

Comments on Croatia's extension request

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Croatia has a good understanding of the extent of the remaining challenge and has the necessary capacity to complete its clearance tasks. The extension request offers a good overview of progress made and it presents a comprehensive and appropriate plan for the extended period. Croatia is requesting seven years to complete its remaining challenge of almost 412km², and this appears to be reasonable.

Among the positive points:

- Croatia has presented a detailed and clear overview of the progress made since the first extension request. It has also provided a clear picture of the extent of the remaining challenge, as well as the annual targets for the forthcoming extension period.
- Croatia has provided the annual costings for survey and clearance, with the expected sources of funding, and excellent measures taken to date to secure funds.
- Croatia has provided a good description of the socio-economic impact of antipersonnel mine contamination and land release. During the first extended period, Croatia made good progress in reducing the socio-economic impact of mines: there are no longer hazardous areas near houses or close to vital roads and infrastructure of any kind. The plan for the second extended period has been developed according to socio-economic priorities.
- The extension request provides detailed information about the management, standards and increased capacity in place to conduct land release.
- Croatia has made a significant contribution of its own funding, over €417 million to date. We commend Croatia's intention to provide over 60% of the funds required in the second extended period.

Among the points that will require clarification:

During the first extension period only half of the land release plan was achieved. Although Croatia consistently received large amounts of international funding for mine action, inability to complete the plan is attributed primarily to insufficient demining funds.

For the upcoming extended period, the extension request states that, "the only risk factor in funding this plan is inability to withdraw European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) funds as planned." It would be useful if Croatia could confirm whether this funding is expected to be approved before the next extension period commences, as the request does not give a timeframe for when the funding will be approved.

The current National Mine Action Strategy is for the period 2009 to 2019. Croatia should outline what plans are in place, if any, to develop a strategy for the whole extension period.

The extension request states that as the remaining areas to be cleared are mainly forest (89.7%), costs will increase because mechanical demining will be reduced. The extension request mentions that it is

necessary to develop methods and techniques for the use of dogs for mine detection in forests on mountain terrain. It would be useful to know more about what is being done to make this happen.

There appears to be some inconsistency in the reporting of the total amount of area remaining to be addressed. On page 31, it is stated that as of December 31st 2017, 411.5km² of mines/ERW remain. However, the total planned land release for 2017 is 56.42km² (tables 1 and 2, pp. 13-14), and the total planned land release for 2018-2026 is 387.3km² (table 14, p.41). That makes a total of 443.7km². We trust this discrepancy could be clarified.

If there was a way to conclude the programme by 31 December 2025 instead of 1 March 2026, Croatia would contribute to the goal of completing mine clearance by 2025 as adopted by States Parties at the Third Review Conference.