

# Social acceptance of mining activities

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## General introduction

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Protests and resistance have been an inseparable part of mining activity in recent years. The growing awareness of the industry impact on the surroundings, force mining companies to take special care for the environment, but also for local communities. In order for the mining investment to succeed, the company, local authorities and the community must establish a relationship and cooperate with each other. Sometimes this cooperation is missing and conflicts arise.

The aim of the lesson is to introduce students to the problem of obtaining social acceptance in mining activities. The students will be presented with case study, where social conflicts emerged in the context of raw materials extraction and management. Their task will be to identify the interests of individual stakeholders, work out a compromise and propose solutions that would help to solve the situation and bring benefits to all stakeholders. On these examples, the pupils will learn the importance of the social aspect in mining activity and see what problems can be caused by the lack of communication between stakeholders.

## Teacher's Card

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The teacher gives pupils printed case study information:

**Task:** Students are divided into three stakeholders groups: local community, company and local authority. They identify their concerns/questions for other stakeholders and try to give answers to each other.

Afterwards, together, they try to answer the following questions:

What can you suggest for everyone to get along? What can a company do to convince residents to build a mine?

Students have time for discussion and propose three solutions for each group.

**Possible answers:**

- Company invites local community representatives to take part in decision-making process
- Company organizes meetings with local community and answers their questions
- Everyone presents their expectations and signs an agreement in which they undertake to comply with them.
- Local community learns about environmental impacts, presents their concerns, ask company for research on that matter.

**Materials:** Printed background case study information.

## Student's Card

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Read the printed case study information. If you have any questions, ask the teacher.

**Task:**

- Identify your stakeholder group concerns and questions for another groups. Present it to the class.
- Try to answer questions asked by other groups.
- Answer the questions: What can you suggest for everyone to get along? What can a company do to convince residents to build a mine? Discuss the problem with your colleagues and try to give three possible solutions (write them on paper).
- Present your solutions to the class.

# Appendix

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## Case study information

**Title:** New lead and zinc mine

Background: A foreign mining company is exploring the area to identify lead and zinc deposits. They drilled several hundred boreholes and confirmed the profitability of the investment. In future they want to build a zinc and lead mine, which will be partially located in the city (it will be necessary to resettle several people). This is the only deposit of this resource in the area.

**Local community attitude:** Most of the city's residents do not agree to the construction of the mine. They are worried about the environment and that the industry will bother them. Some of them want the mine to be built because of possible work places.

There is also a group of operating steel mill employees, who are against the mine.

The main arguments of the local community and steel mill employees against the mine are:

- Negative impact on water relations - cone of depression, water quality and increase in its price, lack of water for other investments. This aspect is particularly in the interest of the steel industry, which employees are afraid of water shortages.
- Failure to keep the promises that Rathdowney made, if another company gets the license for mining;
- Threat to the tourism and agricultural industry;
- Mining damage;
- Lack of employment for the local community. Workplaces for qualified miners from liquidated mines nearby;
- Use of extracted zinc and lead outside Poland;
- Fear of the consequences of mine closure.

**Company attitude:** Company want to extract lead and zinc to gain profit and ensure delivery of the raw material to the market.

In 2010-2013, when geological work was carried out, mining company focused on meetings with landowners of drilling areas (over 1000 meetings). The landowners received a payment for the ground lease. At this stage, the opposition was not observed. In 2013, company began to organize meetings with residents of areas covered by the concession and launched information and consulting points.



**Local authority attitude:** The mayor support building a mine, because city would have money for new investments from taxes. But if he agrees, the residents will not vote for him in the next election.