

WRITTEN QUESTION E-3483/09
by Hiltrud Breyer (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: Repairing mining-subsidence damage to public infrastructure in Naßweiler, Saarland

In parts of the Warndt area in south-west Saarland, serious subsidence damage has been caused as a result of the coal mining operations carried out until 2003 by the French company Houillères du Bassin Lorrain. The municipality of Großrosseln, which includes Naßweiler, is particularly affected. Not only private houses, but also public infrastructure facilities - roads, sewers and utility lines - have suffered major damage put at EUR 10 m by the municipality. Nearly half the inhabitants of Naßweiler have already left, resulting in considerable losses for the municipality in terms of support grants and tax revenue. Naßweiler's survival is threatened.

On the French side, monies from a restructuring fund financed by mining operators' reserves have been used to repair such damage. Though French coal mining operations on German territory have caused considered damage, the French Government is refusing to use funds on German territory on the ground that they are territorially restricted and, accordingly, may be used only in connection with damage and restructuring requirements in France.

1. Is the Commission of the opinion that the practice of repairing mining-subsidence damage to public infrastructure on a cross-border basis is in need of improvement?
2. Does the EU contribute funds for repairing mining-subsidence damage in France? Does the Commission see a possibility of using EU funds for infrastructure repairs?
3. How does the Commission view the fact that the restructuring fund's monies for mining-subsidence damage are used only on French territory although damage has also been caused in Germany by French coal mining operations and there is a cross-border impact?
4. What scope does the Commission see for improving the practice of repairing cross-border mining-subsidence damage?