

Mineral safeguarding in Serbia

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Serbia, in relation to its size and population, has significant mineral resources. The most important mineral commodities are copper, lead, zinc, and coal. There is also a relatively large potential for nickel and gold. Non-metallic minerals, the resources of which are not used sufficiently, are also significant. In Serbia all mineral resources (including coal, mineral water, geothermal resources, and hydrocarbon resources) are the public property of the state. Consequently, the legislation for the mineral industry is predominantly defined on state level and the Ministry of Mining and Energy is in charge of most activities. Permits are issued only by the Ministry and for the Autonomous Region of Vojvodina by the Secretary in charge.

In the modern economy the long-term concept of sustainable mining development implies continued economic growth, but such growth that brings not only economic efficiency and technological progress, but also a higher share of cleaner technologies and innovation in the society as a whole and corporate social responsibility, enabling poverty reduction, long-term better use of resources, improved health and quality of life and reduced pollution, prevention of future pollution and preservation of bio-diversity.

Therefore, it is necessary to have a well-established management system related to mineral resources, which means good cooperation between spatial planning and environmental protection on the one hand and mineral safeguarding as a specific protection of the only non-renewable mineral commodities. The mineral policy in Serbia is so far mentioned in the new Law as a set of procedures to be followed according to the Strategy and not as policy itself, and the Strategy on sustainable management of mineral resources is still a draft version. However, Serbia defined strategic mineral commodities in the Law on Mining and Geological Exploration in 2015, which include oil and natural gas, coal, copper and gold, lead and zinc, boron and lithium, and oil shales. Other mineral commodities may be defined as strategic by a separate act of the government based on recommendations of the Ministry in charge. The same Law also introduced protected zones around the existing quarries and mines, which do not allow any other mining activity.

Mineral safeguarding will have several challenges, such as coordinated national/regional/municipal planning of the mineral supply and safeguarding that addresses cross-sectoral interactions and ensures that documents are consistent, integrated planning for primary and secondary mineral commodities that addresses resource efficiency, capacity and competence to address the preceding two problems, and stakeholder engagement and the consultation process to ensure that planning addresses the concerns and needs of all the target groups.