

Adopted resolution

The necessity of European legislation against cyanide based mining

The cyanide based mining produced in several countries severe harms to the environment. Romania has its own negative record in this respect. In 2000 a major accident happened. A collecting cyanide lake accidentally spilled in a river near Baia Mare, northwest of the country. The resulting pollution going as far as the Danube, several hundreds kilometres south killed fish, animals and birds living in the rivers and surrounding areas. The accident also presented a massive health risk for a large number of humans living in the proximity of the infested rivers. The accident had also an international dimension. Four countries, Romania, Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria were affected. Very recent developments in the Romanian politics are due to promote a course of action which can lead to similar effects if we fail to act now.

Acknowledging the risk posed by cyanide based mining several European countries banned this practice. There is however a number of countries which ignore the warnings and its severe effects on environment. The European Greens were the first European Party to warn against the dangers of this kind of mining¹. In 2007 they have voted a resolution calling for a halt of the cyanide based mining project in Rosia Montana in Romania. The project is still pursued even today and enjoys the support of the government and mainstream political parties. If the project is implemented it will result into destroying four mountains and the habitat of more than 100 species of animals and plants, many of them already endangered. The project will also affect the historical heritage of the country as the targeted area has a large number of antic Roman mines and associated historical sites. Thousands of people will have to be moved and the pastures and houses will be replaced by collecting cyanide lake of more than 300 ha. The sheer magnitude of the project and the type of the technology used will transform Rosia Montana into a very serious environmental hazard affecting Romania but also the neighbouring countries.

Unfortunately, following an intense lobby by the investing company, the government, mainstream political parties and the president of the country became very supportive of the project. The Minister of Economy, strongly backed by the incumbent President, Traian Basescu, declared in December 2009 that the project is one of the policy priorities for the government. The investing company has spent impressive amounts of money on PR and media campaigns in order to appease the overall negative sentiment of the public toward the project. The PR budgets of this campaign are unprecedented and so is the total worth of the project. The campaign is not restricted to convincing the public. Recently a Romanian Liberal MEP has tried to gather support for the project organizing a meeting in the European Parliament.

Against this background the intense efforts of civil society and ours had little chances of success. It is very difficult to fight the media campaigns worth millions of euros and the strong support mainstream parties give to the project. A law banning the use of cyanide is currently blocked in the Romanian Parliament by the mainstream parties.

Given the difficulty to push for an environmental agenda against entrenched economic and political interests and the fact that this kind of project has essentially an international dimension we call for clear commitment to ban the cyanide based mining in Europe. Similar project can spring everywhere threatening the safety of millions of people and endangering natural habitats on the continent.

We thus call for the European Greens to pursue all available ways for tackling the problems related to cyanide based mining. To broaden the support we would suggest involving in the process representatives from civil society, research institutions, political parties and local authorities. If we act now it will be possible to prevent the use of this technology and the promotion of alternative ones having a lesser impact on the environment.

¹ *Arguments for stopping the Gold Corporation of Rosia Montana project* - Adopted resolution by the European Green Party at the 7th COUNCIL MEETING, Vienna, 12-14th October 2007.