

Adopted resolution

Croatian Ministry of Environment attempts to shut down NGO *Green Action/Friends of the Earth Croatia*

The Croatian Ministry of the Environment, Spatial Planning and Construction has launched a case at the Court of Offences in Zagreb against the biggest Croatian Environmental NGO, Green Action / Friends of the Earth Croatia, threatening its closure with a fine of between 50.000 and 110.000 Euros. The case is the result of a peaceful protest action held in front of the Ministry on 12th March 2009.

The action consisted of a small group of activists exhibiting empty cans of paint and varnish in the shape of a question mark for 7 hours in front of the Ministry to protest at the Ministry's failure to implement the Waste Act and provide collection points for waste paint. The Ministry, however, in its statement to the court, described it as illegal dumping of waste, which carries a fine of between 50.000 and 110.000 Euros - a sum which would effectively bankrupt the NGO.

Ironically, the action was successful and led to the provision of free waste paint disposal services at the recycling centres in Zagreb.

It is hard to see this court case as anything other than an attempt by the Ministry to silence the biggest and most successful environmental NGO in Croatia,

It is an embarrassing step backwards for a government which sees itself as leading the country towards EU membership.

We, European Greens, condemn such treatment of civil society organisations in Croatia and demand that the Croatian Government:

- immediately withdraws the current Court case against Green Action/Friends of the Earth Croatia which could result in its bankruptcy and remove it from Croatian civil society;
- to start implementing in practice the National Strategy of Environmental Protection which requires democratic dialogue with civil society and citizens;
- to adhere to the democratic standards that are required of a future member of EU.