

## **WILL THE EU TURN SERBIA INTO A MINING COLONY?**

### ***Serbia-EU Letter of Intent paves way for lithium mining in Serbia in spite of project cancellation and great public opposition***

Belgrade – 25 March 2024 –*Marš sa Drine* has obtained a copy of a signed letter of intent between the EU and Serbia as well as meeting minutes between Serbian President Vučić and the Vice President of the European Commission, Maroš Šefčovič. Both relate to accessing lithium from Serbia to re-power the EU's economy. All documents are being made publicly available today. Due to our website being hacked we ask that all media share the documents via their portals. The EU and Serbia's public deserve to know how the EU seeks to access Serbia's lithium to power the EU's and Germany's automobile industry, despite strong public opposition.

The letter and minutes focus on a strategic partnership in batteries and critical raw materials. Mining, extraction and technological production are presented as solutions to the climate crisis. Collaboration is mapped through the publicly funded EU Horizon Platform, which includes the 6 million Euro [Vector Project](#), partnering with Rio Tinto, and researching opposition to mining in Serbia. It is noteworthy that the strengthening of the rule of law is not mentioned once; this albeit being a concern the EU likes to raise. Instead it claims that this business partnership will “contribute to Serbia's endeavors to joining the EU.”

The letter's publication comes at a time when rule of law is declining across the EU and governments continue to weaken legal and democratic checks and balances. According to *Liberties'* Europe's leading civil liberties network, Brussels is “like a bystander” failing to realize how some “governments continue to weaken legal and democratic checks and balances,” particularly when it comes to environmental protests.

The meeting minutes and letter date from September 2023 and contain business-as-usual rhetoric about “attracting investments,” “clean tech,” “green growth,” “paid jobs” and an agreement to expand political cooperation “on batteries along the entire value chain needed for the roll out of clean mobility and the critical raw materials.”

*“The letter shows how the EU wants business as usual with a corrupt leader, more than a strong rule of law. It also shows how the EU plans to impose lithium mining on Serbia regardless of the injustices this would create and of the peoples' will. This is outrageous. In the middle of a climate crisis we are confronted with plans for more mining and pollution, just so Europe's car industry can benefit. If becoming an EU member means becoming Europe's mining colony, then it shouldn't come as a surprise if anti-EU sentiments are on the rise in Serbia,”* comments Bojana Novaković from *Marš sa Drine*.

*“The ground is being laid to justify the potential expropriation of locals from their land and we will fight even harder to make sure this does not happen,”* says Milica Damnjanović from *Marš sa Drine*.

The letter of Intent and meeting minutes are attached.

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<sup>1</sup> [Liberties, Rule of Law Report 2024](#)