 million dollars, which comes to a total of about 850 million dollars.

According to him, someone would make money by selling the gold that would be mined here, and Serbia would have a maximum benefit of six to seven percent of that amount, and

the municipality of Žagubica maybe not even 2, 3 percent .

He warns that the mined gold would be used for so-called “**heap leaching**” and on 36 hectares, sodium cyanide, which is an aggressive substance and carries a high risk of pollution, would be used.

The company that plans to open the mine, as he specifies, later denied that they would use that substance, but he also asks why they should be trusted.

The problem, he adds, is that in order to get to 19 tons of gold, from which Žagubica would have the least benefit, 70 million cubic meters of earth need to be excavated.

“These are landfills with millions of cubic meters of materials, with extremely unfavorable chemical properties and which have a high degree of acidity. It would be washed away after rainfall and everything would go into the local watercourse network, contaminating groundwater and soil,” he says.

He also gave the example that **nickel** was found in the area of Mokra Gora and its surroundings in 2004 and that they were working to open a nickel mine. If that had been done, it would not have been possible to develop a self-sustainable tourist area such as Zlatibor, which is now connected to Tara and Mokro Gora, as well as the continuation to Andrić town.

“20-30,000 people stay there at any given time and spend significant amounts of money, and the whole area is booming without any pollution,” Ristić said.