



**University of Belgrade
Technical Faculty in Bor,
Mining and Metallurgy
Institute Bor**

**54th International
October Conference
on Mining and Metallurgy**

PROCEEDINGS

Editors:

Ljubiša Balanović

Dejan Tanikić



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PREFACE

On behalf of the Organizing Committee, it is a great honor and pleasure to welcome all esteemed participants of the 54th International October Conference on Mining and Metallurgy (IOC 2023), scheduled to take place at the picturesque Bor Lake, Serbia, from October 18th to 21st 2023.

The collaborative efforts of the University of Belgrade, the Technical Faculty in Bor, and the Mining and Metallurgy Institute Bor have meticulously organized this year's IOC. Our focus remains unwavering on showcasing the latest research findings and advancements in geology, mining, metallurgy, materials science, technology, environmental protection, and other engineering disciplines. Our primary objective is to foster a dynamic environment where academics, researchers, and industry professionals can come together to share their knowledge, experiences, and innovative ideas while exploring opportunities for collaborative research endeavors.

Our conference agenda is rich and diverse, encompassing plenary sessions, engaging invited lectures, technical presentations, enlightening oral and poster sessions, informative technical tours, a diverse exhibition, and memorable social gatherings. At the heart of this event lies our strong commitment to sustainable development within the mining and metallurgy sector. We are dedicated to exploring ecologically conscious methodologies, responsible resource extraction practices, and cutting-edge technologies that reduce the industry's environmental impact and enhance the well-being of local communities.

The conference proceedings comprise 129 papers authored by individuals from universities, research institutes, and industries in 22 countries. We are proud to welcome participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Germany, Greece, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Libya, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Morocco, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, United States, and, of course, Serbia.

We are excited to host the 8th International Student Conference on Technical Sciences (ISC 2023) as part of IOC 2023. This event offers students from Serbia and the wider region a unique chance to showcase their research and discuss the future of their fields with experts.

We sincerely thank the Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia for their generous financial support. In addition, we express our profound gratitude to all our sponsors, exhibitors, and friends of the Conference for their contributions and unwavering support for playing a pivotal role in ensuring the success of IOC 2023.

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to all authors, committees, reviewers, speakers, and chairpersons for their invaluable contributions in shaping IOC 2023.

We look forward to welcoming you to the 55th International October Conference on Mining and Metallurgy (IOC 2024), which will be held in October 2024.

On behalf of the 54th IOC Organizing Committee,

Prof. dr Ljubiša Balanović

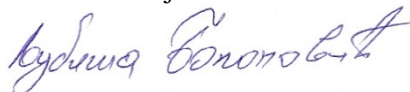


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Plenary Lectures

Velimir R. Radmilović (SERBIA)

Energy: One of the biggest challenges in 21st century 3-3

Jing Yu, Mingshui Luo, Junyi Xiang, Yang You, Zhixiong You, Xuewei Ly (CHINA)

Efficient extraction of vanadium from vanadium slag 4-8

Invited Lectures

Batrić Pešić (UNITED STATES)

The ongoing restructuring of universities to adopt the sophistication offered by internet 11-19

Yaima Filiberto, Alberto Montenegro, Eugenio Alvarez (SPAIN)

Machine learning applied to improving the scrap recycling and melting process in all types of ferrous alloys and steel 20-22

Slobodan Kostić, Qi Fenglai, Savo Pirgić, Nenad Botić, Dobrica Milovanović, Čedomir Sušić, Igor Zlatković (SERBIA)

Construction of a new sintering plant 180 m² within the HBIS Group Serbia Iron & Steel 23-26

Satyananda Patra (INDIA)

Acid activation of bentonite: Physico-Chemical characterization and application in goethitic iron ore green pelletization 27-35

Ridvan Yamanoglu (TURKEY)

Production of metal-based powders by atomization techniques 36-45

Yong Du, Rainer Schmid-Fetzer, Jincheng Wang, Shuhong Liu, Jianchuan Wang, Qiang Lu, Yuhui Zhang, Kai Li (CHINA, GERMANY)

Computational design of engineering materials: case studies for a cemented carbide and a heat resistant Al alloy 46-46

Conference Papers

Ordinartsev Denis, Nadezhda Pechischeva, Svetlana Estemirova, Andrey Rempel (RUSSIA)

Cr(VI) photosorption on composite sorbent of montmorillonite with amorphous TiO₂ 49-52

Mikhail Korovkin, Ludmila Ananyeva, Andrey Zherlitsyn, Sergey Kondratyev, Olesya Savinova (RUSSIA)

Electro-pulse crushing in high-purity quartz production 53-55

Žarko Radović, Nebojša Tadić (MONTENEGRO)

Analytical simulation of EAF dust enrichment 56-59

<u>Nebojša Tadić, Žarko Radović</u> (MONTENEGRO) <i>Thermal and mechanical relaxation of residual stresses in cold rolled aluminium alloy strips</i>	60-63
Dragan Šabaz, Miloš Stojanović, Dejan Petrović (SERBIA) <i>Selection of anchor type using AHP method</i>	64-67
<u>Miloš Stojanović, Veljko Lapčević, Ivica Vojinović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Blast fragmentation analysis in Jama Bor by using WipFrag software</i>	68-71
<u>Veljko Lapčević, Toma Jovičić, Slavko Torbica</u> (SERBIA) <i>Mine ventilation model validation by PQ survey</i>	72-75
<u>Jelena Đorđević, Jelena Stefanović, Sandra Guševac, Ivan Jelić, Stefan Trujić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Life cycle analysis (LCA) of asphalt layers containing recycled asphalt pavement</i>	76-79
<u>Jelena Ivaz, Dejan Petrović, Predrag Stolić, Mladen Radovanović, Dragan Zlatanović, Saša Stojadinović, Pavle Stojković</u> (SERBIA) <i>Occupational injuries in underground coal mining: statistical analysis of data</i>	80-83
<u>Jelena Ivaz, Dejan Petrović, Mladen Radovanović, Dragan Zlatanović, Saša Stojadinović, Pavle Stojković</u> (SERBIA) <i>Prediction of methane emissions in coalmine - Soko</i>	84-87
<u>C. Prochaska, E. Kokkinos, D. Merachtsaki, A. Lampou, E. Peleka, K. Simeonidis, G. Vourlias, A. Zouboulis</u> (GREECE) <i>Recovery of metallic fractions from medical products labelled for single use</i>	88-91
<u>Nataša Sarap, Marija Janković, Vojislav Stanić, Ivana Jelić, Marija Šljivić-Ivanović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Analysis of gross alpha and gross beta activity in samples around former uranium mine Gabrovnica</i>	92-95
<u>Dragan Manasijević, Ljubiša Balanović, Ivana Marković, Uroš Stamenković</u> (SERBIA) <i>Latent heat of some aluminium based phase change alloys for thermal energy storage</i>	96-99
<u>Anđelka Stojanović, Ivica Nikolić, Isidora Milošević</u> (SERBIA) <i>Position of European countries in sustainable resource management</i>	100-103
<u>Aleksandar Đorđević, Duško Minić, Milena Zečević, Dragan Manasijević</u> (SERBIA) <i>Mechanical and electrical properties of the ternary Ag-Ge-Sn alloys</i>	104-107
<u>Milena Zečević, Duško Minić, Aleksandar Đorđević, Dragan Manasijević</u> (SERBIA) <i>Effect of chemical composition on the corrosion resistance of the ternary Ag-Ge-Sn alloys</i>	108-111
<u>Tatiana Aleksandrova, Nadezhda Nikolaeva</u> (RUSSIA) <i>Extraction of low-dimensional structures of nonferrous and noble metals from refractory raw materials</i>	112-115
<u>Viša Tasić, Tatjana Apostolovski-Trujić, Bojan Radović, Nevena Ristić, Tamara Urošević, Vladan Kamenović, Zvonko Damjanović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Air quality measurements in the Bor city during the reconstruction of the copper smelter Bor in 2022</i>	116-119

<u>Slavica Miletić, Biserka Trumić, Suzana Stanković</u> (SERBIA) <i>Application of control charts in the laboratory for testing the metallic materials</i>	120-123
<u>Alexey M. Amdur, Sergei A. Fedorov, Andrey A. Forshev, Nikolay V. Grevtsev, Vera V. Yurak</u> (RUSSIA) <i>Technological aspects of the use of peat as a component of pulverated coal fuel for blast furnaces</i>	124-127
<u>Ljiljana Avramović, Zoran Stevanović, Vanja Trifunović, Radmila Marković, Dragana Božić, Daniela Urošević, Silvana Dimitrijević</u> (SERBIA) <i>Hydrometallurgical treatment of mining waste from Bor - Serbia in aim of copper recovery</i>	128-131
<u>Daniel Kržanović, Radmilo Rajković, Ivana Jovanović, Milenko Jovanović, Miomir Mikić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Determination the final contour of the open pit Veliki Krivelj for the mining capacity 23.1 million tons of ore</i>	132-135
<u>Vladan Marinković, Miroslava Maksimović, Milenko Jovanović, Goran Pačkovski</u> (SERBIA) <i>The use of unmanned aerial vehicles for making the precise 3D topo models and orthophoto images</i>	136-140
<u>Dejan Tanikić, Anđela Stojić, Jelena Đoković, Miloš Stoljiljković</u> (SERBIA) <i>Mechanical characteristics of the shape memory alloy Cu-Zn-Al</i>	141-144
<u>Ljiljana Avramović, Vanja Trifunović, Zoran Stevanović, Radmila Marković, Dragana Božić, Dejan Bugarin, Silvana Dimitrijević</u> (SERBIA) <i>Copper recovery from RE-flotation tailings by combined process</i>	145-148
<u>Milenko Jovanović, Daniel Kržanović, Radmilo Rajković, Vladan Marinković, Miroslava Maksimović, Miomir Mikić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Application of hybrid geogrids in mining</i>	149-153
<u>Stefan Trujić, Miroslava Maksimović, Vladan Marinković, Ljiljana Avramović, Vanja Trifunović, Dragana Božić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Geological exploration of the technogenic deposit - old flotation tailing pit - Bor with the possibility of leaching</i>	154-157
<u>Zoran Stevanović, Radmila Marković, Ljiljana Avramović, Vojka Gardić, Jelena Petrović, Dragana Božić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Sustainable and smart mining</i>	158-161
<u>Snežana Ignjatović, Ivana Vasiljević, Branisav Sretković, Milanka Negovanović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Using gravity data to define structural correlation affecting the formation of Neogene basins</i>	162-165
<u>Deniz Eylül Akpınar, Batuhan Turgut, Ugur Gurol, Savas Dilibal</u> (TURKEY) <i>Characterization of wire arc additively manufactured wear-resistant bimetallic component</i>	166-169
<u>Mistreanu Sebastian, Ramona Cimpoesu, Dragoș Achiței, Mihai Popa, Daniela Lucia Chicet, Vasile Manole, Ana-Maria Scripcariu, Nicanor Cimpoesu</u> (ROMANIA) <i>Sandblasting process influence on stainless steel cutting element properties</i>	170-174

<u>Dorđe Petrović, Katarina Stanković, Latinka Slavković Beškoski, Ksenija Kumrić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Removal of Cu(II) from aqueous solutions using adsorbent based on chitosan hydrogel beads</i>	175-178
<u>Jovan P. Šetrajčić, Siniša M. Vučenović</u> (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA) <i>Modified basic properties of electrons in layered nanocrystals with a complex lattice</i>	179-182
<u>Irena Nikolić, Milena Tadić, Dijana Đurović, Nevena Cupara, Ivana Milašević</u> (MONTENEGRO) <i>Kinetic and thermodynamic aspects of strontium adsorption by steelmaking slag</i>	183-186
<u>Miomir Mikić, Milenko Jovanović, Sandra Milutinović, Daniel Kržanović, Radmilo Rajković</u> (SERBIA) <i>New flotation plant Veliki Krivelj monitoring plan</i>	187-190
<u>Miomir Mikić, Radmilo Rajković, Daniel Kržanović, Sandra Milutinović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Recultivation of open pit Veliki Krivelj</i>	191-194
<u>Farzet Bikić, Khaola Awad, Halim Prčanović, Mirnes Duraković</u> (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA) <i>Analysis of influenced factors on tropospheric ozone content in the city of Zenica during 2020</i>	195-198
<u>Sandra Milutinović, Ljubiša Obradović, Daniel Kržanović, Miomir Mikić, Radmilo Rajković</u> (SERBIA) <i>Flotation tail storage methods</i>	199-202
<u>Sandra Milutinović, Milena Kostović, Ljubiša Obradović, Srđana Magdalinović, Sanja Petrović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Methods of transportation and discharge of tails to flotation tailings pond</i>	203-206
<u>Uğur Gürol, Ceren Çelik, Müesser Göçmen, Mustafa Koçak</u> (TURKEY) <i>Microstructural and mechanical characterization of armor steel joint welded with sandwich design</i>	207-210
<u>Branka Pešovski, Milan Radovanović, Vesna Krstić, Danijela Simonović, Silvana Dimitrijević</u> (SERBIA) <i>Electrochemical characteristics of the anodized titanium oxide films in sulfuric acid</i>	211-215
<u>Duško Đukanović, Nemanja Đokić, Zoran Aksentijević, Daniel Radivojević, Branisl Stakić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Methane as an untapped energy potential of the "Soko" brown coal mine</i>	216-220
<u>Žaklina Tasić, Marija Petrović Mihajlović, Ana Simonović, Milan Radovanović, Maja Nujkić, Milan Antonijević</u> (SERBIA) <i>Electrochemical methods for the determination of tryptophan and caffeine</i>	221-224
<u>Isidora Milošević, Anđelka Stojanović, Sanela Arsić, Ivica Nikolić, Ana Rakić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Circular economy in the era of Industry 5.0</i>	225-228

<u>Almaida Gigović-Gekić, Elvis Agović, Belma Fakić, Hasan Avdušinović</u> (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA) <i>Effect of delta ferrite on microstructure and hardness welded joints of steel S21800</i>	229-232
<u>Radmila Marković, Dragana Bozić, Zoran Stevanović, Tatjana Apostolovski Trujić, Vojka Gardić, Ljiljana Avramović, Vesna Marjanović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Combining neutralization and adsorption methods for metals removal from Saraka stream</i>	233-236
<u>Ana Petrović, Radmila Marković, Emina Požega</u> (SERBIA) <i>CNTs as potential material for wastewater purification: a review</i>	237-240
<u>Zdenka Stanojević Šimšić, Ana Kostov, Aleksandra Milosavljević, Slavica Miletić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Experimental investigations of CuAlNi alloys with 70 at%Cu</i>	241-244
<u>Ana Kostov, Aleksandra Milosavljević, Zdenka Stanojević Šimšić, Ivan Jovanović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Determination of melt properties in Cu-Fe alloys</i>	245-248
<u>Vladimir Nikolić, Milan Trumić</u> (SERBIA) <i>A simple method of determining of bond work index for finer samples</i>	249-252
<u>Ivan Jovanović, Novica Staletović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Management of risk assessment in environmental protection in surface copper mine</i>	253-256
<u>Jovan P. Šetrajić, Stevo K. Jaćimovski, Siniša M. Vučenović</u> (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA) <i>Possibility of localized electron states appearance in ultrathin layered crystalline structures</i>	257-260
<u>Jovica Sokolović, Ivana Ilić, Dragiša Stanujkić, Zoran Štirbanović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Application of VIKOR method for comparison of the washability of coals</i>	261-264
<u>Vladimir Jovanović, Dejan Todorović, Branislav Ivošević, Dragan Radulović, Sonja Milićević, Marija Ercegović, Slavica Mihajlović</u> (SERBIA) <i>The process of obtaining biochar and the development of the products thus obtained</i>	265-269
<u>Jelena Petrović, Marija Ercegović, Marija Simić, Marija Koprivica, Jelena Dimitrijević, Marija Marković</u> (SERBIA) <i>Mg/Fe-modified hydrochar with promoted adsorption performances</i>	270-273
<u>Esra Dokumaci Alkan, Nurdan Ari, Murat Alkan</u> (TURKEY) <i>A coating application of IN718 via self-propagating high-temperature synthesis method</i>	274-277
<u>Murat Alkan, Esra Dokumaci Alkan, Dilan Ugurluer, Aslihan Karakanat</u> (TURKEY) <i>Production of AlCoCrCuXFeNi alloys via self-propagating high-temperature synthesis method</i>	278-281
<u>Jarmila Trpčevská, Iveta Vasková, Katarína Pauerová, Martina Laubertová, Dušan Oráč</u> (SLOVAKIA) <i>Zinc volatilization in the primary and the secondary zinc production</i>	282-286

<u>Dragan Ignjatović, Lidija Đurđevac Ignjatović, Vanja Đurđevac, Katarina Milivojević, Ivan Jovanović (SERBIA)</u> <i>Application of the numerical method in the definition of a substrate of circular cross section</i>	287-291
<u>Dragan Ignjatović, Lidija Đurđevac Ignjatović, Vanja Đurđevac, Mladen Supić, Dušan Tašić (SERBIA)</u> <i>Influence of the subsoil bearing capacity during formation of high landfills</i>	292-296
<u>Bojana Živković, Jelisaveta Marjanović, Jelena Đokić, Maja Petrović (SERBIA)</u> <i>Soil and rock properties as a basis for the sanitary landfill settings</i>	297-300
<u>Milan Gorgievski, Miljan Marković, Nada Štrbac, Vesna Grekulović, Kristina Božinović, Milica Zdravković, Marina Marković (SERBIA)</u> <i>Adsorption kinetics for copper ions adsorption onto onion peels</i>	301-304
<u>Saba Nourozi, Fatemeh Pourasgharian, Ahmad Khodadadi Darban (IRAN)</u> <i>Recovery of copper from low-grade copper ore using organic acid</i>	305-308
<u>Maria Krasteva (BULGARIA)</u> <i>Methodology and equipment for researching corrosion cracking processes in steel 3H14L (BDS 3692-78)</i>	309-312
<u>Jasmina Nešković, Pavle Stjepanović, Nenad Milojković, Dejan Lazić, Klara Konc Janković, Svetlana Polavder, Ivana Jovanović (SERBIA)</u> <i>Testing the Bond work index on limestone from flue gas desulphurization plant in TPP Ugljevik</i>	313-317
<u>Biljana Zlatičanin, Sandra Kovačević (MONTENEGRO)</u> <i>Impact of titanium addition on microstructure and properties of as-cast Al-Cu15 alloys</i>	318-321
<u>Biljana Zlatičanin, Sandra Kovačević (MONTENEGRO)</u> <i>Effect of cooling rate on mechanical properties of binary Al-Cu23 alloys</i>	322-324
<u>Desislav Ivanov, Irena Peytcheva, Marko Holma (BULGARIA)</u> <i>Horizon Europe AGEMERA project - Agile Exploration and Geo-modelling for European Critical Raw Materials: The potential of Assarel porphyry copper deposit for critical raw materials</i>	325-328
<u>Shehret Tilvaldyev, Uzziel Caldiño Herrera, Jose Omar Davalos, Manuel Alejandro Lira Martinez, Marlenne Alejandra Hernandez Lira, Diego Adan Villordo Melendez (CANADA)</u> <i>Problems of anthropogenic pollution of space</i>	329-334
<u>Mohammed Derqaoui, Abdelmoughit Abidi, Abdelrani Yaacoubi, Khalid El Amari, Omar Oabi, Abdelaziz Bacaoui (MOROCCO)</u> <i>Apatite flotation from low-grade sedimentary phosphate ore</i>	335-338
<u>Nadezhda Kazakova, Alexandar Popov, Georgi Chernev (BULGARIA)</u> <i>Influence of the distribution and content of limestone particles on the properties of blended cements</i>	339-342

<u>Daniel Ogochukwu Okanigbe, Shade Rouxzeta Van Der Merwe</u> (SOUTH AFRICA) <i>Rocks of Obafemi Awolowo University and Environ, Nigeria: structural analysis of geological contact</i>	343-347
<u>Vladan Kašić, Ana Radosavljević Mihajlović, Jovica Stojanović, Slavica Mihajlović, Melina Vukadinović, Nataša Đorđević, Ivana Jelić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Study of thermally treated zeolitic tuffs of Serbia, deposits "Zlatokop" and "Općište"-Beočin</i>	348-352
<u>Vesna Grekulović, Aleksandra Mitovski, Milica Zdravković, Nada Štrbac, Milan Gorgievski, Milovan Vuković, Miljan Marković</u> (SERBIA) <i>Electrochemical behavior of copper in chloride medium in the presence of nettle extract</i>	353-356
<u>Marko Pavlović, Marina Dojčinović, Muhamed Harbinja, Atif Hodić, Dragan Radulović, Mirjana Stojanović, Zagorka Aćimović</u> (SERBIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA) <i>Effects of the application of pyrophyllite in the composition of protective coatings</i>	357-360
<u>Tamara Ristić, Nenad Milosavljević, Dobrica Milovanović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Measures for the processing of iron with a higher incoming phosphorus content at the steel shop</i>	361-365
<u>Ivana Mikavica, Dragana Randelović, Milena Obradović, Jovica Stojanović, Jelena Mutić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Microplastic textile fibers in urban soils of Serbia</i>	366-369
<u>Jianbo Zhao, Xinnan Zhao, Donglai Ma, Yang You, Zhixiong You, Xuewei Lv</u> (CHINA) <i>Preparation of ferronickel by semi-molten smelting a mixture of two types of laterite ore</i>	370-374
<u>Mladen Radovanović, Dejan Petrović, Jelena Ivaz, Dragan Zlatanović</u> (SERBIA) <i>Possibility of copper ores exploitation using in situ leaching method</i>	375-378
<u>Ivan Jelić, Nikola Lekić, Nikola Stanić, Miomir Mikić</u> (SERBIA) <i>Selection of an optimal route for relocation of the Čehotina river bed</i>	379-382
<u>Milica Zdravković, Vesna Grekulović, Bojan Zdravković, Nada Štrbac, Milan Gorgievski, Miljan Marković</u> (SERBIA) <i>Electrochemical behavior of steel in 0.1 mol/dm³ HCl in the presence of potato peel juice</i>	383-386
<u>Ivana Marković, Dalibor Jović, Uroš Stamenković, Dragan Manasijević, Ljubiša Balanović, Milan Gorgievski</u> (SERBIA) <i>Microstructure and thermal properties of leaded brass after quenching</i>	387-390
<u>Mehmet Ali Yildiz</u> (SERBIA) <i>Hot strip mill walking beam slab reheating project</i>	391-394
<u>Peter Polyak</u> (SERBIA) <i>Finishing mill automation upgrade at hot strip mill</i>	395-400
<u>Branislav Potić, Ana Arifović</u> (SERBIA) <i>The metallurgical testing results of the boron mineralized material from Valjevo-Mionica basin</i>	401-406

Uroš Stamenković, Ivana Marković, Srba Mladenović, Saša Marjanović, Avram Kovačević, Milijana Mitrović, Filip Basarabić (SERBIA) <i>The influence of quenching media on different properties of C45 carbon steel</i>	407-413
Yang You, Jiabao Guo, Zhixiong You, Xuewei Lv (CHINA) <i>Investigation of the mixing and granulation behavior of iron ore fines in horizontal high-shear granulator</i>	414-417
Jovica Sokolović, Grozdanka Bogdanović, Velizar Stanković, Gracijan Strainović, Ivana Ilić, Milan Gorgievski, Miljan Marković (SERBIA) <i>Investigation on beneficiation of iron from copper ore of Mauritania Copper Mine (MCM) by magnetic separation</i>	418-421
Essen Suleimenov, Rustam Sharipov, Galymzhan Maldybayev, Zhibek Orazaliyeva (KAZAKHSTAN) <i>Investigation of the influence of pulsed electric current on the efficiency of decomposition of aluminate solution</i>	422-423
Lovro Liverić, Tamara Holjevac Grgurić, Sunčana Smokvina Hanza, Wojciech Sitek, Vedrana Špada, Marko Kršulja (CROATIA) <i>Influence of silver content on martensitic transformation of Cu-Al-Ag alloy</i>	424-427
Hasan Ali Taner, Vildan Onen (TURKEY) <i>Evaluation of the efficiency of different collectors in the chalcopyrite flotation</i>	428-434
Vesna Conić, Dragana Božić, Miloš Janošević, Ljiljana Avramović, Vanja Trifunović, Dejan Bugarin, Ivana Jovanović (SERBIA) <i>A pyro-hydrometallurgical process for the recovery of zinc from jarosite waste</i>	435-438
Maria Krasteva, Rumen Petkov (BULGARIA) <i>Research the rate of chemical corrosion of steel 3X14H2 (BDS 3692-78)</i>	439-442
Srba Mladenović, Bojan Novaković, Ivana Marković, Uroš Stamenković (SERBIA) <i>Effect of casting speed and water flow on tensile strength, elongation and microstructure of continuous cast copper wire</i>	443-447
Nadira Bušatlić, Ilhan Bušatlić, Dženana Smajić-Terzić (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA) <i>Dependence of compressive strength of geopolymer based on fly ash and alkaline activator ratio</i>	448-451
Gergana Meracheva, Efrosima Zaneva-Dobranova, Nikolay Hristov (BULGARIA) <i>Hydrocarbon potential of the Lower Paleozoic sediments in NE Bulgaria by geochemistry and well-logging</i>	452-455
Dragana Marilović, Grozdanka Bogdanović, Sanja Petrović (SERBIA) <i>Leaching of flotation tailings with a solution of sulfuric acid and ionic liquid</i>	456-459
Ivana Jovanović, Vesna Conić, Dragan Milanović, Daniel Kržanović, Tanja Stanković, Daniela Urošević, Miloš Janošević (SERBIA) <i>Determination of Bond rod mill work index of a very low-grade copper ore</i>	460-463

<u>Hasan Ali Taner, Ali Aras, Muhammad Hashim Rasa (TURKEY)</u> <i>Investigation of the effect of depressant and collector conditioning times on cobalt recovery by flotation</i>	464-467
<u>Aleksandar Cvetković, Žaklina Tasić, Marija Petrović Mihajlović, Maja Nujkić, Milan Radovanović, Ana Simonović (SERBIA)</u> <i>Microplastics</i>	468-471
<u>Sanja Petrović, Srđana Magdalinović, Ljubiša Obradović, Sandra Milutinović, Bojan Drobnjaković, Slađana Krstić (SERBIA)</u> <i>Tailing management: tailings filtering equipment</i>	472-475
<u>Jelena Stefanović, Jelena Đorđević, Sandra Guševac (SERBIA)</u> <i>XRD analysis of corrosion product formed in industrial aggressive environment</i>	476-480
<u>Muhamad Ghulam Isaq Khan, Filip Rajković, Miljana Popović, Dejan Prelević, Aleksandar Ćitić, Tamara Radetić (SERBIA)</u> <i>Initiation of abnormal grain growth in cold-rolled sheet of AA5182 Al-Mg alloy: role of texture</i>	481-484
<u>Danijela Voza, Hesam Dehghani, Milica Veličković (SERBIA)</u> <i>The dissolved oxygen prediction based on the machine learning techniques</i>	485-488
<u>Hasan Acan, Hasan Ergin (TURKEY)</u> <i>A novel model for minimizing mine closure costs and the optimum final quarry boundry</i>	489-492
<u>Ivana Jovanović, Dragan Milanović, Oliver Dimitrijević, Vesna Conić, Igor Svrkota (SERBIA)</u> <i>Role of wing tank in DMS process. Suspension velocity through the seal leg orifice – case study</i>	493-496
<u>Dejan Petrović, Jelena Ivaz, Saša Stojadinović, Predrag Stolić, Dragan Zlatanović (SERBIA)</u> <i>Risk management and mining machines maintenance – a brief review</i>	497-500
<u>Stefan Đorđievski, Dragana Adamović (SERBIA)</u> <i>History of surface water pollution by mining and metallurgical activities in Bor, Serbia</i>	501-504
<u>Olivera Dragutinović, Vaso Manojlović, Đorđe Veljović, Stefan Dikić, Marko Simić (SERBIA)</u> <i>Investigation of the properties of Co-Cr-W and Co-Cr-Mo alloys coated with hydroxyapatite for use in dental implants</i>	505-509
<u>Zoran Karastojković, Dragoslav Gusković, Ognjen Ristić, Zorica Kovačević (SERBIA)</u> <i>About the “relative plasticity” between steel matrix and non-metallic inclusions</i>	510-513
<u>Aleksandar Jovanović, Mladen Bugarčić, Milena Milošević, Marija Vuksanović, Muna Abdualatif Abduarahman, Miroslav Sokić, Aleksandar Marinković (SERBIA, LIBYA)</u> <i>Modified hybrid cellulose membrane for Nickel(II) ions removal from industrial wastewater</i>	514-517
<u>Elena Todorova, Nadezhda Kazakova, Georgi Chernev (BULGARIA)</u> <i>Structural investigation via SEM analysis of silica hybrid materials</i>	518-521

<u>Tanja Kalinović, Jelena Kalinović, Jelena Milosavljević, Ana Radojević, Snežana Šerbula (SERBIA)</u> <i>Atmospheric bulk deposition as environmental quality indicator</i>	522-526
<u>Gordana Marković, Vaso Manojlović, Miroslav Sokić, Jovana Ružić, Dušan Milojkov (SERBIA)</u> <i>Designing biocompatible high entropy alloys using Monte Carlo simulations</i>	527-530
<u>Tatjana Volkov-Husović, Sanja Martinović, Ana Alil, Milica Vlahović (SERBIA)</u> <i>Application of image analysis for cavitation erosion resistance monitoring of some engineering materials</i>	531-534
<u>Milan Nedeljković, Srba Mladenović, Jasmina Petrović, Milijana Mitrović (SERBIA)</u> <i>Changes in the structure and density of copper during the refining smelting process</i>	535-538
<u>Jasmina Petrović, Srba Mladenović, Ivana Marković, Milan Nedeljković, Milijana Mitrović (SERBIA)</u> <i>Microstructure analysis of EN AW 6061 alloy using a SEM microscope after artificial aging</i>	539-542
<u>Milijana Mitrović, Saša Marjanović, Biserka Trumić, Jasmina Petrović, Milan Nedeljković (SERBIA)</u> <i>Effects of cold rolling and annealing processes on the microstructure and properties of micro-alloyed copper</i>	543-546
<u>Makedonka Dimitrova, Jasminka Dimitrova Kapac (NORTH MACEDONIA)</u> <i>Unlocking energy efficiency: financing preferences for SMEs in the Republic of North Macedonia</i>	547-555
<u>Zoran Štirbanović, Vesna Vojinović, Jovica Sokolović, Maja Trumić (SERBIA)</u> <i>Analysis of the effectiveness of different methods for cutting samples</i>	556-559
<u>Ivica Nikolić, Isidola Milošević, Anđelka Stojanović (SERBIA)</u> <i>Land turnover increases due to mining: An empirical analysis of Bor, Serbia, 2013-2022.</i>	560-563
DONORS	565-590
AUTHOR INDEX	591-596

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ANALYSIS OF GROSS ALPHA AND GROSS BETA ACTIVITY IN SAMPLES AROUND FORMER URANIUM MINE GABROVNICA

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Abstract

Gabrovnica, uranium mine near Kalna in the Eastern Serbia was a natural ore with uranium content. Exploitation of the uranium ore in this region was started in the 1960s and it was terminated in 1996. The aim of this work was to analyze radiological characterization of environmental samples around uranium mine Gabrovnica. Soil samples were taken in the autumn of 2022 and spring 2023, while surface soil samples (Gabrovnicka River) were taken continuously for six month (July-December 2022 and January-June 2023). All samples were analyzed in order to determine gross alpha and gross beta activities and measured on ultra low level gas proportional counter Thermo-Eberline FHT 770T.

Keywords: *Gabrovnica; environmental samples; gross alpha and gross beta activity*

1. INTRODUCTION

Exploitation of the uranium ore was started in the 1960s in the region of Stara Planina Mountain (Eastern Serbia) in the vicinity of the Bulgarian border. The first investigated location was Aldina reka, while in 1951 uranium ore occurrences were discovered in Mezdreja. Uranium ore exploitation was carried out in three uranium mines: Mezdreja, Srneći Do and Gabrovnica. The area surrounding the town of Kalna on Stara Planina Mountain represents a location characterized by the increased content of natural radionuclides. Gabrovnica is situated north from Mezdreja, on the left side of the Gabrovnicka River at about 1.5 km from its running into the Timok River [1]. Gabrovnicka River is the right tributary of the Trgoviški Timok [2]. The Gabrovnica mine had a plant processing about 200 t/day of ore [1].

Knowledge of impacts on the natural environment from uranium mining in general, is essential. An assessment of impact in terms of contaminated soil, surface water, groundwater, lake sediments, etc. or activity levels and doses are very important and directly linked to potential uptake of radionuclides by humans, principally from soils and water. Radionuclides could be taken up and concentrated by plants in the vicinity, thereby posing a potential risk to vegetation as well as to animals higher in the food chain, including humans [3].

Various methodological procedures were applied in order to determine the contamination of waters in the area of the abandoned mines (geoecological, radiological, geochemical and hydro chemical investigations were carried out in the study area). In order to analyze radioactivity contents of natural radionuclides, gamma spectrometry were applied [4-6]. In that case, it is possible to determine the concentrations of individual radionuclides present in environmental samples. It is not known whether gross alpha and gross beta activity was analyzed in soil and water samples in the vicinity of Gabrovnica mine, which is the aim of this paper.

2. EXPERIMENTAL

Soil sampling was carried out in the immediate vicinity of former mine Gabrovnica (Hydrometallurgical plant) (43° 26' 25" N and 22° 25' 30" E) using the method of representative

samples, from three depths: surface layer 0-5 cm, 5-10 cm and 10-15 cm during October 2022 and April 2023.

Surface water samples from Gabrovnička River were sampling once a month and the analysis was done in a composite six-month sample. Sampling were done upstream of the Hydrometallurgical plant (43° 26' 32" N and 22° 25' 40" E) and downstream of the Hydrometallurgical plant (43° 26' 24" N and 22° 25' 29" E) during the period July-December 2022 and January-July 2023.

Soil sample preparation includes cleaning from grass and stones, and samples were dried in the oven at the temperature of 105°C to constant mass, and sifted through the 2 mm sieve. A certain mass of homogeneous sample was weight in a Aluminium planchet and fixated with -alcohol [7]. For water samples method EPA was applied [8]. An aliquot of a preserved water sample is evaporated to dryness and ashed at 450 °C. Samples were placed in a Aluminium planchet and fixated with alcohol.

For the gross alpha and gross beta activity measurements, the gas low-level proportional counter Thermo-Eberline FHT 770T was used. The counting gas is a mixture of 90 % Ar and 10 % methane. Efficiencies were determined using the certified radioactive calibration standards ²⁴¹Am and ⁹⁰Sr (9031-OL-334/11 and 9031-OL-335/11, respectively, Czech Metrology Institute), traceable to the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures (BIPM). The counting efficiency was 26 % for alpha and 35% for beta radiation. Measurement time was 14400 s, by 4 independent detectors simultaneously. Measurement uncertainty was expressed as an expanded measurement uncertainty at the confidence level of 95% (k=2).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results for gross alpha and gross beta activity for water samples are presented in Table 1. In six-months composite samples, lower values for gross alpha activity was obtained for samples taken upstream of the Hydrometallurgical plant for both investigated period. The same trend was observed also for gross beta activity. A greater difference between the results was obtained for those taken in the second half of 2022 for the samples downstream of the Hydrometallurgical plant, compared to those taken in the first half of 2023. For the samples taken upstream, that difference is smaller.

Table 1 - Gross alpha and gross beta activity in surface water samples

Surface water sample Gabrovnička River	Gross alpha activity (Bq/l)	Gross beta activity (Bq/l)
Upstream of the Hydrometallurgical plant July-December 2022	0.022 ± 0.005	0.057 ± 0.009
Downstream of the Hydrometallurgical plant July-December 2022	0.279 ± 0.017	0.454 ± 0.022
Upstream of the Hydrometallurgical plant January-July 2023	0.032 ± 0.006	0.073 ± 0.006
Downstream of the Hydrometallurgical plant January-July 2023	0.072 ± 0.009	0.116 ± 0.008

In Serbian Legislation, the allowed values for gross alpha and gross beta activity are defined only for drinking water (0.1 Bq/l for gross alpha and 1 Bq/l for gross beta) [9]. The gross beta activity is mainly due to the presence of ⁴⁰K but also ¹³⁷Cs, while the gross alpha activity in samples originates from the decay chains of ²³⁸U and ²³²Th.

The obtained results for gross alpha and gross beta activity in soil samples from different depths for autumn 2022 and spring 2023 are presented at Figures 1 and 2. Samples are marked with S1: 0-5 cm; S2: 5-10 cm; S3: 10-15 cm. Gross alpha activity is higher for samples taken in autumn, with the fact that this difference is the largest for the sample S1 (0-5 cm depth). For gross beta

activity, for the soil samples S1 and S3 higher values were obtained for samples taken in autumn, while for sample S2 gross beta activity is higher for sample taken in spring. Gross alpha and gross beta activity for samples taken in spring increase with depth increasing, which indicates the fact that there was a migration of radionuclides in depth. The situation is slightly different with the samples taken in autumn, where there was a decrease in activity at a depth of 5-10 cm, and then an increase again at a depth of 10-15 cm.

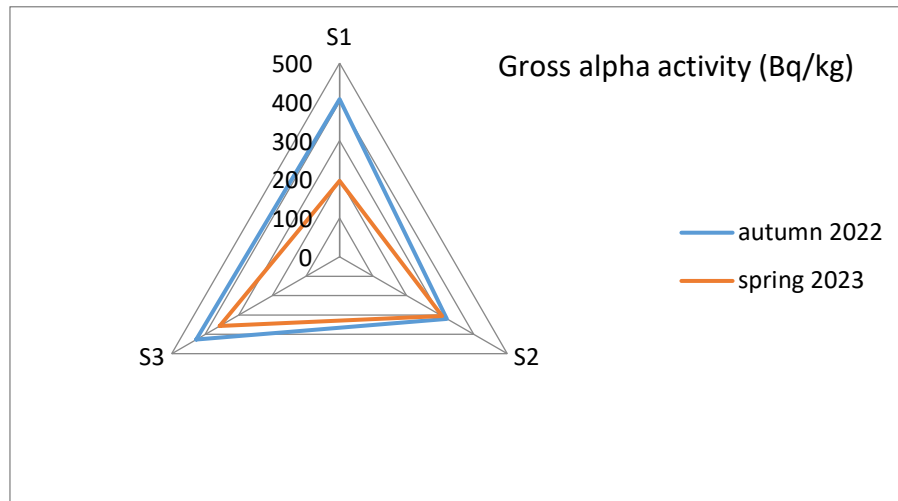


Figure 1 - Gross alpha activity in soil samples

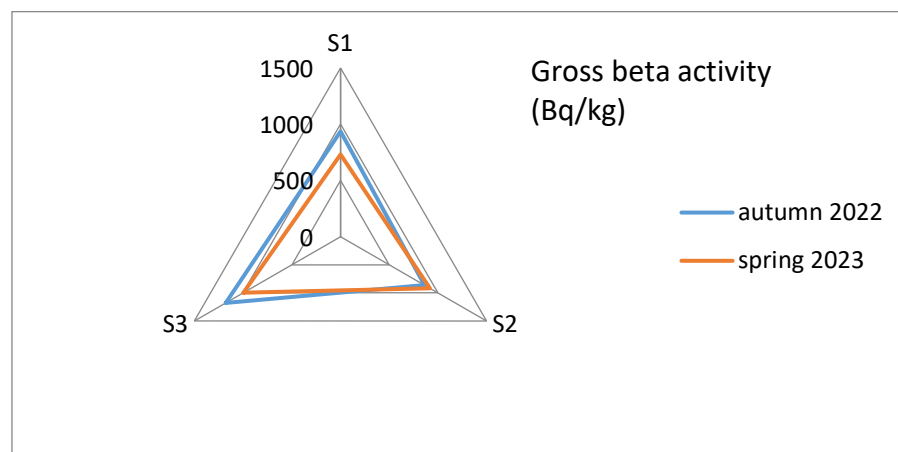


Figure 2 - Gross beta activity in soil samples

The impacts on the environment from uranium mining are not all related to the radionuclide content alone. The presence of other contaminants may also have an influence on the environment. The other effects may include: the chemical toxicity of the radionuclides, including uranium; the chemical toxicity of heavy metals and metallic compounds; the chemical toxicity of non-metallic minerals and compounds in the ore or introduced during processing (e.g. sulphuric acid, kerosene); acidity, resulting from sulphidic (ore) minerals; increased turbidity in surface waters; increased salinity [3]. In order to assess the radiological impact on the environment in the vicinity of abandoned mines, constant monitoring is necessary.

4. CONCLUSION

Soil samples in the vicinity of former mine Gabrovnica and surface water samples from Gabrovnička River were analyzed using screening method gross alpha/beta activity, in order to assess the radiological impact on the environment. Results show that gross alpha and gross beta activity in water are higher for the samples taken downstream of the Hydrometallurgical plant. Given the fact that there are no prescribed limits for the permitted values for gross alpha and gross

beta activity in rivers, the comparison can only be made in relation to the values defined for drinking water. The gross beta activity is mainly due to the presence of natural radionuclide ^{40}K but can also contain artificial radionuclide ^{137}Cs or ^{90}Sr , while the gross alpha activity originates from the decay chains of ^{238}U and ^{232}Th . In this regard, in soil samples, greater activity is observed with increasing depth, which means that radionuclides have migrated from the surface layer.

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