

Hungarian Geothermal Association: After Novation

The latest information about Hungary for the IGA News readers was probably the report on the European Geothermal Conference approximately a year ago. By the time of EGC 2003 where some 160 participants gathered from 28 countries, the Hungarian Geothermal Association had just overcome a deep crisis period.

Disaccordance within the Board of HGA started in 2002, just after the new board had been elected in July. Things went worse and worse the next year when three attempts on holding the annual general meeting of HGA failed. The situation became even worse in April 2003 when the Hungarian geothermal community was divided into two parts because another geothermal association was formed under the leadership of HGA's former vice president. Most of the Board members of HGA also joined the new group.

At that time, late spring 2003, the Hungarian Geothermal Association had a practically inaccessible president and an uncertain membership.

Five of the members, however, decided to save HGA and called together an extraordinary meeting in May 2003. That general assembly accepted a new constitution and voted on a totally new Board for HGA. The withdrawn president appealed to the law and some of the members initiated a reviewal taken by the Prosecutor. Legal procedures lasted for almost a year when in May 2004 the General Meeting of HGA could definitively close them.

When the new Board started its activity in June 2003 it faced with the following main problems:

1. No roster for members of HGA was available.
2. Minutes of general and board meetings were missing.
3. Bank account was almost out of money.
4. Both HGA and geothermal energy (in general) had very bad reputation in Hungary.

Due to serious efforts made by the new Board, HGA had its updated roster with 55 members by the end of 2003. During this period the Board was sitting five times and adopted 14 resolutions. So the Board managed to consolidate HGA both organically and financially.

By the beginning of 2004 time had come to start the professional activity. In January 2004 HGA published the first number of its quarterly news bulletin called "Ground Heat Newsletter". This journal, which has been issued, in the meantime, three times already contains useful information for the geothermal energy users, such as reports on international/national workshops, observations of regulation, lists of upcoming geothermal events, news related to the HGA, retrospection to the past of harnessing geothermal energy, etc.

The Hungarian Geothermal Association, for the first time in its 9 year history, organised a workshop in order to discuss the present situation and possibilities for the future and main problems of geothermal in Hungary. The fact is that since the legal regulation related to geothermal waters has been changed in January 2004. The energetic use of geothermal waters gets into a disadvantageous position compared to the use of these waters in spas and thermal baths. For instance geothermal water utilised for energetic purpose has to be re-injected, while re-injection is forbidden if the water has been already used in a bath. Re-injection into argillaceous sandstone, which is the main aquifer in Hungary has been forced by the authorities for over 15 years. Unfortunately no general method for re-injection at low pressure in an economically feasible way has been found yet for any of those 10-15 pilot equipments that have been built and operated. It is even a bigger problem that a report, which was

compiled by a state scientific institute in 2001 introduces 8 reference places for successful re-injection to sandstone in Hungary, while the situation in practice is completely the opposite.

HGA has sent remarks and reflections to the ministries and authorities recently in order to respond about the Mining Act, which also regulates the use of geothermal energy in Hungary. HGA hopes to eliminate existing contradictions within the act and the executive order.

The Hungarian Geothermal Association intends to go ahead with the analysis of legal environment for geothermal energy utilisation and would like to be a reputable member of the international geothermal community.