

Help stop the wasting of EU taxpayers' money on unsustainable projects!

EU aid to new Member States is funding unsustainable projects. The Clean Air Action Group (Hungary) claims that this contradicts EU laws and has filed a complaint with the European Parliament. Now CAAG is mobilising NGOs from other countries to inform the Committee about similar situations in their countries as well as their opinion about the issue.

The European Commission has approved billions of Euros in aid to new Member States for the years 2007-2013. A substantial part of this aid is to be used for the construction of new roads, even though road transport users do not pay the full costs of their activity even today. For example, in Hungary each year heavy trucks create several billion Euros in damage which are not paid by the operators of these vehicles. Another example is the illegal accounting of private use of cars as company use which results in a loss of revenues for the Hungarian state budget equalling to about 3 per cent of the GDP.

In CAAG's opinion the construction of new roads should be financed in accordance with the polluter (user) pays principle instead of putting more burden on EU taxpayers and society as a whole.

Furthermore, the EU-required Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) prepared to assess the Transport Operational Programme of Hungary concluded that if implemented, this Programme would promote environmentally unsustainable activities. Therefore further EU financial aid for this purpose would be in direct violation of EU legislation. The Hungarian government certainly realised this problem because the English version of the SEA submitted to the European Commission did not include the conclusion in the Hungarian version regarding the programme's unsustainability.

At the same time less than one per cent of the total EU aid would be spent on energy efficiency, although this is one of the most acute problems. For example, in Hungary three times more energy is used to heat one cubic meter in buildings than in the neighbouring Austria. Public transport and railway would also receive much less aid than would be expedient (and moreover, a large part of this aid would be spent very inefficiently – for a 7-kilometer long metro line).

If the present structure of the EU aid will remain, it will enhance processes in Hungary which are unsustainable socially, economically as well as environmentally. The situation is similar in other new member states in Central and Eastern Europe. Environmental NGOs have already warned the European Commission and national governments many times about these problems, however without real results. They know that the European Commission has tried on many occasions to refuse those demands of national governments which consider only the short term interests of certain business circles and which are unsustainably on the long term. Still, the Commission has been ceding too much to the pressure of national governments, even if these demands violate the basic principles and even the legislation of the European Union concerning market economy, environment and sustainability.

In January 2007, the Clean Air Action Group (CAAG) wrote a letter to the European Commission warning it about Hungary's Transport Operational Programme's contradictions with EU law. Even after several exchange of letters, CAAG did not receive a clarification from the Commission on the essence of the problem. CAAG subsequently filed a complaint about the case to the Committee on Petitions of the European Parliament in October 2007 and

is still awaiting a reply. CAAG believes that when making their decision, the Committee should consider also the urgent need to redirect EU investment into other fields, like energy efficiency and environmentally sustainable transport modes.

Now CAAG is mobilising NGOs from other countries to inform the Committee about similar situations in their countries as well as about their opinion about the issue. If you would like to help, please see: www.levego.hu/english/ec-op-ep0810-ngos.doc

Budapest, October 2008

Clean Air Action Group
www.levego.hu

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Documents on the case

[Petition of the Clean Air Action Group \(CAAG\) to the European Parliament \(06.10.2007\)](#)

Annexes to the Petition

1. [Reply of DG TREN to CAAG concerning CAAG's opinion of the Hungarian Transport Operational Program](#)
2. [CAAG's complaint to the European Commission \(03.01.2007\)](#)
3. [CAAG's letter to DG TREN and DG REGIO \(02.02.2007\)](#)
4. [CAAG's letter to DG TREN and DG REGIO \(19.02.2007\)](#)
5. [Reply from DG TREN to CAAG \(20.02.2007\)](#)
6. [CAAG's letter to DG TREN \(05.06.2007\)](#)
7. [Reply from DG TREN to CAAG \(06.07.2007\)](#)
8. [CAAG's letter to DG Environment \(25.09.2007\)](#)
9. [The European Commission's Decision B\(2007\) 3794 of 01.08.2007 on the Hungarian Transport Operational Program \(in Hungarian\)](#)
10. [Letter from DG Environment to CAAG \(10.10.2007\)](#)
11. [CAAG's opinion about the reply from DG Environment \(12.11.2007\)](#)

Other related materials

- [Article in the T&E Bulletin 3/2007 \(p. 3\)](#)
- [CAAG's opinion on the Hungarian Transport Operational Program \(in Hungarian, 08.11.2006\)](#)