(English version)

Question for written answer E-002259/25
to the Commission
Irena Joveva (Renew)
(4 June 2025)

Subject: Compliance with EU-equivalent environmental and labour standards of 13 new strategic projects under the Critical Raw Materials Act

With the recent announcement of 13 new strategic projects under the Critical Raw Materials Act ([1]), including a lithium extraction project in Serbia, the Commission has taken steps to secure access to key resources needed for the green transition. However, the proposed Jadar lithium project has raised serious concerns among local communities in the Jadar Valley, civil society organisations, and numerous environmental experts.

Allegations of inadequate environmental impact assessments, limited public consultation, and risks to biodiversity have sparked widespread protests and highlighted the dangers of pursuing strategic partnerships without robust safeguards. More concerningly, the monitoring of these projects is reportedly ensured through national legislation and commitments made in letters of intent and memoranda of understanding (Art. 6 and Annex to the Critical Raw Materials Act).

1. How does the Commission intend to ensure that strategic projects in non-EU countries, particularly in candidate countries such as Serbia, comply with EU-equivalent environmental and labour standards?

2. In the light of the serious rule of law concerns highlighted in the latest accession progress report on Serbia, how does the Commission plan to ensure that monitoring is credible and effectively enforced in practice?

Submitted: 4.6.2025

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Séjourné on behalf of the European Commission
(18 August 2025)

The Critical Raw Materials Act ([2]) specifies that, in order to be recognised as a Strategic Project, a relevant project must comply with a set of criteria, including its sustainability, notably to monitor, prevent and minimise environmental impacts and socially adverse impacts. Independent experts assess the projects' technical, financial, and sustainability-related aspects and verify whether they meet the Critical Raw Materials Act criteria. After their selection, project promoters are obliged to submit a report every two years on the state of their project and to notify the Commission about any relevant changes to it. The Commission can also ask for information directly. If the conditions for a listed project change and it no longer fulfils all the criteria, the Commission will consult the Critical Raw Materials Board and the project promoter on the matter. The Commission can withdraw its recognition of a listed project.

Serbia’s national legislation is in the process of being aligned to that of the EU, including in the area of the rule of law, and on environmental, labour and social standards. This also means requirements to conduct environmental assessments and public consultations. In addition, meaningful engagement with local communities is key in this context. Serbia’s progress in all these areas is closely followed by the Commission as part of the accession negotiations with Serbia.

([1]) Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 of 11 April 2024 establishing a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials (OJ L, 2024/1252, 3.5.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1252/oj).
([2]) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:02024R1252-20240503.