

Save Rosia Montana Campaign



Alburnus Maior
www.rosiamontana.org

The Save Rosia Montana Campaign is the connection between a local opposition in Rosia Montana, Romania, manifested in the association Alburnus Maior, and activists from all over Romania fighting against Europe's biggest, to be, open-cast gold mine planned in Rosia Montana. Rosia Montana is a village in the Apuseni Mountains, Transylvania region, Romania, and it is the oldest documented mining settlement in Romania (about 1,880 years old).

'Alburnus Maior' is a grassroots NGO based in Rosia Montana village, Transylvania Region, Romania. It was founded in September 2000 and it regroups 300 families of peasants from Rosia Montana village and Bucium neighbouring village, to oppose the largest gold mine proposal in Europe which entails the destruction of Rosia Montana and its surroundings. Alburnus Maior is the initiator of the 'Save Rosia Montana' campaign. The association's opposition is based on social, environmental, cultural and economic grounds.

Strong local opposition to the gold mining project emerged almost immediately in the year of 2000 when Canadian junior mining company, Gabriel Resources, announced its intentions to destroy the historic village of Rosia Montana by building the largest open-cast gold mine in Europe. Resistance to the project has since spread across Romania. During over 10 years of resistance, Alburnus Maior, through the Save Rosia Montana Campaign has successfully mobilized thousands of people and has so far kept the mine from being realized. Amongst the activities developed, we are proud to mention:

- Direct actions <http://rosiamontana.org/en/galerie-actiuni.htm>
- Petitions www.rosiamontana.net
- Court cases against illegal administrative documents issued by various Romanian authorities in favour of the mining company; a report from 2008 of court cases won by Alburnus Maior: http://www.ngo.ro/date/4ef160f5484c05ea6c665d19f7a161d3/7argumente_AMraportlegal_mai08.doc
- Protest Festival 'FanFest' (the 'Hay Fest') – 6 editions that reunited thousands of participants across Romania, to contribute to the local economy of Rosia Montana www.fanfest.ro
- Cyber activism and photo actions; photo action to propose Rosia Montana as an UNESCO protected site: www.rosiamontana.org/unesco
- Sustainable development alternative projects; tourism projects and small scale farming support projects; www.drumulaurului.ro and www.buciumanii.ro
- Risk Reports on the mining project and alternative opportunities for development of Rosia Montana <http://rosiamontana.org/en/sub32836/33150/eia-procedure.htm>
- Lobby activities against the mining project; the most significant lobby effort was against the use of cyanide in gold mining; at the moment, this initiative is at the moment blocked by the Romanian Parliament because of corruption issues and personal interest of key members of the Parliament; details at www.bancyanide.ro; Lobby for an EU Cyanide ban, which resulted in successful national cyanide bans in Hungary and Bulgaria;
- Other activities: movie projections, cultural events, conferences.

Who are we fighting against?

The title owner of the mining project is Rosia Montana Gold Corporation - www.rmgc.ro - a joint venture

between the Canadian company Gabriel Resources - www.gabrielresources.com – (80.69% shares), and the Romanian state owned company Minvest (19.31% shares) - www.minvest.hd.ro. Gabriel Resources was founded for the sole purpose of developing this mining project.

According to the company's Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, Gabriel Resources proposes a mine consisting of 4 pits for the gold/silver exploitation, 2 pits for construction material and several waste dumps including a large scale tailings management facility (TMF). At full production (24/7 operation), the mine will evacuate 70,000 tones per day or 500,000 tons of rock per week. It will emit 134kg of cyanide into the air per day and use between 13-15 million kilograms of cyanide per year during the 16-year mine life. While mining will occur at Rosia Montana the adjacent valley of Corna village will be turned into the TMF to hold 250 million tons of unconsolidated tailings. It will have a surface area of roughly 4km long by 2km wide. The tailings will be contained by a rock-fill dam over 1km long and 185m high.

The mine would destroy a total surface of 1500 hectares (including 4 mountains, forests), 740 farms and 140 apartments currently inhabited by the local population and used by small-scale sustainable farmers for their livelihoods, 10 churches, 9 cemeteries, 50 patrimony buildings, 7 km of Roman and pre-Roman galleries, 80 km of medieval galleries and with all this, the future of the entire region.

The mine poses wider regional environmental threats in the event of any cyanide spills, with trans-boundary effects towards Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria. If ever developed, this mine will be Europe's largest of its kind.

Despite all the efforts of the Save Rosia Montana Campaign, the latest political developments in Romania, put under threat, more than ever, the fate of Rosia Montana.

Risk of destruction of Cultural Patrimony

In July, 2011, the Romanian Minister of Culture, Kelemen Hunor granted an illegal archaeological discharge Certificate for the Carnic Mountain from Rosia Montana. Carnic is the most important historical monument from Rosia Montana, hosting 7 km of Roman and pre-Roman galleries, 80 km of medieval galleries and many historical vestiges dating from more than 2000 years. The archaeological discharge Certificate is the procedure that allows the destruction of the Carnic mountain. Alburnus Maior, already sued the Ministry of Culture for this decision and we expect a long court procedure, involving at least 2 years of hearings and investigations, with appeals from the defendant – the Ministry of Culture. Official informations about this decision can be found here (in Romanian): http://www.cotidianul.ro/images/rosia_monti_1.jpg

Forced expropriation

Since early August 2011, it was brought to the public attention the existence of a new law proposal that is being debated in the Romanian Parliament, which would allow private mining companies to perform forced expropriation, evicting landowners from their property. This stipulation is profoundly violating human rights and tries to substitute the role of the Romanian State and Romanian Judicial system in the expropriation procedure, with private companies that can and will abuse this illegal and immoral right. This new proposal would give the mining company from Rosia Montana the possibility to evict all the people resisting the project. The new law proposal also proposes the simplification of the authorization procedure for mining projects. At the time of writing this document, the Save Rosia Montana Campaign is widely distributing a Juridical Report on the Illegality of the Expropriation Law Proposal.

Alburnus Maior has initiated different lobby and street actions to stop it being passed by Parliament. We

expect the Law Proposal to be voted in the next weeks by the Romanian Parliament. Official informations regarding the Law Proposal (in Romanian), can be found here http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.proiect?cam=2&idp=10585. Over 16000 signatures were raised against this law proposal at www.rosiamontana.net

Non-democratic Political decision in favour of the mining project

At the end of August, 2011, the President of Romania, Traian Basescu, made an unexpected visit at Rosia Montana, guided by the mining company Gabriel Resources. During discussions with Alburnus Maior members, he accused the local opposition of “Bolshevism” for the fact that they defend their properties and life in Rosia Montana and threatened them with forced expropriation. This unprecedented political action shows that the President is not representing the interests of Romanian citizens, but the interest of a private mining company. An important mention is that Gabriel Resources funded the electoral campaign of the President in 2009. You may find here the video of discussions in Rosia Montana (in Romanian) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GddP8R71b7g> and the transcripts of the discussions (in English) <http://respectrosiamontana.wordpress.com/2011/09/02/romanian-president-traian-basescu-talks-to-the-local-people-in-rosia-montana/>

As a reaction of the President's action, hundreds of people organized simultaneous street actions in 4 cities of the country. You may find here a video of the street action in Bucharest, in front of the residential house of the President (no words, just attitude): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGSTa_xW1rA. The protests continue.

Our long term goals:

1. Stop the mine in Rosia Montana
2. Raising awareness about cyanide-based mining and open-cast mines and associated risks in Romanian society and other countries.
3. Strengthening the ties between the local opposition in Rosia Montana, activists around the country, anti-mining struggles against in other countries and with activists working on similar issues.
4. Work towards the ban of cyanide on a national and EU level.
5. Promote sustainable small-scale agriculture and Eco-tourism as possible alternatives to open-cast mining.

The most urgent problem we need to act on, is the Law Proposal that stipulates forced expropriation for private mining projects. The plenary vote could take place in the following weeks. Strategically, we need to slow down the legislative process, in order to create the premises for rejection in the plenary of the Parliament. The entire process could take a few months. It is impossible to predict the future political events around this Law Proposal.

