

WRITTEN QUESTION E-4368/05  
by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL)  
to the Commission

Subject: Failure to provide warnings about mines left over from wartime in the coastal areas of Croatia, to which tourists are increasingly returning

1. Is the Commission aware that mines still remain in the ground in Croatia, not only in the interior, along the fronts dating from the period 1992-1995 on the borders of the areas shielded against the new State by Serb inhabitants and the Yugoslav army, but that during the same period mines were also laid at a considerable distance, around military fortifications on the islands in the Adriatic Sea and along the coast?
2. Is the Commission aware that, since 1995, nearly 500 people have been involved in accidents with exploding mines in Croatia, which in most cases resulted in the loss of a foot and lower leg, while on some occasions causing further injuries or death, and that, for example, such accidents have so far happened to five people on the Adriatic island of Vis, which lies far off the coast in the region of Split?
3. Is the Commission aware of the case of the young Dutch archaeologist Tesse Stek, who in July 2005 near Komiža on the island of Vis, entered an area by a main road where there were no warnings, signs or prohibitions and lost one of his legs in an explosion?
4. Is the Commission aware that the accident referred to at 3 occurred at a panoramic lookout point for tourists, in a place where many tourists also practise paragliding on the hillsides and may touch the ground at unpredictable locations?
5. Is the Commission aware that the local authority in Vis did not know about these facts and that Croatia's Ministry of Defence has specifically denied the presence of any mines, although local residents claim that everyone knows about them? Why did the authorities responsible fail to provide visible warnings to visitors concerning the presence of hazardous debris left over from the war and to draw their attention to the need to avoid areas which have not yet been completely cleared?
6. Will the Commission contact the Croatian Government about this and draw attention both to the unacceptable dangers to the many tourists from the present EU Member States and to the disadvantages for the further development of the potential for tourism in Croatia, which will probably join the EU in future, if this hidden problem becomes increasingly well known but measures are not taken to clear away the hazardous material completely and to provide conspicuous warnings in areas which have yet to be cleared?
7. What support can the EU and its Member States give to Croatia during the pre-accession stage to assist more rapid mine clearance and improve information to visitors?

Source: TV Nederland 3, Nova current affairs programme, 12 November 2005.