

FACTSHEET

The legacy of Uranium mining and milling in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria more than 40 mining sites and two Uranium mills have been exploited by the uranium industry. This activities have generated over 20 million t of radioactive waste which have accumulated in tailing heaps and sludge basins. Over 1 700 000 sq.m. agricultural land have been polluted and destroyed.

More than 1 000 l/s of contaminated water are generated by the uranium leaching process. The radioactivity of the tailings exceeds many times the radioactivity of the surrounding environment (from twofold up to hundredfold). A major source of pollution is the waste water from the uranium extraction by sulphuric acid.

Buhovo, Yana, Seslavtsi, Eleshnitsa and Sliven are the regions, where the uranium mining and milling facilities are located. The population of these regions lives with the highest risk of being contaminated by the radioactivity. Now rehabilitation activities are being done in these regions.

The national energy strategy defines the priorities and tasks concerning Uranium mining as follows:

1. Terminating of the technical liquidation of the uranium mining and milling facilities;
2. Realization of a high-quality technical and biological recultivation, in order to allow the future use of the land for agriculture (farming and forestry)
3. Implementation of a comprehensive monitoring system of the environment in the former mining regions;
4. A complex purification of the polluted waste waters, coming out from the uranium extraction sites.

For the period 2002-2003 the following activities have been planned:

- liquidation and decontamination of the technical equipment
- recultivation
- water purification
- monitoring
- coordination of the national activities with the PHARE program.

The budget for the decommissioning and recultivation activities of Bulgaria's uranium mining and milling facilities was:

- 1,5 mio Euro for 2002, which ~ 60% have been spent
- 1,6 mio EURO for 2003, of which ~ 55 % have been spent.