

Partnership Action

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT NEWSLETTER. VOL.1, NO.5. DECEMBER 2005

Welcome to the fifth edition of the Environmental Partnership Newsletter, the last one in 2005!
Your feedback is extremely important to us!
Please tell us if you wish to hear from us in the future!

NEWS IN BRIEF

- On 4th November, the National Clean Business Awards 2005 ceremony was held in Poland. For the first time the winners can apply for nomination to the DG-Environment's European Business Awards for the Environment. For more details see: www.euro-eko-nagrody.pl
- On 22nd November, the Tatra Fund celebrated its first anniversary together with the opening of the exhibition: "**Tatras After the Windstorm**" by Czech photographer Radek Michut. Details can be found at: www.fondtatry.sk
- Run for a tree! On 1st November more than 200 trees were planted along the Krakow – Moravia – Vienna trail. This successful project is in collaboration with the **Prague International Marathon. Skanska CZ**, general programme partner, also contributed.

OUR ADVOCACY PROGRAMMES

Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation tests court practices

In Hungary, the legal requirements for registering an NGO are fairly clear, but most NGOs experience difficulties even if experienced lawyers prepare the documents.

There are large differences among the practices of individual courts, e.g. **it is notoriously difficult to register an NGO in the capital but a lot simpler in its environs.** There is also no simplified procedure for registering small self-organised groups which means they struggle to obtain a legal framework for their activities. **As a result of this situation HEPE, and its nonprofit lawyer and expert partners launched a research project this autumn: they created an association in each county and submitted identical documents to 20 courts for registration.** By the end of October 2005, all replies had been received and - not surprisingly - no associations were registered without further comment. Some of the rulings listed six densely typed pages of extra requirements. When compared, it was found that there wasn't one single issue all rulings unanimously addressed. What's more sometimes the same points required different changes! A number of the demands were considered by the lawyers to be in contradiction with the letter and the spirit of law.

The data gained has been compiled into a study (prepared by the Environmental Management and Law Association), which outlines the main lessons and makes recommendations for improvements. The study will be presented to the National Judicial Council, the official body issuing law interpretation and guidance to courts.

We hope that the findings will persuade the Council to address the problems, standardise court practices and simplify NGO registration. In the long run, we wish to help to improve legislation, reduce administration and increase the level of democracy and transparency.

Hopefully community groups in the future will be able to organise themselves more easily and work to clear, consistent rules, which facilitate rather than hinder the establishment and operation of NGOs, the core of civil society.

Romanian Environmental Partnership Advocating for changes to the National Environmental Fund

Thanks to serious efforts, recommendations for changing the granting mechanism of the Romanian Environmental Fund were accepted in October 2005 by the Romanian Ministry of Environment.

The fund, which collects environmental taxes, importing fees and penalties from polluters, supports environmental development projects by distributing several million Euros each year. Applications for loans and grants by companies, enterprises, and NGOs have been made to the fund since 2003.



Photographer > Radek Michut

The Romanian Environmental Partnership Foundation, in partnership with the Green Transylvania Association formulated a petition signed by 59 Romanian NGOs stating that the fund was completely unfriendly to NGOs. The main criticism was that NGOs were treated equally with other applicants, thus setting impossible conditions. These included the requirement to provide a bank guarantee, make a min. 60% own contribution and not permitting co-financing. As a result only one NGO managed to receive funding during 2004. A meeting took place in October with the Minister and the Deputy Minister of the Environment and the Director of the Environmental Fund. **As a result the application procedures and conditions were changed significantly, making the fund more NGO-friendly.** This means: amended application guidelines, separate treatment of NGO applications and project support increased to 80% (with the allowance of 10% cash and 10% in-kind contribution as well as co-financing).

Fair Trade: first market research in Hungary

Up to very recently, Fair Trade, the alternative trading system that provides a fairer income for primary, smallholder producers in developing countries, has received little attention in Hungary. Except for some isolated initiatives, there has been no concerted effort from civil societies or official agencies to introduce its concept or products.

At the beginning of this year, this situation drastically changed: a coalition of mainly environmental NGOs launched a coordinated campaign for Fair Trade in Hungary. They made their debut at the Eco-fest in April: a successful two-day festival featuring presentations, debates, exhibitions and an organic Fair Trade cafeteria. Since then they have travelled around the country with their cafeteria attending summer festivals and similar events, reaching out to literally thousands of people. The next step of the work will be finding the best way to introduce products to the market: either through organic and specialized shops, on-line trading or supermarket shelves. However, to develop business and marketing plans, hard data about consumer attitudes to the concept were required.



The Hungarian Environmental Partnership Foundation, which has assisted the Fair Trade coalition since its establishment, undertook to execute this task. Using its own financial and human resources, it contracted a market research agency to study the issue. The research, delivered in September 2005 showed that the concept of Fair Trade is hardly known among Hungarian consumers. It also showed that the ideal consumer is comparatively well off (due to the higher prices of the goods), has a certain level of conscientiousness and also is sensitive towards to problems of poor countries. While the presence of these ideal consumers wasn't measurable, it was felt that a considerable segment (app. 13%) can be sensitised towards the issue, if presented with credible, convincing information about the benefits of Fair Trade.

The survey has been heavily used by NGOs to plan their image and marketing messages. The results have also been presented to the mass media at a press conference, combined with a tasting of Fair Trade coffees, teas and chocolate.

"Message in the Bottle" a Friends of the Earth – SPZ project supported by the Slovak Environmental Partnership

In November 2005, a campaign focusing on the increasing environmental pollution caused by beverage packaging, was launched. During the first week 800 bottles containing messages for the Slovak Prime Minister were collected.

Experiences from different countries have shown that the implementation of a deposit system on beverage packaging leads to a significant decrease in waste pollution in comparison to the waste separation method. Despite this fact, the Slovak Ministry of the Environment has been discussing the system with the Ministry of Economy for the last three years without any tangible results. **Friends of the Earth – SPZ decided to speed up the whole process by initiating the creative "Message in the Bottle" campaign.** In November, they challenged Slovaks to send letters in empty, used PET bottles to the Slovak Prime Minister asking him to push forward the application of the deposit system in Slovakia. The organisation plans in the future to organise information tours in ten Slovak cities and to simulate the deposit system in the Capital for one day. The campaign wants to demonstrate the economical effects of the deposit system and its advantages compared to other measures. Friends of the Earth – SPZ promotes sustainable living and introduces positive solutions in the area of waste management and toxic problems.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our Friends, Grantees & Supporters!