

WRITTEN QUESTION P-3547/09
by Hiltrud Breyer (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: Repairing mining-subsidence damage to private property 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. Many houses have already had to be demolished; most of those remaining are seriously damaged; they have developed cracks, are leaning over badly, and are therefore virtually uninhabitable and unsaleable.

In the meantime, civil liability for repairing the mining-subsidence damage has now passed to the French Republic. For a long time, however, the individuals concerned had no specific French authority contact point. Inquiries were not answered; building sites and unused plots were neglected. Ground movement is still taking place as a result of coal mining. While damage repairs and compensation for the individuals concerned have often proceeded by mutual agreement, progress is extremely slow or non-existent in many instances. In those cases, compensation for the considerable loss of property value has been delayed for years or is still being refused. Subjectively at least, the individuals concerned are living in a legal vacuum; they are subject to serious stress, and their fundamental rights are being violated.

1. Is the Commission of the opinion that the practice of repairing mining-subsidence damage on a cross-border basis is in need of improvement?
2. How does the Commission view the French Government's conduct to date in this matter?
3. How does the Commission view the situation of the individuals concerned from a fundamental-rights perspective?
4. What scope does the Commission see for influencing the French Government so as to improve the practice of repairing cross-border mining-subsidence damage and support those affected by mining-subsidence damage in Naßweiler?