

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Reject Rio Tinto's Jadar Project from Strategic Status under the CRMA

Serbian Collective Marš sa Drine and German NGO Green Legal Impact are releasing their [Formal Notice](#) to the EU Commission & Members of the Critical Raw Materials Board against the Recognition of the Jadar Lithium Mining Project under the Critical Raw Materials Act

Rio Sava Exploration d.o.o., the Serbian subsidiary of Rio Tinto plc, applied to receive the status of a "strategic project" under Art. 6, 7 CRMA for its planned Lithium and Boron Mine in Serbia's Jadar River valley. This project should not be granted strategic status based on legal, environmental, social and political concerns. Risks already known include mining activities to surrounding water bodies, repression against environmental defenders, lack of administrative transparency and accountability. The Jadar proposal as submitted for EIA assessment is now in scoping phase, and contains shortcomings which do not fulfill the criteria for granting 'strategic status' as per CRMA.

This submission is precedent setting. While the EU Commission has not provided space for its decision on strategic status to be contested by NGOs, its decision on the classification of a project under to Article 6 (1) CRMA is an 'administrative act' within the meaning of Article 2(1)(g) Regulation No 1367/2006 (Aarhus Regulation). This complaint asserts its right to challenge an administrative act, which is ultimately subject to internal review according to Article 10 of the Aarhus Regulation. We are challenging a political decision at the EU level, and will pursue legal avenues if Jadar is granted strategic status.

In Serbia, the shortcomings of the Jadar proposal are adding strong legal arguments against granting any environmental permit.

The report indicates environmental, human rights and human health dangers, lack of transparency and inconsistency with good business practice, legal irregularity, impacts on environmental health, soil, agriculture, water, protected sites and species, land acquisition process, lack of transparency and intimidation, impact on the social structure of the region, jobs creation, tax revenue, effects on existing business, particularly agriculture, irregularities in terms of permitting, timelines and governance issues as well as violations of Serbian law.

The European Union's mineral acquisitions are deeply intertwined with concerns of neo-colonial practices. As the EU seeks to secure a "greener" economy, its dependence on these minerals places it in a position of significant power over foreign nations rich in such resources, where extraction projects are often conducted by global giants like Rio Tinto. This reliance reveals a broader pattern of exploitative dynamics in the EU's relationship with resource-rich nations, particularly in regions where governance and environmental protections may be weak.

"In countries like Serbia, the extraction of minerals could devastate local ecosystems—damaging soil, water, and biodiversity and creating political and social instability —raising questions about the EU's commitment to human rights and sustainable practices abroad. The EU's push for "ethical sourcing" is compromised when it turns a blind eye to these environmental and social impacts. In turn, these operations risk the EU's political credibility, especially if they are seen as reinforcing (neo)colonial exploitation. Moreover, the lack of transparency, legal irregularities, and deficient feasibility studies in these projects further expose the EU's complicity in undermining the very governance and regulatory frameworks it claims to champion, perpetuating a system of unequal resource extraction that benefits parts of Europe at the expense of other nations. The future is not green if it's only green for you." Bojana Novakovic, Marš sa Drine.

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