

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



56<sup>th</sup> International  
October Conference  
on Mining and Metallurgy  
**PROCEEDINGS**

Editors:

Ljubiša Balanović

Dejan Tanikić



22-25 October 2025,  
Bor Lake, Serbia



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Plenary Lectures

**Markus A. Reuter** (GERMANY)

*Fundamental limits of green metal and mineral processing supply chains within the circular economy* 3-5

**Miljana Radivojević** (UNITED KINGDOM)

*Metals and the making of the ancient world: environmental and economic legacies of Eurasian bronze age metallurgy* 6-6

**Peizhong Feng, Baojing Zhang, Zhi Liu, Shiheng Li, Xiaohong Wang** (CHINA)

*Recycling and utilization of spent molybdenum disilicide: preparation of coating and metal recovery via synergistic smelting* 7-9

**Srećko Stopić, Alexander Birich, Bernd Friedrich** (GERMANY)

*Advances in understanding of reduction processes in extractive metallurgy* 10-10

### Invited Lectures

**Buxin Chen, Mao Chen, Meilong Hu, Kaihui Ma, Hongqing Liu, Chenguang Bai** (CHINA)

*Development of hydrogen metallurgy in China* 13-16

**Alejandro Cruz-Ramírez, José Enrique Sanchez-Vite, Teresita del Refugio Jiménez-Romero, Margarita García-Hernández, Heriberto Mendoza-Cárdenas** (MEXICO)

*Characterization of industrial jarosites from the Mexican zinc extraction process* 17-20

**Nicanor Cimpoesu, Ionuț Adomniței, Corneliu Munteanu, Mihai Axinte, Marian Luțcanu, Mihai Alin Pop, Marius Teleşcă, Ana Maria Roman** (ROMANIA)

*Characterization of ceramic coatings with thermal barrier role obtained by atmospheric plasma jet spraying* 21-24

**Cemalettin Okay Aksoy, Güzin Gülsev Uyar Aksoy, Hasan Berker Sarisan** (TURKEY)

*Computational fluid dynamics analysis of ventilation strategies for mitigating geothermal gas leakage in subsurface infrastructure projects* 25-28

## **Conference Papers**

### **Geology and Mining**

**Zoran Marković, Milić Erić, Aleksandar Milićević, Rastko Jovanović, Nikola Živković, Ivan Lazović, Milica Jovčevski (SERBIA)**  
*Optimization of the electrostatic precipitators in unit A1 of the Kostolac a thermal power plant* 33-36

---

**Stefano Utili, Dainius Jenkus, Akanksha Mishra, Filippo Bianchi, Riccardo Castellanza (UNITED KINGDOM)**  
*Optimal pitwall design for open pit mines in the presence of faults* 37-44

---

**Katarina M. Mihajlović, Jovica Stojanovic, Slavica Mihajlović, Ivana Jelić, Ana S. Radosavljević-Mihajlović, Suzana Erić (SERBIA)**  
*Comparative mineralogical analysis of two zeolitic tuff Slanci and Zlatokop* 45-47

---

**Edita Lazarová, Mária Bali Hudáková, Vít'azoslav Krúpa, Alexander Kiovský, Pavol Vavrek, Lucia Ivaničová (SLOVAKIA)**  
*Results from experimental research of rock breaking by small diameter diamond core drill bits* 48-51

---

**Edita Lazarová, Vít'azoslav Krúpa, Pavol Vavrek, Mária Bali Hudáková, Lucia Ivaničová, Alexander Kiovský (SLOVAKIA)**  
*Failure criterion of limestone and granodiorite determined by laboratory tests and theoretical processing of drilling process results* 52-55

---

**Mária Bali Hudáková, Edita Lazarová, Vít'azoslav Krúpa, Pavol Vavrek, Lucia Ivaničová, Alexander Kiovský (SLOVAKIA)**  
*Optimisation of the rock drilling process conducted with small diameter drilling tools* 56-59

---

**Vladan Kašić, Ana Radosavljević-Mihajlović, Jovica Stojanović, Slavica Mihajlović, Nataša Đorđević, Ivana Jelić (SERBIA)**  
*Geological and technological characteristics of the Igroš-Vidojevići zeolite tuff deposits* 60-64

---

**Marija Jonović, Dejan Bugarin, Tanja Stanković (SERBIA)**  
*Sensitivity analysis of a copper ore exploitation investment project using COMFAR III software* 65-68

---

**Branimir Farkaš, Ana Hrastov, Iva Štefičar (CROATIA)**  
*Factors influencing the occurrence of flyrock phenomena on surface mines-case study* 69-72

---

**Petar Radichev (BULGARIA)**  
*Strategic planning, design and mine management under the conditions of the Asarel open pit mine* 73-76

---

---

<b><u>Gergana Meracheva, Efrosima Zaneva-Dobranova, Nikolay Hristov</u></b> (BULGARIA) <i>Geological conditions of natural H<sub>2</sub> exploration on the Balkan peninsula for prosperity mapping</i>	77-80
<b><u>Güzin Gülsev Uyar Aksoy, Cemalettin Okay Aksoy, Ozan Savaş</u></b> (TURKEY) <i>Seismic intelligence in surface blasting: seisblast-promax as a next-generation design and optimization tool</i>	81-84
<b><u>Milenko Jovanović, Daniel Kržanović, Miroslava Maksimović, Vladan Marinković, Stefan Trujić, Miomir Mikić</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>The importance of geogrids for landfill security and environmental protection</i>	85-89
<b><u>Daniel Kržanović, Milenko Jovanović, Radmilo Rajković, Miljan Gomilanović, Miloš Stojanović</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>NPV based optimization of final pit contours in the cementacija mining complex</i>	90-93
<b><u>Ivica Vojinović, Dragan Šabaz, Miloš Stojanović</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Implementation of the sublevel caving mining method in the T4 ore body at the Jama Bor underground mine</i>	94-97
<b><u>Miloš Stojanović, Ivica Vojinović, Dragan Šabaz</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Application of neural networks for optimizing rock bolt system in underground mining</i>	98-101
<b><u>Ivica Vojinović, Miloš Stojanović, Dragan Šabaz</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Technological innovations transforming the mining industry: a short review</i>	102-105
<b><u>Danka Kostadinović, Dušan Randelović, Zoran Marković</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Implementation of ground-mounted and floating solar panels in mines</i>	106-109
<b><u>Milan Protić, Ana Bijelić, Miomir Raos, Marjan Popović</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Kinetic modeling of oak wood thermal degradation using the distributed activation energy model (DAEM)</i>	110-114
<b><u>Dragan Šabaz, Ivica Vojinović, Miloš Stojanović</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Monitoring techniques for subsidence induced by mining operations: a review</i>	115-118
<b><u>Vladan Marinković, Miroslava Maksimović, Milenko Jovanović, Željana Novaković, Andela Maričić</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Geological structure and genesis of Zn, Pb deposit Ribnik-Šuplja Stijena</i>	119-122
<b><u>Radmilo Rajković, Vladan Marinković, Daniel Kržanović, Miomir Mikić, Milenko Jovanović</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>The possibility of long-term exploitation of copper ore in ore bodies of the Majdanpek copper mine</i>	123-126
<b><u>Miomir Mikić, Ivana Mikić, Milica Mededović, Radmilo Rajković</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>The global impact of climate change on the mining sector</i>	127-131

---

<b><u>Miomir Mikić, Daniel Kržanović, Milenko Jovanović, Sandra Milutinović, Ivana Mikić (SERBIA)</u></b>	
<i>The impact of climate change on mining in serbia, an overview</i>	132-135
<b><u>Milan Grozdanović, Živana Jovanović Pešić, Jelena Đoković, Dejan Tanikić (SERBIA)</u></b>	
<i>Analysis of the energy potential of briquettes made from ground plum, date, and avocado pits</i>	136-139
<b><u>Milivoje Zlatić, Dejan Petrović, Jelena Ivaz, Mladen Radovanović, Milan Stajić (SERBIA)</u></b>	
<i>Selection of primary support system for the river Mali Pek tunnel</i>	140-143
<b><u>Snežana Ignjatović, Branislav Petrović (SERBIA)</u></b>	
<i>Applying electrical survey to detect the thickness of the Epikartst</i>	144-147
<b><u>Nikola Jovanović, Jelena Stefanović, Miloš Živanović, Zlatko Pavlović, Nikola Miljković, Jelena Đorđević, Nikola Lekić (SERBIA)</u></b>	
<i>Building information modeling (BIM) as a tool for enhancing technical solutions in mining design: A case study of the main process building in Brskovo, Montenegro</i>	148-152
<b><u>Samil Hoskan, Bayram Kahraman (TURKEY)</u></b>	
<i>Comparing the accuracy of Kriging and IDW interpolation for estimating a Cu-Zn deposit in Turkey</i>	153-156
<b><u>Nenad Vušović, Milica Vlahović (SERBIA)</u></b>	
<i>Challenges in mining subsidence engineering</i>	157-160
<b><u>Mineral Processing and Recycling</u></b>	
<b><u>Igor Zh. Bunin, Alexey N. Kochanov (RUSSIA)</u></b>	
<i>On the mechanism of selective disintegration of rocks under explosive and pulse-discharge impacts</i>	163-166
<b><u>Renguo Li, Lanjie Li, Heng Ji, Minglei Gao, Shiwei Wang (CHINA)</u></b>	
<i>Experimental study on pelletization of blended sea sand ores</i>	167-170
<b><u>Milić Erić, Zoran Marković, Aleksandar Milićević, Rastko Jovanović, Danka Kostadinović, Ivan Lazović, Milica Jovčevski (SERBIA)</u></b>	
<i>Experimental research of the lignite drying process in packed bed</i>	171-174
<b><u>Slavko Todić, Predrag Lazić (SERBIA)</u></b>	
<i>Investigation of the flotation potential of sulfideoxide ore from the Veliki Majdan deposit</i>	175-178
<b><u>Vladimir Nikolić, Milan Trumić (SERBIA)</u></b>	
<i>Refinement of the bond work index calculation method for finer samples</i>	179-182

---

**Jose Enrique Sanchez-Vite, Alberto Hernandez-Casimiro, Teresita del Refugio Jiménez-Romero, Alejandro Cruz-Ramírez, Margarita García-Hernández**  
(MEXICO)

*Mineralogical evolution in industrial jarosite through flux-assisted roasting* 183-186

---

**Albin Dobersek, Aleksandra Mitovski, Olga Mishina, Andrej Avrachov, Pavel Saltykov, Viktoriia Zhmurova, Alexandra Friesen, Theresa Schulz**  
(GERMANY)

*Gold recovery from flotation tailings in copper metallurgy: A sustainable approach to resource valorization* 187-190

---

**Ivana Jovanović, Dragan Milanović, Vesna Conić, Miloš Janošević, Daniela Urošević, Mile Bugarin** (SERBIA)

*Chemical-mineralogical characterization of carbonate-clay type lithium ore* 191-194

---

**Jelena Đorđević, Jelena Stefanović, Sandra Guševac, Nevena Marković, Zoran Avramović, Nikola Jovanović, Nikola Lekić** (SERBIA)

*Effect of recycled asphalt (RAP) and copper slag (CS) as partial substitution of natural aggregate in asphalt mixtures* 195-198

---

**Artur Hubert, Felix Heinicke** (GERMANY)

*Transferring common HPGR application from copper to lithium ore* 199-202

---

**Venkateswara Rao, Jayapal Reddy** (INDIA)

*Mathematical modeling and statistical analysis of sub grade iron ore beneficiation using wet high intensity magnetic separator (WHIMS)* 203-210

---

**Dušica Mirović, Yuankun Yang, Shengli Yu** (SERBIA)

*Safety challenges in transport of copper concentrate: TML as a boundary parameter of maritime cargo stability* 211-214

---

**Klaudia Kundráková, Jana Pirošková, Jakub Klimko, Jarmila Trpčevská, Petra Růžičková, Dušan Oráč** (SLOVAKIA)

*Electrospinning of ZnO nanofibers from zinc galvanizing flue dust* 215-220

---

**Dragana Marilović, Grozdanka Bogdanović** (SERBIA)

*Leaching of covellite in ionic liquid solution* 221-224

---

**Nadezhda Kazakova, Vladislava Stefanova, Petar Iliev, Biserka Lucheva**  
(BULGARIA)

*Analytical study of zinc recovery from spent solutions resulting after galvanization process* 225-228

---

**Katarina Balanović, Maja Trumić, Tamara Gavrilović** (SERBIA)

*Influence of hidden neuron number on the performance of ANN models applied to deinking flotation data* 229-232

---

## **Extractive Metallurgy and Process Innovations**

**Teresita del Refugio Jiménez-Romero, José Enrique Sanchez-Vite, Alejandro Cruz-Ramírez, Margarita García-Hernández, Ángel de Jesús Morales-Ramírez (MEXICO)**

*Recovery of copper from a chalcopyrite ore using natural deep eutectic solvents (NADES) of choline chloride-urea as a leaching agent* 235-238

---

**Alexey M. Amdur, Sergei A. Fedorov (RUSSIA)**

*Droplet flotation in metallurgical melts* 239-242

---

**Yuchao Shi, Taibai Fu, Xinyi Zhang, Liang Zhang, Shiyi Wen, Yuling Liu, Yingbiao Peng, Jiangxing Wang, Ziqing Xie, Yong Du (CHINA)**

*Development of ICALPHAD software for phase diagram calculation and intelligent thermodynamic optimization* 243-246

---

**Vesna Grekulović, Milica Zdravković, Milan Gorgievski, Nada Štrbac, Miljan Marković, Marina Marković, Kristina Božinović (SERBIA)**

*Electrochemical behavior of copper in chloride medium in the presence of pine cone macerate* 247-250

---

**Ana Kostov, Aleksandra Milosavljević, Ivan Jovanović (SERBIA)**

*DTA thermodynamic behaviour of the ternary system Ga-Ge-Sb* 251-254

---

**Dimitrije Anđić, Aleksandar Jovanović, Nikola Vuković, Ivana Jelić, Mladen Bugarčić, Vaso Manojlović, Miroslav Sokić (SERBIA)**

*Innovative oxidative system for leaching of Fe<sup>2+</sup> from sphalerite concentrate* 255-259

---

**Vanja Trifunović, Snežana Milić, Ljiljana Avramović, Dragana Božić, Zoran Avramović (SERBIA)**

*Behavior of zinc, calcium and iron in the two-stage leaching process of the EAF dust* 260-263

---

**Petar Petrov (BULGARIA)**

*Creation of sintering cup for laboratory sintering installation* 264-268

---

**Angel Iliev, Daniela Grigorova (BULGARIA)**

*Thermodynamic investigation of carbothermic reduction of electric arc furnace dust* 269-272

---

**Xiaohua Liu, Renhao Tian, Yang You, Zhixiong You, Xuewei Lv (CHINA)**

*Numerical simulation of temperature field in a rotary hearth furnace under infrared-assisted heating conditions* 273-276

---

**Sara Lukovac, Nebojša Tadić, Dijana Đurović, Irena Nikolić (MONTENEGRO)**

*S/S treatment for aluminium slag waste using fly ash-based geopolymers* 277-280

---

**Xing Han, Hongqiang Liu, Lanjie Li, Pengyang Li, Xiaolong Guo (CHINA)**

*The role of hydrogen based shaft furnaces in steel industry decarbonization* 281-286

---

---

**Gvozden Jovanović, Dimitrije Andić, Danijela Smiljanjić, Dragana Randelović, Branislav Marković** (SERBIA)

*Behavior of plant micronutrients (Fe, Cu) during combustion of contaminated Sorghum spp.*

287-290

---

**Igor Zlatković, Živko Đorović** (SERBIA)

*Analysis of the new sinter line in HBIS Group Serbia and creating conditions for production improvement*

291-295

---

**Nebojša Tadić, Irena Nikolić, Nina Jovović, Dejana Dizdar, Vanja Asanović, Milena Tadić** (MONTENEGRO)

*Valorization of fly ash and plastic waste using geopolymerization technology*

296-299

---

**Miloš Vuleta, Milodarka Žugić, Vladan Andrejić, Tamara Ristić** (SERBIA)

*Industrial optimization of BOF steelmaking: increasing scrap ratio through hot metal parameter control*

300-303

---

**Aleksandra Milosavljević, Ana Kostov, Marijana Pavlov-Kagadejev** (SERBIA)

*Artificial intelligence challenges in modern alloy design*

304-307

---

**Vesna Conić, Miloš Janosević, Dragan Milanović, Ivana Jovanović, Daniela Urošević, Mile Bugarin** (SERBIA)

*Overview of methods for bor separation*

308-311

---

**Sandra Guševac, Nevena Marković, Jelena Đorđević, Jelena Stefanović** (SERBIA)

*The possibility of using copper slag aggregate in concrete*

312-315

---

**Emine Savilgan, Patrick Zhang** (TURKEY)

*Leaching behaviour of phosphogypsum with different acids*

316-318

---

**Duško Minić, Milena Zečević, Aleksandar Đorđević, Veljko Minić** (SERBIA)

*Electrical resistivity of the Al-Bi-Ge ternary alloys*

319-322

---

**Velizar Stanković, Miljan Marković, Milan Gorgievski, Stefan Đorđević** (SERBIA)

*On the leachability of copper from copper-iron minerals mixture*

323-326

---

**Ferenc Kristaly, László Farkas, Andrea Mihalkó, Bence Tamás, Balázs Szeleczi** (HUNGARY)

*Recoverable Pd and Pt accumulation in a Ca(OH)<sub>2</sub> based CO<sub>2</sub> filter of a hydrogenation organic byproduct plant*

327-330

---

**Oliver Dimitrijević, Ivana Jovanović, Vesna Conić, Dragan Milanović, Tanja Stanković** (SERBIA)

*Example of dense media cyclone selection*

331-334

---

**Petra Růžičková, Klaudia Kundráková, Kristína Talianová, Jakub Klimko, Dušan Oráč** (SLOVAKIA)

*Selective recovery of copper from hydrometallurgical processing of e-waste* 335-340

---

## **Alloys, Composites, and Advanced Materials**

**Anca Cazac, Diana-Petronela Burduhos-Nergis, Andrei Victor Sandu, Mihai Popa, Costica Bejinariu** (ROMANIA)

*Strontium phosphate conversion coatings: A short review* 343-346

---

**Maja Vončina, Jožef Medved, Tinkara Smolar, Matej Steinacher** (SLOVENIA)

*Influence of heat treatments on mechanical properties of aluminium alloy EN AW-2011* 347-350

---

**Alexandra Tamara Sutic, Gheorghe Bădărău, Romeu Chelariu, Ramona Cimpoesu, Ana-Maria Roman, Mihai-Adrian Bernevig, Nicanor Cimpoesu** (ROMANIA)

*An assessment of corrosive and mechanical performance of biodegradable ZnMgTi alloys* 351-354

---

**Jožef Medved, Tilen Balaško, Stanislav Kores, Maja Vončina** (SLOVENIA)

*In-situ synthesis of Mg<sub>2</sub>Si-reinforced amc* 355-359

---

**Karlo T. Raić, Mile B. Đurđević, Srećko Manasijević, Aleksandra Patarić, Marija Mihailović** (SERBIA)

*Statistical evolution of non-metallic inclusions in continuous cast Al-killed steel* 360-363

---

**Kristina Božinović, Dragan Manasijević, Ljubiša Balanović, Milan Gorgievski, Uroš Stamenković, Miljan Marković** (SERBIA)

*Microstructural analysis and thermal properties of Ag-Sn alloys* 364-370

---

**Srdan Matijašević, Mirko Grubišić, Nataša Đorđević, Ana Radosavljević-Mihajlović, Slavica Mihajlović** (SERBIA)

*The effect of the free energy change on crystallization in lithium-germanate glass* 371-374

---

**Jovana Ružić, Jelena Stašić, Marko Simić, Andrijana Žekić, Branislava Vučetić, Dušan Božić** (SERBIA)

*Influence of the heat treatment on the structural parameters of the CuCrZr-TiB<sub>2</sub> alloy* 375-377

---

**Ionuț Adomnitei, Daniela Lucia Chicet, Bogdan Istrate, Marcelin Benchea, Gheorghe Bădărău, Nicanor Cimpoesu** (ROMANIA)

*Obtaining and characterization of high yttria content in zirconia coatings* 378-381

---

**Florin Sorin Todirică, Daniela Lucia Chicet, Dragoș-Cristian Achiței, Vasile Manole, Mihai-Adrian Bernevig, Ioan Stîrbu, Nicanor Cimpoesu** (ROMANIA)

*Using energy dispersive spectroscopy for a stainless steel-brass welding interface characterization* 382-385

---

---

**Shehret Tilvaldyev, América Yamile Amaya Diaz, Adrian Alberto Castro De La Cruz** (CANADA)

*Analysis of the variations of the wing lift coefficient of unmanned aerial vehicles with increasing Reynolds number of airflow*

386-389

---

**Nebojša Tadić, Žarko Radović** (MONTENEGRO)

*Investigation of the influence of residual stresses on the mechanical properties of aluminum alloy strips*

390-393

---

**Aida Imamović, Mirsada Oruč, Milenko Rimac, Gorazd Kosec, Safet Hamedović** (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA)

*Influence of dimensional size of rolled product made of S690QL steel on impact toughness and grain size*

394-400

---

**Krzysztof Pancikiewicz, Mariusz Maslak, Paulina Zajdel, Marcin Klimek** (POLAND)

*Phase transformations in a welded joint of unalloyed steel after long-term subcritical annealing*

401-404

---

**Franjo Kozina, Zdenka Zovko Brodarac, Ivica Buljeta, Natalija Dolić** (CROATIA)

*Analysis of crack formation in AlSi11 alloy automotive rim*

405-408

---

**Žaklina Tasić, Marija Petrović Mihajlović, Ana Simonović, Milan Radovanović, Milan Antonijević** (SERBIA)

*Carbon-based electrochemical sensor modified with metal oxide nanoparticles*

409-412

---

**Almaida Gigović-Gekić, Elvis Agović, Hasan Avdušinović, Branka Muminović** (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA)

*Testing the impact of toughness of the welded joint of steel S21800*

413-416

---

**Lovro Liverić, Tamara Holjevac Grgurić, Marko Kršulja, Matej Fonović** (CROATIA)

*TEM Investigation of Cu-10Al-7Ag Shape Memory Alloy in As-Cast State*

417-420

---

**Marko Kršulja, Damir Karabaić, Lovro Liverić, Samir Grudić** (CROATIA)

*Comparison of non-destructive and destructive welding assessment tests on MAG-welded AISI316L and DH36 steels using K-309LT filler*

421-425

---

**Dana Bolibruchová, Martina Sýkorová, Marek Matejka** (SLOVAKIA)

*Influence of Be addition on mechanical and physical properties of alloys with low Si content*

426-429

---

**Milan Nedeljković, Srba Mladenović, Vladan Čosović, Ivana Marković, Jasmina Petrović, Uroš Stamenković, Milijana Mitrović, Avram Kovačević** (SERBIA)

*Microstructures and wettability behavior of Sn-0.7Cu solder doped with graphene nanosheets*

430-433

---

<b><u>Srba Mladenović, Nikola Marinković, Dragica Milojković, Jasmina Petrović, Milan Nedeljković (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Structural characterization of welded joints of AlSiMg alloys</i>	434-437
<b><u>Martina Sýkorová, Dana Bolibruchová, Marek Matejka (SLOVAKIA)</u></b> <i>Development of the Al-Si alloy with niobium addition for gigacastings</i>	438-441
<b><u>Veljko Savić, Vladimir Topalović, Jelena Nikolić, Marija Došić, Milena Obradović, Danijela Smiljanić, Snežana Grujić (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Insights into the glass network structure of coal fly ash-based glass</i>	442-445
<b><u>Uroš Stamenković, Ivana Marković, Dragan Manasijević, Milan Nedeljković (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Termomechanical treatment of S275JR steel: impact on microstructure, hardness, and impact toughness</i>	446-449
<b><u>Milan Protić, Momir Prašević, Nikola Mišić, Mimir Raos, Viša Tasić (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Flammability assessment of acoustic insulation materials using mass loss calorimetry</i>	450-453
<b><u>Marek Matejka, Dana Bolibruchová, Martina Sýkorová (SLOVAKIA)</u></b> <i>Analysis of selected properties of Al-Si-Cu based alloy with tungsten addition</i>	454-457
<b><u>Žarko Mišković, Radivoje Mitrović, Danilo Pejčić, Jovana Antić (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Overview of installations and methodologies for conveyor idlers testing-developed at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Belgrade</i>	458-461
<b><u>Mile B. Đurđević, Srećko Manasijević, Aleksandra Patarić, Marija Mihailović, Karlo Raić (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Role of magnesium in solidification feeding of hypoeutectic Al-Si5-Mg alloys</i>	462-465
<b><u>Jelena Gligorijević Sokolović, Jasmina Petrović, Emina Požega (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Casting of bronze castings with thin walls using wax-paraffin models and CO<sub>2</sub> hardened sand molds</i>	466-469
<b><u>Shi Wenli, Tanja Marinković Stojanović, Aleksandar Djuga, Marko Radosavljević, Stefan Nešić (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Metallurgical and process challenges in flash butt welding of different dimensions of micro-alloyed steel on continuous pickle line</i>	470-473
<b><u>Emina Međedović, Vanja Asanović, Milena Tadić, Jasmina Grbović Novaković, Irena Nikolić, Anđela Mitrović Rajić (MONTENEGRO)</u></b> <i>Structural changes in pyrophyllite induced by mechanochemical modification and zinc oxide doping</i>	474-477
<b><u>Biljana Zlatičanin, Branislav Radonjić (MONTENEGRO)</u></b> <i>Effect of copper content on phase formation and mechanical response of Al-Cu alloys</i>	478-481

<b><u>Biljana Zlatičanin, Branislav Radonjić</u></b> (MONTENEGRO) <i>Combined effect of cooling conditions and Mg content on the microstructure and properties of Al-15Cu alloys</i>	482-485
<b><u>Vladimir Glushchenkov</u></b> (RUSSIA) <i>Improvement in the technology of pouring copper plates for their further use in electrolysis production</i>	486-489
<b><u>Marko Pavlović, Marina Dojčinović, Mirjana Stojanović</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Cavitation resistance of talc-reinforced pyrophyllite ceramics</i>	490-493
<b><u>Salko Ćosić, Almir Osmanović, Jasmin Halilović</u></b> (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA) <i>Probabilistic analysis of press fit joint load carrying capacity</i>	494-497
<b><u>Saša Marjanović, Milijana Mitrović, Emina Požega, Dragana Božić</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Influence of cold rolling and annealing on the hardness of Cu-Al bimetallic strip</i>	498-501
<b><u>Emina Požega, Slavko Bernik, Dragana Božić, Srđana Magdalinović, Miloš Đukić, Jelena Gligorijević Sokolović, Radmilo Rajković</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Properties of Se doped Bi<sub>2</sub>Te<sub>3</sub> based material: Part I</i>	502-505
<b><u>Nandita Gupta, Kamlesh Kumar Singh, Manoj Kumar, Himanshu Khandelwal</u></b> (INDIA) <i>A study of single piece ceramic shell core for geometrically complex investment casting</i>	506-510
<b><u>Veljko Minić, Jelena Miladinović, Miljana Popović, Milena Zečević, Aleksandar Đorđević</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Experimental characterization of the Bi-Ge-Pb ternary alloys</i>	511-514
<b><u>Ondrej Kožej, Iveta Vasková, Ladislav Jankovčín</u></b> (SLOVAKIA) <i>Investigation of gas and shrinkage porosity in AlSi10Mg alloy gearbox castings manufactured by HPDC</i>	515-521
<b><u>Jasmina Petrović, Srba Mladenović, Uroš Stamenković, Milan Nedeljković, Milijana Mitrović</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Effect of oxy-cutting on the microstructure and hardness of high-carbon steel</i>	522-525
<b><u>Ivana Marković, Uroš Stamenković, Dragan Manasijević, Ljubiša Balanović</u></b> (SERBIA) <i>Changes in hardness and microstructure during isothermal aging of nickel-aluminum bronze</i>	526-529
<b><u>Ferenc Kristaly, László Farkas, Andrea Mihalkó, Bence Tamás, Balázs Szelecski</u></b> (HUNGARY) <i>Microscale features of Pd-Pt aggregates resulted from aniline hydrogenation tar incinerating process</i>	530-533

---

**Sandra Milutinović, Ljubiša Obradović, Sanja Petrović, Srđana Magdalinović, Ivana Mikić (SERBIA)**  
*Reinforcements in composite materials* 534-537

---

**Milijana Mitrović, Saša Marjanović, Biserka Trumić, Milan Nedeljković, Jasmina Petrović, Uroš Stamenković (SERBIA)**  
*Influence of temperature and annealing time on changes of the mechanical properties of the CuFe1 alloy* 538-541

---

**Zoran Karastojković, Radiša Perić, Srba Mladenović (SERBIA)**  
*Limitations for wider usage of gold-aluminium alloys based on intermetallic compound Au-Al<sub>2</sub>* 542-545

---

**Dragan Jeremić, Željko Šutović, Milić Ječmenica, Dragomir Glišić, Stefan Dikić, Nenad Radović (SERBIA)**  
*Development of 12.0mm thick hot rolled strip of S640MC grade steel in HBIS Serbia* 546-549

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## **Technology and Energy**

**Margarita García-Hernández, Alejandro Cruz-Ramírez, Ángel de Jesús Morales-Ramírez, José Enrique Sanchez-Vite, Teresita del Refugio Jiménez-Romero (MEXICO)**  
*Decay time determination from luminescence emissions of Eu<sup>3+</sup> doped Y<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> powder* 552-555

---

**Valery Pierre Vassiliev, Cristopher Stanley (RUSSIA)**  
*Optimization of heat capacities of sphalerite and wurtzite phases as a single system* 556-559

---

**Rastko Jovanović, Ivan Lazović, Milić Erić, Zoran Marković, Marija Živković (SERBIA)**  
*Predicting CO emissions using novel numerical model for particle ignition/combustion* 560-563

---

**Marija Jeremić, Andreas Krammer, Markus Lehner (AUSTRIA)**  
*Biomass to BioSNG-Methanation of syngas from biomass gasification* 564-567

---

**Duško Kostić, Mitar Perušić, Srećko Stopić, Dragan Kostic, Jelena Vuković, Nebojša Vasiljević, Radislav Filipović, Vladimir Damjanović (BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA)**  
*High-pressure oxygen leaching of tionite residue for titanium recovery* 568-574

---

**Zoran Avramović, Dragana Božić, Vanja Trifunović, Jelena Stanković (SERBIA)**  
*Cathodic protection of metals* 575-578

---

**Milica Zdravković, Slađana Savić, Vesna Grekulović, Dalibor Stanković, Iva Dimitrievska (SERBIA)**  
*ATR-FTIR characterization of the white willow bark extract used as a copper corrosion inhibitor* 579-582

---

**Milica Zdravković, Edina Huseinović, Jasmina Dedić, Emir Horozić, Vesna Grekulović (SERBIA)**

*Extraction of bioactive compounds from nettle seeds as a potential inhibitor of metal corrosion*

583-587

---

**Milica Zdravković, Slađana Savić, Vesna Grekulović, Dalibor Stanković (SERBIA)**

*HPLC-DAD identification of compounds in corrosion inhibitor Salix Alba bark extract and the hydrolyte*

588-592

---

**Milos Đukić, Stefan Đordievski, Sanela Vasiljević, Dragana Adamović-Marković, Emina Požega, Jelena Nikolić, Vesna Stankov-Jovanović (SERBIA)**

*Internal quality control of ICP-MS method for water analysis*

593-596

---

## **Environmental Protection, Remediation and Risk Assessment**

**Aleksandar Grigorov, Silviya Lavrova, Daniela Grigorova (BULGARIA)**

*Application of nanomaterials in water treatment from manganese*

599-602

---

**Ana Marinković, Jovana Buha Marković, Jasmina Savić, Milica Mladenović, Milić Erić, Zoran Marković, Biljana Vučićević (SERBIA)**

*Assessment of mercury content in different fuel types*

603-606

---

**Marija Koprivica, Marija Simić, Jelena Petrović, Jelena Dimitrijević, Marija Ercegović, Marija Marković (SERBIA)**

*Tree leaf biochar as a potential adsorbent for lead ion removal from aqueous solution*

607-610

---

**Vesna Krstić, Danijela Simonović, Renata Kovačević, Daniel Kržanović, Mirjana Šteharnek, Daniela Urošević, Sunčica Stanković (SERBIA)**

*Multivariate statistical evaluation of agricultural soil contamination near the city of Bor*

611-615

---

**Ana Petrović, Stefan Đordievski, Miloš Đukić, Emina Požega, Jelena Gligorijević Sokolović, Dragana Adamović-Marković (SERBIA)**

*Application of metal foams for the water purification process*

616-619

---

**Viša Tasić, Tatjana Apostolovski-Trujić, Renata Kovačević, Bojan Radović, Nevena Ristić (SERBIA)**

*State of air quality in the city of Bor in 2024*

620-623

---

**Aleksandra Papludis, Slađana Alagić, Snežana Milić, Dragana Medić, Jelena Nikolić, Snežana Jevtović, Ivana Zlatanović Đaić (SERBIA)**

*Distribution of PAHs in soils from Bor region, taken from the rooting zone of poison ivy*

624-627

---

**Žarko Radović, Nebojša Tadić (MONTENEGRO)**

*Effect of air oxygen enrichment on gaseous fuels combustion and GHG emission*

628-631

---

<b><u>Maja Nujkić, Žaklina Tasić, Sonja Stanković, Dragana Medić (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Optimizing cadmium ion adsorption: predictive modeling based on literature data</i>	632-635
<b><u>Miljan Marković, Milan Gorgievski, Marina Marković, Vesna Grekulović, Nada Štrbac, Kristina Božinović, Milica Zdravković (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Statistical modeling of copper ions biosorption onto sunflower hulls</i>	636-640
<b><u>Miloš Stojanović, Nicoleta Sorina Nemes, Adina Negrea, Mihaela Ciopec, Ivan Svrkota, Daniel Kržanović, Igor Svrkota (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Environmental sampling strategy for the Romania–Serbia border mining region</i>	641-644
<b><u>Danka Kostadinović, Milić Erić, Ivan Iazović (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Application of waste materials in green roofs</i>	645-648
<b><u>Branislava Matić, Snežana Živković Perišić, Srđan Mančević (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Use of AIRQ+ software in assessing the impact on health from exposure to particles in Bor, Serbia</i>	649-654
<b><u>Jelena Kalinović, Tanja Kalinović, Ana Radojević, Snežana Šerbula, Jelena Jordanović (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Assessment of element accumulation efficiency in plant parts using biological factor analysis</i>	655-658
<b><u>Milan Gorgievski, Marina Marković, Miljan Marković, Vesna Grekulović, Nada Štrbac, Kristina Božinović, Milica Zdravković (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Equilibrium and thermodynamic analysis of the adsorption of copper ions on sunflower hulls</i>	659-663
<b><u>Marina Marković, Milan Gorgievski, Miljan Marković, Vesna Grekulović, Nada Štrbac, Kristina Božinović, Milica Zdravković (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Kinetic analysis of copper ions adsorption on sunflower hulls</i>	664-668
<b><u>Danijela Šimonović, Daniel Kržanović, Renata Kovačević, Daniela Urošević, Mirjana Šteharinik, Sunčica Stanković, Vesna Krstić (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Assessment of heavy metal contamination of soil and the ecological risk based on national limit values and quantitative indices</i>	669-673
<b><u>Aleksandra Petrović, Stefan Đordjević, Bojan Radović, Renata Kovačević (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Assesment of PAH and PCB concentrations in Bor River bed sediments affected by mining and metallurgy</i>	674-677
<b><u>Stefan Đordjević, Ana Radojević, Tanja Kalinović, Maja Nujkić, Jelena Kalinović, Jelena Jordanović, Renata Kovačević, Yasumasa Ogawa (SERBIA)</u></b> <i>Assessment of the copper availability by extraction of riverbed sediments from Eastern Serbia with 0.5 M HCl</i>	678-681

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**Miloš Đukić, Stefan Đordjević, Sanela Vasiljević, Dragana Adamović-Marković, Ana Petrović, Jelena Nikolić, Vesna Stankov-Jovanović (SERBIA)**  
*Cerovo river-Annual monitoring of impact of the Cerovo open-pit mine* 682-685

---

**Emine Savilgan, Patrick Zhang (TURKEY)**  
*A review on recovery of REEs and radioactive materials from phosphogypsum* 686-688

---

## **Industrial Management, Digitalization and Quality Control**

**Yufei Wang, Xiaoyu Zheng, Xiangyang Ying, Qi Huang, Xiong Shuai, Changfa Du, Ya Li, Yingbiao Peng, Yuling Liu, Yong Du (CHINA)**  
*Integrated computational material engineering practice paths by Changsha Ruirui Technology: From CALPHAD to phase field and crystal plastic finite element* 691-694

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**Aleksandra Fedajev, Sanela Arsić (SERBIA)**  
*Is mining and quarrying most efficient and profitable export sector in Serbia? Insights from a multi-criteria performance analysis* 695-699

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**Predrag Stolić, Zoran Jovanović, Željko Mravik, Marko Jelić, Sonja Jovanović, Aleksandra Milosavljević (SERBIA)**  
*The path to better education of engineers using open data-A practical example in the Republic of Serbia* 700-703

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**Tatjana Volkov Husović, Ana Alil, Sanja Martinović (SERBIA)**  
*NDT methods for monitoring degradation of refractory lining for blast furnace and converter* 704-711

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**Maria Krasteva, Petar Raykov (BULGARIA)**  
*Quality control in the production of vacuum pumps for the automotive industry* 712-715

---

**Andelka Stojanović, Isidora Milošević, Dragan Manasijević (SERBIA)**  
*Intra- and extra-EU trade in recyclable metals: opportunities for industrial symbiosis* 716-720

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**Marijana Pavlov-Kagadejev, Aleksandra Milosavljević (SERBIA)**  
*Application of metaheuristic algorithms in metallurgical industry: A review of methods and applications* 721-724

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## **Abstracts**

**Eugeniu Martac, Christine Laskov, Katarzyna Staniewska (GERMANY)**  
*Mining after mining: Real-time XRF-CPT for strategic resource estimation in tailings reprocessing* 727-727

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**Tilen Balaško, Aleš Nagode, Jiehua Li, Jožef Medved, Maja Vončina (SLOVENIA)**  
*The role of lanthanum addition in the microstructural evolution of an EN AW-7175 alloy during solution annealing* 728-728

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<b><u>Wei Su, Yi Xing, Yang Zheng, Rongrong Lei</u> (CHINA)</b> <i>Construction and technological progress of a comprehensive carbon reduction system for CCUS in the steel industry</i>	729-729
<b><u>Stefan Trujić, Miroslav Popović, Milenko Jovanović, Katarina Milivojević, Boško Vuković</u> (SERBIA)</b> <i>Geological investigations of the 'Povlatna zona' and 'Istočno polje' of the Gacko Coal Basin (BiH) for coal quality assessment and design of a beneficiation plant (2023–2025)</i>	730-730
<b><u>Roxana Hobjâlă, Nicolae Răzvan Mititelu, Ștefana Agop, Laurențiu Slătineanu, Diana Diaconu</u> (ROMANIA)</b> <i>The contribution and application of polymeric materials in the metallurgical industry</i>	731-731
<b><u>Ștefana Agop, Bogdan-Ionut Dochita, Roxana Hobjâlă, Nicanor Cimpoescu, Tiberiu Sutic</u> (ROMANIA)</b> <i>The behavior description of CuZnAl shape memory alloys through the dynamics of multifractal complex systems</i>	732-732
<b>Publishing partners</b>	733-738
<b>Donors</b>	739-772
<b>Author Index</b>	773-780

## ASSESSMENT OF ELEMENT ACCUMULATION EFFICIENCY IN PLANT PARTS USING BIOLOGICAL FACTOR ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

Understanding the processes of accumulation and translocation of potentially toxic elements through the soil-plant system is crucial for environmental protection and pollution risk assessment. The aim of this study is to investigate the possibility of accumulation and translocation of potentially toxic elements in *Crataegus* spp. and to assess the applicability of this plant species in phytoremediation.

**Keywords:** *Crataegus* spp., Biological factor analysis, potentially toxic elements

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Potentially toxic elements in the environment can originate from natural sources, such as volcanic activities, weathering of metal-rich rocks, erosion and other geological processes, as well as from human activities, such as industrial processes, urban wastewaters, agriculture, etc. [1]. Mining represents a significant source of environmental pollution. Once toxic elements enter the soil, they can be accumulated by crops, including vegetables and other plants. The uptake of potentially toxic elements by plants from the soil is an important pathway by which toxic elements can enter the food chain. Understanding the translocation and accumulation of elements in soils and plants is of great importance for environmental protection [2]. Phytoremediation is an environmentally friendly strategy to improve contaminated areas [3].

This study aims to evaluate the possibility of accumulation and translocation of potentially toxic elements in different parts of *Crataegus* spp. and its potential for use in phytoremediation.

## 2. EXPERIMENTAL

*Crataegus* spp., a widespread perennial deciduous shrub, was selected for investigation. The plant material (roots and leaves) and the soil from the root zone were sampled during the plant's harvest period, before natural leaf fall (September to mid-October). The sampled plants were healthy with no visible signs of disease or pests. The total of 14 sampling sites were distributed into eight sampling zones (urban-industrial (UI), urban (U), suburban (SU), industrial (I1, I2, I3, I4 and I5), rural (R1 and R2), tourist (T), traffic (TR) and background (B)). The locations of the sampling sites were selected in relation to the copper smelter, open pits, ore waste heaps, and the flotation tailing ponds. The B zone was located in the rural settlement of Gornjane, 17 km from the copper smelter, which was not affected by anthropogenic pollution [4,5]. A detailed description of the sampling procedure and the sampling sites can be found in Kalinović *et al.* [5].

Biological factor analysis is used to assess the ability of plants to accumulate potentially toxic elements from the soil and translocate them through the plant. Biological factor analysis is crucial in revealing the remarkable capabilities of plants, such as their potential for environmental

remediation. The bioconcentration factor (BCF) provides information about a plant's ability to accumulate elements from the soil in the roots. The factor is calculated using equation (1) [1,6,7]:

$$BCF = C_r / C_s \quad (1)$$

where  $C_r$  is the element concentration in the plant root (mg/kg);  $C_s$  is the element concentration in the soil (mg/kg). If the BCF value is greater than 1, the accumulation of elements in the plant roots is effective [1,6,7].

The translocation factor (TF) indicates the ability of plants to transport elements from the roots to the leaves (i.e. to allow them to enter the food chain). The factor is calculated according to the following equation (2) [1,6,7]:

$$TF = C_{wl} / C_r \quad (2)$$

where  $C_{wl}$  is the element concentration in the washed leaves (mg/kg);  $C_r$  is the element concentration in the plant root (mg/kg). If the TF value is greater than 1, the elements are effectively translocated within the plant [1,6,7].

The biological absorption coefficient (BAC) is calculated by the equation (3) [8,9]:

$$BAC = C_{wl} / C_s \quad (3)$$

where  $C_{wl}$  is the element concentration in the washed leaves (mg/kg);  $C_s$  is the element concentration in the soil (mg/kg).

Depending on the BAC values, the absorption of elements in leaves from the soil can be intensive (BAC in the range of 10–100), strong (1.0–10.0), intermediate (0.1–1.0), weak (0.01–0.10), and very weak absorption (0.001–0.010) [10]. According to Nouri *et al.* [11], plants suitable for phytoextraction generally have the values of  $BCF > 1$  and  $TF > 1$ , whereas, plants suitable for phytostabilisation have  $BCF > 1$  and  $TF < 1$ .

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The BCFs for As, Cd, Cu and Pb are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Bioconcentration factor (BCF) for As, Cd, Cu and Pb

Site	As	Cd	Cu	Pb
UI	<0.006	<0.054	0.004	<0.008
U	<0.010	<0.085	0.006	<0.011
SU	<0.014	<0.103	0.007	<0.010
I1	<0.050	<0.435	0.032	<0.030
I2	<0.024	<0.299	0.099	0.039
I3	<0.057	<0.108	0.012	<0.015
I4	<0.025	<0.255	0.007	<0.025
I5	<0.029	<0.192	0.010	<0.027
R1	<0.012	0.730	0.043	<0.026
R2	0.011	0.413	0.040	0.026
T1	<0.008	<0.048	0.005	<0.012
T2	<0.007	0.267	0.049	0.055
TR	<0.086	<0.209	0.012	<0.016
B	<0.103	/	0.079	<0.053

The BCF values with the sign "<" are obtained by replacing the missing element concentration by the limit of determination of the element in the root (the LD for As and Pb is 1 mg/kg; for Cd 0.2 mg/kg); "/" Both values are missing in the calculation of the BCF.

The BCF values for all the analysed elements were below 1 at each sampling site (except at site B for Cd), indicating that *Crateaegus* spp. have a low ability to accumulate these elements in the roots from the soil.

Regardless of this, a significant correlation between the Cu concentrations in the soil and root samples (Table 2) indicates a possible accumulation of a certain amount of Cu from the soil. It was not possible to calculate the correlation for the other elements, as their concentrations were below the limit of determination for most samples.

Table 2. Spearman correlation coefficient

Element	Soil–Root	Root–Washed leaves	Soil–Washed leaves
As	/	/	0.727*
Cd	/	/	/
Cu	0.582*	0.820**	0.749**
Pb	/	/	0.429

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed);  
"/" The correlation coefficient was not calculated for the elements for which the number of samples is  $\leq 5$ .

The TFs for As, Cd, Cu and Pb are shown in Table 3. According to the obtained values, the TFs for the analysed elements were higher than 1 in most cases (except at the sites R1, R2 and T2 for Cd and at the site T2 for Cu). These high TF values indicate that *Crataegus* spp. effectively translocated the elements from the roots to the leaves. The significant and positive correlation between the Cu concentrations in the roots and the washed leaves is in favour of an effective translocation. However, it was not possible to calculate the correlations for the other elements as their concentrations were below the limit of determination for most samples.

Table 3. Translocation factor (TF) for As, Cd, Cu and Pb

Site	As	Cd	Cu	Pb
UI	>29.977	>2.596	9.225	>28.383
U	>2.463	/	3.588	>5.443
SU	>1.524	/	4.272	>3.902
I1	>1.474	/	5.279	>2.222
I2	>1.427	/	1.223	2.325
I3	/	/	3.286	>2.224
I4	>1.829	/	5.885	>4.712
I5	>2.027	/	4.813	>4.618
R1	>4.868	0.761	2.282	>10.325
R2	6.195	0.694	3.128	18.255
T1	>1.705	/	6.583	>8.549
T2	>2.628	<0.713	0.768	1.522
TR	/	/	1.152	>1.775
B	/	/	2.143	>1.198

The values given in bold represent  $TF > 1$ ; The TF values with the sign ">" are obtained by replacing the missing element concentration by the limit of determination of the element in the root (the LD for As and Pb is 1 mg/kg; for Cd 0.2 mg/kg); "/" Both values are missing in the calculation of TF.

The BAC values for As, Cd, Cu and Pb are shown in Table 4. The determined values show a weak to intermediate absorption of the analysed elements from the soil into the leaves. A certain amount of the elements can also be absorbed from the air via the leaves. However, the significant and positive correlations between the elements in the soil and the washed leaves (except for Cd) shown in Table 2 confirm that *Crataegus* spp. absorb elements from the soil into the leaves via the roots to a certain extent. According to Baker's classification [12], *Crataegus* spp. could be categorised as an excluder due to the BAC values for As, Cd, Cu and Pb, which were below 1. Based on the values obtained for BAC and TF, it could be said that *Crataegus* spp. is unsuitable for phytoextraction or phytostabilisation of the studied elements. However, it is the plant that has adapted to the environment with different levels of pollution.

Table 4. Bioaccumulation factor (BAC) for As, Cd, Cu and Pb

Site	As	Cd	Cu	Pb
UI	0.182	0.140	0.041	0.237
U	0.025	<0.085	0.022	0.063
SU	0.023	<0.103	0.030	0.041
I1	0.075	<0.435	0.170	0.068
I2	0.036	<0.299	0.121	0.090
I3	<0.057	<0.108	0.041	0.035
I4	0.046	<0.255	0.042	0.121
I5	0.059	<0.192	0.049	0.125
R1	0.062	0.555	0.098	0.273
R2	0.067	0.286	0.125	0.472
T1	0.015	<0.048	0.033	0.107
T2	0.021	<0.191	0.038	0.084
TR	<0.086	<0.209	0.014	0.029
B	<0.103	/	0.170	0.064

The BAC values with the sign "<" are obtained by replacing the missing element concentration with the limit of determination of the element in the washed leaves (the LD for As is 1 mg/kg; for Cd 0.2 mg/kg); "/" Both values are missing in the calculation of BAC.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

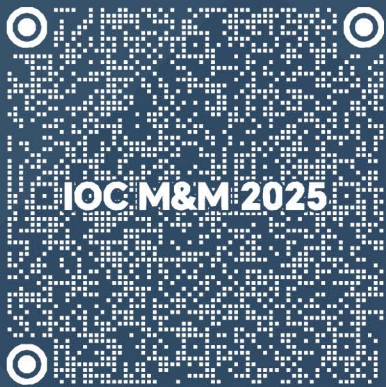
In this study, the accumulation and translocation of potentially toxic elements in *Crataegus* spp. were analysed. The results showed that this plant species has a low ability to accumulate As, Cd, Cu and Pb from the soil into the roots. In addition, *Crataegus* spp. has a limited potential for the translocation of these elements to the aboveground parts of the plant. Therefore, *Crataegus* spp. is not considered suitable for phytoextraction or phytostabilisation purposes.

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