

THE MINERAL INDUSTRY OF BULGARIA

By Walter G. Steblez

Bulgaria was a regional producer of nonferrous metal ores and concentrates that met most of the country's domestic and export requirements. Small quantities of iron and manganese ores and a variety of industrial minerals also were mined (asbestos, barite, fluorspar, gypsum, and limestone), largely for domestic consumption. Most of Bulgaria's requirements for iron ore, steel, and mineral fuels, however, had to be met through imports.

After several years of declining performance, Bulgaria's economy appeared to have made a recovery in 1998 as the gross domestic product rose by about 4% compared with that of 1997. Major changes in mineral production were few, if any, and the output of most minerals in 1998 was within the range of levels in 1997. Among metals, gold, refined copper, and manganese ore showed the greatest increases in output, amounting to 19%, 17%, and 7%, respectively, compared with those of 1997. However, crude steel production declined by 16%. Among industrial minerals produced in 1998, only barite and salt displayed significant change as output increased by 59% and 50%, respectively. The output of mineral fuels remained steady. (See table 1.)

The Government remained committed to transforming the economy to a market-based system. The legal basis for this transformation was the Law on Transformation and Privatization of State and Municipal-Owned Enterprises, which was adopted by Parliament in 1992.

State-owned assets that were to remain entirely state-owned were the Bulgarian State Railroads, Bulgargas (gas industry), Bulgarian Posts, Education and Sciences Establishment,

Cartography Company, National Cadastral Company, National Geodesy Company, Geopribor (geological equipment production), Geozashchita, and Vodokanalenzhnir (water main engineering) (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1997). The major commercial enterprises in Bulgaria's minerals industry are listed in table 2.

To promote private enterprise and foreign investment, the Government adopted the Underground Resources Act in 1998. Although the act stipulates that underground mineral wealth is the property of the state, it provides for claims by domestic and foreign companies to be approved for the development and operation of mineral deposits for up to 35 years with additional 15-year extensions. Exploration rights to private companies could be granted for up to 3 years (Kousseff, 1999). In addition, the National Program for Sustainable Development of Mining in Bulgaria was drafted and approved during the year. The program's chief aim was to restructure the country's minerals industry and to complete the privatization of the industry by yearend 1999.

For more extensive coverage of the mineral industry of Bulgaria, see the 1997 Minerals Yearbook, Volume III, Europe and Central Eurasia.

References Cited

- Kousseff, Vladimir, 1999, Bulgaria: Mining Journal Mining Annual Review, v. 332, no. 8537, June 25, p. 41.
U.S. Department of Commerce, 1997, Bulgaria Fiscal year 1998: U.S. Department of Commerce Country Commercial Guide, December, 50 p.

TABLE 1
BULGARIA: PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES 1/ 2/

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
METALS					
Aluminum, metal, secondary	4,412	4,519	4,417	4,500	4,500 e/
Bismuth, metal e/	40	40	40	40	40
Cadmium, metal, smelter	286	250	250	280	250
Copper:					
Ore:					
Gross weight thousand tons	19,000	21,050	21,123	21,836	20,726
Cu content e/ do.	75	105	106	109	105
Concentrate:					
Gross weight do.	370	378	444	463	438
Cu content do.	74	76	89	93	88
Metal, primary and secondary:					
Smelter	80,400	95,900	104,398	114,630	119,500
Refined	26,500	28,800	22,301	34,530	36,800
Gold, metal kilograms	2,000 e/	3,100	3,390	1,020	1,213
Iron and steel:					
Iron ore:					
Gross weight thousand tons	950 e/	959	1,000 e/	858	895
Fe content do.	268	270	282	242	250 e/
Iron concentrates do.	462	483	497	479	462
Metal:					
Pig iron for steelmaking do.	1,442	1,581	1,481	1,610	1,000 e/
Ferrous alloys, ferrosilicon e/ do.	20	8	8	10	10
Steel, crude do.	2,491	2,724	2,457	2,628	2,216
Semimanufactures, rolled do.	2,120	2,250	1,901	2,242	1,800 e/
Lead:					
Mine output, Pb content	50,000	37,000	33,000	30,000	35,000 e/
Concentrate:					
Gross weight	65,000	46,466	40,681	39,800	34,595
Pb content	43,000	33,000	28,500	27,900	24,200 e/
Metal, refined, primary and secondary	61,950	72,150	74,690	72,580	72,975
Manganese ore:					
Gross weight	--	19,000	44,270	47,430	55,600
Mn content	--	5,600	13,100	14,000	17,000 e/
Silver, mine output, Ag content e/	35	30	49	32	24 3/
Tin, metal	22	13	8	10	10 e/
Uranium, oxide, U content e/	600	600	600	600	600
Zinc:					
Mine output, Zn content	30,000	21,200	25,700	21,000	20,000 e/
Concentrate:					
Gross weight	54,900	49,200	38,000	38,420	33,600
Zn content	29,000	26,000	19,800	20,000	17,000 e/
Metal, smelter, primary and secondary	64,005	79,700	68,018	70,420	72,755
INDUSTRIAL MINERALS					
Asbestos fiber, all grades	100	400	300	300	300 e/
Barite	950,000	990,100	976,700	285,000	452,197
Cement, hydraulic thousand tons	1,910	2,070	2,137	1,656	1,700 e/
Clays:					
Bentonite do.	76	126	202	171	176
Kaolin, washed do.	145	168	189	150	150 e/
Refractory do.	60	61	67	62	62 e/
Feldspar do.	50	74	30	36	40 e/
Fluorspar e/ do.	5	4 3/	2 3/	2	2
Gypsum and anhydrite:					
Crude do.	161	163	169	156	185
Calcined do.	62	64	64	60	65 e/
Lime, industrial do.	665	952	991	1,000	1,000 e/
Limestone and dolomite do.	10,000 e/	--	10,443	10,842	11,000 e/
Nitrogen, N content of ammonia do.	995	1,203	1,194	1,200	1,000 e/
Perlite do.	35 e/	33	26	20	20 e/
Pyrites, gross weight e/ do.	150	150	150	150	150
Salt, all types do.	1,300	1,500	1,600	1,600	2,400
Sand and gravel thousand cubic meters	3,000 e/	--	3,075	2,140	2,000 e/

See footnotes at end of table.

TABLE 1--Continued
BULGARIA: PRODUCTION OF MINERAL COMMODITIES 1/ 2/

(Metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
INDUSTRIAL MINERALS--Continued					
Silica (quartz sand) thousand cubic meters	700 e/	707	832	557	593
Sodium carbonate, calcined do.	451	796	800	800	800
Sulfur: e/					
Sulfur content of pyrite	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Byproduct	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000	50,000
Total	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Sulfuric acid	427,959	453,827	524,714	500,000	500,000 e/
MINERAL FUELS AND RELATED MATERIALS					
Coal, marketable:					
Anthracite thousand tons	29	24	23	16	16
Bituminous do.	144	170	172	130	105
Brown do.	3,155	3,187	3,961	3,491	3,692
Lignite do.	25,429	27,449	28,101	26,929	27,435
Total do.	28,757	30,830	32,257	30,566	31,248
Coke thousand tons	1,116	1,240	1,157	1,200	1,200 e/
Natural gas, marketed million cubic meters	8	60	42	38	33
Petroleum:					
Crude, reported thousand tons	36	47	34	28	32
Refinery products e/ thousand 42-gallon barrels	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000

e/ Estimated. r/ Revised.

1/ Table includes data available through March 2000.

2/ In addition to commodities listed, chromite, magnesite, palladium, platinum, tellurium, and uranium and a variety of crude construction materials (common clays, dimension stone, and crushed stone) are produced, but available information is inadequate to make reliable estimates of output levels.

3/ Reported figure.

TABLE 2
BULGARIA: STRUCTURE OF THE MINERAL INDUSTRY IN 1998

(Thousand metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity	Major operating companies	Location of main facilities	Annual capacity
Cement	Reka Devnia	Devnia	1,825.
Do.	Zlatna Panega	Panega	1,300.
Do.	Others	Temelkovo, Dimitrograd, Pleven, and Beli Izvor	1,590.
Coal:			
Bituminous	Economic Mining and Power Combine (Smek) Balkanbass	Balkan Coal Basin in central Bulgaria, northwest of Silven	445.
Brown	G. Dimitrov	Pernik coal basin, southwest of Sofia	4,000.
Do.	Others	Bobov Dol and Pirin in western Bulgaria	3,100.
Lignite	SMEK East Maritsa	East Maritsa coal basin near Zagora	25,000.
Do.	Others	Marbas, Pernik, and Bobov Dol coal basins	5,300.
Copper (Cu):			
Concentrate, Cu content	Medet-Asarel Co.	Panagurishte, Pazardzhik District	25.
Do.	Chelopech Ltd.	Srednogorie, Sofia District	5.
Do.	Bradtze	Malko Turnovo	2.
Do.	Elatzite-Med Ltd.	Srednogorie, Sofia District	15.
Do.	Rosen	Burgas, near the Black Sea	1.
Do.	Tsar Asen	Srednogorie, Sofia District	2.
Do.	Burgaskii Mines Ltd., Zidorovo	Burgas, near the Black Sea	0.5.
Metal, refined	MDK SA Copper Smelter & Refinery	Srednogorie, Sofia District	120.
Iron ore	Kremikovtsi Iron and Steel Combine	Kremikovtsi	2,000.
Lead-zinc (Pb-Zn):			
Concentrate, Pb-Zn content	Gorubso Co.	Erma Reka, Kurdjali, Laki, and Rudozem, all in Madan area near Greek border	59 Pb, 47 Zn.
Do.	Madzharovo Ltd.	Near Plovdiv	3 Pb, 2 Zn.
Do.	Ossogovo Ltd.	Ossogovo Mountains, western Bulgaria	3 Pb, 2 Zn.
Do.	Ustrem Ltd.	Near Thundza River, eastern Bulgaria	3.5 Pb, 0.8 Zn.

See footnotes at end of table.

TABLE 2--Continued
 BULGARIA: STRUCTURE OF THE MINERAL INDUSTRY IN 1998

(Thousand metric tons unless otherwise specified)

Commodity	Major operating companies	Location of main facilities	Annual capacity
Lead-zinc (Pb-Zn)--Continued:			
Metal:			
Pb, refined	KCM SA 1/	Plovdiv	44.
Do.	Lead and Zinc Complex, Ltd.	Kurdjali	60.
Zn, smelter	KCM SA 1/	Plovdiv	60.
Do.	Lead and Zinc Complex, Ltd.	Kurdjali	30.
Manganese ore	Mangan Ltd. (Obrotchishte)	Varna District	50.
Natural gas	Ministry of Power Supply	Chiren field, in northwest Bulgaria	(2/).
Petroleum:			
Crude	do.	do.	(2/).
Refined	barrels per day Economic Trust for Petroleum Products	Refineries in Burgas, Plevan, and Ruse	260,000.
Steel, crude:	Kremikovtsi Iron and Steel Works	Near Sofia	2,300.
Do.	Stomana Iron and Steel Works	Pernik	1,300.

1/ Dimitur Blagoev became KCM SA following the country's transition to a market economy system.

2/ Insignificant capacity.