

At the recent gathering “Project Jadar - What is known” many relevant speakers got a chance to talk about the project. The gathering was organized by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts SANU and it lasted for two days.

SANU does not deal with conjunctural determinations, but will search for scientifically based truths - I guess this is the only way this environment needs it, said SANU President Vladimir Kostic at the opening of the conference “Jadar Project - What is known” at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

“Nothing is being resolved here, but we may be a little smarter in looking for a solution,” Kostic said.

The President of the Committee for the Environment of SANU, Vladimir Stevanovic, emphasized that, regardless of the fact that it is declaratively announced that everything in the Jadar project will be environmentally safe, it remains full of questions that bring everything into doubt, because the project was non-transparent from the beginning.

He pointed out that on one side we should put how much forests cost, land that can be destroyed “in an instant”, for example by converting it into construction land, then water pollution, and on the other side profit and see what Serbia gains and what it loses.

The director of Rio Sava Exploration, Vesna Prodanovic, stated that the Jadar plant should start working in 2027 and pointed out that jadarite is the only mineral that contains lithium, which is crucial for Europe and the world.

She expressed hope that the Jadar project will influence the attraction of new and related investments.

She pointed out that Rio Tinto came to Serbia because of boron in 2001 and that the discovery of lithium was not unexpected, but that it was not a metal of special commercial interest at the time, but that it became so after 2010.

She pointed out that the mine will be an underground, not a surface mine, as is often stated, claiming that there will be no acid waste, that the processing does not generate declining vapors, and that the ore content of toxic metals is low, and that the project will respect the current legislation.

Prodanovic stated that, when it comes to the mine, one should not speak as if it was 1921, but 2021.

Activists are announcing a lawsuit against the state

The coordinator of the Coalition for Sustainable Mining, Zvezdan Kalmar, said today that the environmental movement and its members would sue the state of Serbia for illegally adopting the Special Purpose Plan for the realization of the Rio Tinto Jadar project and the opening of a lithium mine near Loznica.

After the protest of that environmental movement in front of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, he told the Beta agency that the plan was adopted without the necessary documentation.

“The state administration passed the Special Purpose Plan in 2020, a year and a half before the ore reserves were verified, which is a precondition for the adoption of that document,” Kalmar said.

He added that the second precondition was the preparation of a feasibility study, which began to be done only after the adoption of the Special Purpose Plan, which, according to him, is illegal.

Therefore, he says, it is not yet known what technology will be used for the production of lithium from jadarite ore, as well as how much sulfuric acid and other dangerous substances will be produced, water will be used and where the landfill will be.

He pointed out that it is not yet known how long the mine will be used.

Kalmar said that lithium batteries for electric cars will have to increase the production of electricity from coal, so it is planned to increase the consumption of that fossil fuel from 39 million tons to 48 million tons.

“All this speaks of the harmfulness of the Jadar project and the opening of the lithium mine,” said Kalmar, and pointed out that the state hurried to adopt a special purpose plan so that the investor could start expropriating the land from the inhabitants of that area.

The Minister of Mining and Energy, Zorana Mihajlovic, stated at the meeting “Project Jadar - What is known” that the technology used in the mines must comply with the principles of environmental protection.

She pointed out that the deposit of jadarite in Serbia is important from the aspect of the amount of lithium, which is one of the largest in Europe, and that by excavating lithium, Serbia would position itself as a resource on which development depends, due to lithium batteries and electric cars.

She assessed that lithium is “the metal of the future” and “a critical raw material without which the future is invisible”, and that Serbia can take an important technological place.

“Either we will use the historical chance in the production of products from the most sought-after metal, or we will be silent observers,” said Mihajlovic.

In the part intended for Minister Mihajlović’s questions, the representative of the Association for the Defense of the Rivers of Stara Planina, Aleksandar Jovanović Cuta, asked why Serbia was talking to Rio Tinto when the company was expelled from Portugal and said that such people should not be accepted into the house.

Prodanovic later reacted by denying that Rio Tinto had been expelled from Portugal.

The director of Rio Sava Exploration was also asked about arsenic, which is very toxic, and about how much water is needed and where it will be brought for rinsing with sulfuric acid, and Prodanovic promised to get answers to those questions by the end of the day.

The Dean of the Faculty of Forestry, Ratko Ristic, warned that Jadar is a very flooded area and emphasized that the question is how to guarantee that harmful substances from landfills do not enter Jadar and reach Belgrade.

He emphasized that it is impossible to guarantee that the negative influences will be of a local character.

Ristic pointed out that the project is particularly endangered biodiversity because there are strictly protected plants and animals in the area, emphasizing that there are cultural assets in the vicinity such as the monasteries of Tronos and Trsic, which are part of the tourist destination, but that there will be none if a project is launched.

He also stated that there is an action plan on relocating the local population.

Ristic assessed that the “pink presentation” of Rio Tinto was heard today and positive examples, stating that he received examples of Rio Tinto’s work from colleagues from the world, that the population was evicted, that water and air pollution and mass infections of the upper respiratory tract occurred on roads, to deposit toxic materials, make tailings that are constant sources of pollution.

“As far as I am concerned - Rio Tinto’s imprint is unacceptable in the world,” said Ristic, and Prodanovic called on him not to present information from the Internet, but to talk about the facts.

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