

A gas rig that sank in the northern Adriatic in 2020 may be leaking gas, possibly methane, Greenpeace Croatia warned over the weekend.

The 65.5-metre high Ivana D, an automated gas platform located about 50 kilometres from the Croatian mainland, sank on 5 December 2020, likely due to a heavy storm.

The Witness, one of Greenpeace's vessels, sailed to the area where Ivana D was located in early June and divers who reached the rig noticed repetitive gas leaks. Greenpeace Croatia said a video shot underwater "clearly shows gas bubbles coming from the rusty pipes of the rig."

Croatia's oil and gas group INA, majority-owned by Hungary's MOL, quickly denied the report as "incorrect and unscientific." It said INA was regularly monitoring the sunken Ivana D platform and added that in case of a gas leak, visible bubbles would be "drastically bigger."

Greenpeace Croatia director Zoran Tomić told EURACTIV that "for a full year and a half, we have been listening to soothing assurances from INA and the government that everything is okay, investigation underway, and that the public will be duly informed in a timely manner." "Now we have the opportunity to see that certain gas leakage exists there, and one might logically conclude that it could be methane. We demand that these circumstances are urgently investigated, and the public finally informed about the true state of affairs." Greenpeace said that an official investigation has been going on for 17 months but without concrete results.

The Nacional weekly reported in December 2021, it had received what it said was a classified document warning about extensive damage to the gas platform that could lead to dangerous gas leaks.

Croatia, whose tourism industry is largely based on the natural beauty of its Adriatic coast, has had few major ecological disasters so far.

In the early 2000s, it shelved a plan for a Druzhba-Adria pipeline, supposed to connect Russian oilfields to Croatia's deep-sea port of Omišalj, due to environmental concerns, Euractiv writes.