

Successful conference on heavy truck traffic

The Clean Air Action Group together with the Environmental Working Group of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP, the leading governing party) and the Green Section of Fidesz National Civic Union (the leading opposition party) organised a successful conference in Budapest on the 15th of December 2006. About 150 persons participated in the event: members of the Parliament, officials from ministries, mayors and other representatives of local governments, NGO activists, scientists.

In their introductory speech, *Sándor Orosz* (MSZP, Vice-Chairman of the Environmental Committee of the Hungarian Parliament), *Zoltán Illés* (Fidesz, former Chairman of the Committee) and *Péter Mészáros* (President of the Hungarian Traffic Club) all emphasised the serious economic and environmental problems caused by heavy trucks.

Erika Bozzay, Head of Unit of the Ministry of Economy and Transport informed about the government's plans to extend the present vignette system (which is valid now only on motorways) to other main roads in April 2007. Furthermore, in 2008 an electronic toll system is to be introduced on the motorways.

György Gémesi, Mayor of Gödöllő and President of the Hungarian Association of Local Governments stressed that local governments have serious difficulties in protecting the health of their residents and maintaining their roads which are being ruined by heavy trucks. Similar experiences were told by other mayors present at the conference.

Ueli Balmer, Deputy Head of the Transport Policy Section in the Federal Office for Spatial Development in Switzerland presented the heavy truck fee introduced in his country in 2001.

Gyula Hegyi, Member of the European Parliament spoke about the new Eurovignette Directive which came into force in 2006.

András Lukács, President of the Clean Air Action Group presented the arguments for rapid introduction of a heavy truck fee in Hungary. He proposed that the system should be similar to that in Switzerland, and based on the trucks' tachograph.

Miklós Hinfner, General Secretary of the Hungarian Road Transporters' Association emphasised that the environmental characteristics of trucks have been improving continuously.

Imre Kovács, Deputy General Director of MÁV Cargo (Freight Division of Hungarian Railways) spoke about the conditions necessary for improving rail freight transport.

The conference was followed by a press conference, where 5 national television channels, several radio stations, the Hungarian News Agency as well as several national newspapers were represented.

Some of the presentations can be found (mostly in Hungarian) on the website <http://www.levego.hu/kamionstop/>