

***Birds would say no for re-injection – a reaction to Burkhard Sanner's report  
by Gábor Szita, President of HGA, Hungary***

In IGA News No. 62, Dr. Burkhard Sanner, as the President of EGEC gave a report on the 6<sup>th</sup> Inter-parliamentary Meeting held in Edinburgh last October. He mentioned a well informed Hungarian member of the European Parliament (MEP), who has been pressed by the Hungarian Geothermal Association to cancel the relevant legislation on geothermal.

In this context HGA needs to announce the followings:

1. No one from the members of HGA, including Board Members, has entered into relations with any of Hungarian MEPs.
2. HGA has never *pressed* anybody to change the legislation. HGA is just *trying* to change, always saying its arguments, some of the existing domestic decrees throughout the negotiations with the Ministry of Environment.

Dr. Sanner offered the governments to allow for transition periods and support re-injection projects. HGA fully agrees with that. The problem is that the existing Hungarian legislation provides very short (practically no) transition period and there is no any support for re-injection. The true, however, is that there are 70 times (!) more penalties for those who do not use re-injection. Dr. Sanner thought that HGA was fighting against re-injection. That is not true. HGA is fighting against the general obligation for reinjection came in force in 2004 in Hungary, which is in contradiction with the Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament on water policy and acts as an unnecessary barrier for the future developments. Financial support, or from national or from EU sources, may help to develop the technology of re-injection into sandstone reservoirs. That is we need first before drilling hundreds of re-injection wells. We have already collected many experiences on unsuccessful re-injections since the first test was carried out in 1978.

The fact is that there is successful re-injection in Hungary has been operated for over 20 years – into fractured limestone.

What about the birds? – the reader may ask.

It's an interesting story. One of the biggest geothermal users has a large artificial lake for storing the cooled down geothermal water before discharging it into a river. It freezes very seldom. The vegetation is rich and different kind of fishes can be found in the water. Birds have also taken to that lake. Some of them hatch out their eggs, others just take a rest when migrate from one place to other. The 20 year long observation of those birds shows that there are some protected ones and two of them appear only on the bank of that lake. However, due to the existing legislation the lake is to be cleared off. Or the geothermal company will stop its activity because of the high rate of penalty, or all the water will be re-injected. If they are asked birds will obviously say no for re-injection.

Life is sometimes more complicated and colourful than we could imagine.

***HGA managed to make modify a government decree***

Based on the results of negotiations between HGA and the Ministry of Environment the Hungarian Government modified its 2004 decree.

Negotiations started shortly after the “Statement of HGA on the situation of harnessing of geothermal energy in Hungary” was accepted by Second Workshop of HGA in October 2004. The bilateral talks lasted for almost half a year and the Ministry of Environment drew up its proposal in July 2005. Conciliation with the other ministries consumed another half a year.

The modified decree contains that geothermal users may again apply for individual consideration regarding emission limits if geothermal waters are let in surface recipients. It

allows the geothermal companies that if they issue applications for individual limits and those are accepted by the local environmental authorities users will pay less penalty. Hungarian Geothermal Association, which has 21 corporate members and represents 70% of Hungarian geothermal utilisation, hopes that the modification is only the first step of creating a friendly legal environment for geothermal energy in Hungary.