



# PROJECT FACTSHEET

New EU Member States Division January 2019

## DEMINING AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF MINE VICTIMS IN CROATIA IMPROVING SAFETY FOR THE CROATIAN POPULATION IN MINE-INFESTED AREAS



Switzerland's demining project in Croatia is helping to create a safe and protected environment for people living in heavily mined areas. © CROMAC

Mines and other explosive remnants of war are a dangerous legacy from Croatia's 1991–96 war and they continue to pose a threat to the local population. Integrating mine victims economically and socially is also a challenge for Croatian society. As part of its enlargement contribution, Switzerland has provided CHF 3 million to support mine-clearance measures and improve the situation for mine victims and their families. The goal is to improve living conditions for people living in mine-infested areas.

It is estimated that 368 square kilometres of Croatia are still infested by around 32,000 explosive remnants of war. This poses a risk to the people living in these areas and also prevents them from using their forests and farmlands. Because of the forestation, the mine-infested areas are difficult to access and the demining work is costly and time-consuming. Croatia was supposed to have destroyed all anti-personnel mines on its territory by March 2019 in line with international agreements. This deadline has now been extended to 2026, because in spite of major national investment and financial support from the EU, demining is advancing at only a slow pace. This makes Croatia reliant on external support.

### KOTAR-STARI GAJ WOODS CLEARED OF MINES IN RECORD TIME

Thanks to Switzerland's contribution in 2018, the demining process is now advancing more quickly. In September, 294 local deminers defused 3,585 explosive remnants of war covering 1.8 square kilometres of the Kotar-Stari Gaj woods. The Swiss-funded operation was carried out in record time without interruption – only 39 days – thanks to thorough planning by the Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC) and major human effort. When this is compared with the yearly average in the whole of Croatia (two to three thousand mines defused each year), the efficiency of the Swiss project is clear. 2018 marked a record high for CROMAC with 9,567 defused unexploded ordinances. This area can only be definitively cleared as productive land when the surrounding areas have also been demined.

### MORE CIVILIAN MINE VICTIMS AFTER THE WAR THAN DURING THE WAR

The section of the Kotar-Stari Gaj woods that was cleared of mines under the Swiss project lies 60km to the south of the Croatian capital, Zagreb, and borders Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is one of the most dangerous mine-infested areas in Croatia because the minefields border directly on the residential areas. There were more civilian casualties after the war than during the war itself. Since 1991, 31 people have died and 45 have been seriously injured because of the mines in these woods alone. A monumental headstone commemorates the death of a 33-year-old local deminer. Mine-related accidents in this area usually result from activities linked to deforestation, agriculture or hunting.

Dragomir Brkic and Ivica Portner are two inhabitants with first-hand experience of the deadly risk from the mines. Brkic's father, a civilian, was badly injured in these woods and had to have his leg amputated. Portner had a friend who was killed whilst clearing

the woods of mines. Brkic and Portner used to be deminers themselves. Today they are in charge of the post-clearance inspection. They argue that the people's fear of the mined areas cannot be erased by demining alone. Fear and negative experiences are handed down from generation to generation.

than 12,300 mine warning signs have been put up throughout the country. CROMAC has also devised an app – Misportal – which provides detailed maps of dangerous areas to help people.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION FOR MINE VICTIMS

In addition to the actual mine clearance and awareness-raising activities, victim support is an important pillar of the overall package of measures that fall under mine action. The Swiss-Croatian project includes the provision of support to victims and their families. By compiling and analysing the needs of those affected in a national database, measures to support their economic and social integration should be defined and implemented by the project's close in 2024.

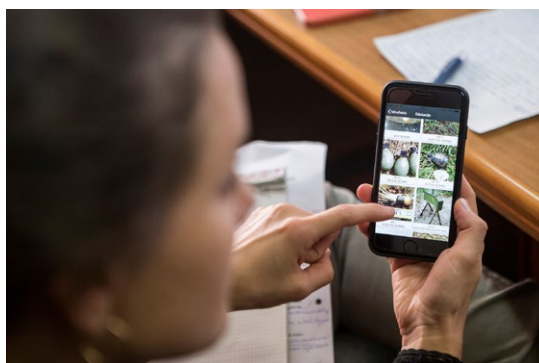
## AWARENESS-RAISING HELPS REDUCE CASUALTIES

There has not been a mine-related incident in Croatia since 2017. One of the main reasons for this is raising public awareness of the risks involved. More

Dragomir Brkic and Ivica Portner live in one of the villages bordering the woods where mines are being cleared as part of the enlargement contribution. They are former deminers now working in the post-clearance inspection. © SDC



CROMAC's «Misportal» app provides information about the different types of mines in Croatia. © SDC



### THE PROJECT IN BRIEF

#### TOPIC

Improving public safety

#### COUNTRY

Croatia

#### PARTNERS

Foreign state institutions (National State Institute North)

#### CURRENT PHASE / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Parts of Croatia that are suspected of being infested with mines cover hundreds of square kilometres. This compromises both the safety of the local population and their ability to use their forests and farmlands safely.

#### AIM

A safe and protected environment for people living in mine-infested areas with greater socio-economic chances and economic opportunities from using the land.

#### ACTIVITIES

- Demining in Kotar woods, Sisak-Moslavina County
- Needs analysis of mine victims
- Setting up of a mine victim database
- Provision of relevant educational and empowerment measures

#### TARGET GROUPS

- Institutions working with mine victims
- Political decision makers
- People living in mine-infested areas
- Direct victims (mine casualties) and their families

#### COSTS

Swiss contribution: CHF 3 million

#### RESPONSIBLE FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION:

Croatian Mine Action Centre (CROMAC)

#### DURATION

2017–2024

SWITZERLANDS CONTRIBUTION  
TO THE ENLARGED EU  
January 2019  
[www.erweiterungsbeitrag.admin.ch](http://www.erweiterungsbeitrag.admin.ch)