



European Commission
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200,
1049 Bruxelles/Brussel

Brussels, Berlin, 25th September 2026

Object: No Strategic label for projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the second round of Strategic Projects release

Dear Executive Vice-President Séjourné,

We, Members of the European Parliament, of the Bundestag and the French National Assembly, are contacting you to raise your attention to the current ongoing mining situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and request that no project in this country receives the “Strategic project” labelling from the European Union (EU) in the next upcoming release of strategic projects planned for October 2026.

We have been in close contact with the local communities affected by geological exploration and mining and would like to highlight that the current Bosnian context of mining environment and legislative framework do not allow the fulfilment of the criteria set out in the Critical Raw Materials Act (CRMA) for awarding the label.

To begin with, there are ongoing serious concerns about authorisations that have been granted by BiH to foreign companies for mining on state property. However, the issue of state property as such remains a contested legal matter of significant political weight in BiH, and yet unresolved. Despite the constitution of BiH and the rulings of the Constitutional Court of BiH, which have confirmed that the state property belongs exclusively to the state of BiH, political leaders, most notably Milorad Dodik¹, have tried to shift ownership to the entity level, these efforts, however, have been ruled unconstitutional². The dispute on state property and issued mining permits have a direct effect on the trust of the people in political leaders and state institutions.

Furthermore, BiH does not require any environmental impact assessment prior to the exploration phase, which can already prove quite problematic for the quality of water. As there are no baseline measurements existing for the quality of water in Bosnia, there is consequently no possibility for citizens to prove that a mining company would be responsible for the degradation of the water quality and pursue a legal case against it. We were told that government safety inspectors charged with writing reports on the quality of the water wrote down a conclusion based only on the appearance of water, without even tacking a sample of it and analysing it. This seems highly problematic to us in terms of public and legal accountability

¹<https://balkaninsight.com/2022/09/22/dodik-slates-bosnian-court-ruling-against-republika-srpska-property-law/bi/>

² <https://www.trtworld.com/article/12790044>

and for the purpose of monitoring potential pollution linked to mining. Notwithstanding the fact that water does not have borders, and that the pollution of these very vulnerable ecosystems in one country does indeed affect EU countries sharing the water resource. Far from being a simple local matter, this is thus a matter of regional and EU's importance.

Despite a grave and serious lead poisoning case reported in Vareš, where more than 300 people have been found to have lead in their blood, among them many children³, the citizens are still lacking an adequate answer from the political level and local authorities, as no stance is willing to take the responsibility for the lead poisoning of this community. Even though the scandal occurred five months ago, there is still no wide free testing provided for the citizens in the region by the responsible state authorities, despite the calls by citizens to at least test the children. Few citizens who were tested had to fight, so that the anonymised data on their testing would be made public by the competent authorities.

From field visits and extensive exchange with both the local communities and the NGOs in BiH, we gather the same grave concerns: it seems that transparency around mining project is lacking everywhere, even though the operating foreign companies know how essential this is for public acceptance. Local citizens have been surprised upon finding via the Australian stock exchange market that geological explorations were conducted nearby their homes. At least one SLAPP action has also been initiated by mining companies against an environmental defender⁴.

It is the duty of the EU to avoid the promotion, facilitation and diplomatic support to mining projects that do not meet basic international standards on transparency and threaten the environment and the health of local communities. We should not repeat the mistake done with the Memorandum of Understanding signed with Rwanda.

We perfectly understand EU's willingness to diversify its supplies of CRM and develop partnerships with third countries. Yet we expect mining projects in BiH led by European mining companies to avoid exploiting the loopholes in BiH environmental legislation and to guarantee the participation rights of local communities. At this point, however, we are concerned that they do not operate in Bosnia and Herzegovina on these grounds. One example is the German company, MFE Magnesium for Europe, which has not consulted the local community affected by their geological research and mining. If we truly are to compete with major actors on the field, like China, our competitive advantage lies in our high environmental and social standards. The only image the EU is sending by this is one of a Union which does its best to protect environmental standards at home and uses any opportunity it finds to dig easily in third countries. From our exchange with the local communities, we fear that this provokes an anti-EU feeling we really do not need, especially with the latest development of the war in Ukraine.

By giving too easily strategic labels that do not meet the criteria set out in the CRMA, by letting its businesses reproduce bad behaviours from old colonial time in third countries without intervening, by giving the impression that it operates with double standards, the Union is losing its credibility in the region and in the enlargement process, rather than winning a race with geopolitical rivals such as China. There is only one thing that differentiates us from the big multinational companies operating in the mining sector and that is our ability to set high social and environmental norms and to ensure that they are being followed through. It is only by sticking to these and enforcing them that the EU might meet its targets on CRM diversification.

³ <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/bosnian-town-seeks-answers-after-hundreds-test-positive-lead-their-blood-2026-05-06/>

⁴ <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/court-rules-favour-hajrija-cobo-defamation-lawsuit>

This is why we strongly call upon you not to include projects from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the second round of Strategic Projects release, due to the concerns and evidence stated above. Additionally, we would like the next accession report done by the European Commission to dedicate a special chapter to the environmental and mining legislation in BiH and explore to what extent the principle of Free Prior and Informed Consent can be applied there. As for now, the basic conditions for starting CRM projects are not and cannot be met in the current situation in BiH.

We thank you for your consideration and remain fully available for a meeting to further discuss the matter with you.

Sincerely yours,

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