REPORT about the Geothermic Workshop in Iceland

18-22 September 2017

Municipality of Kaposvár

The City of Kaposvár is committed to environmental protection and sustainable development. Kaposvár has a medium-term strategic plan called Smart City 2050 Concept which aims to reach our sustainability goals. The main principle of this plan is for Kaposvár to become an energy-independent city using mostly renewable energy resources.

The Department of City Development of our Municipality keeps looking for applications and funds which can help to reach our goals, so when we heard about the application opportunity of Geothermic Workshop in Iceland in the framework of Norwegian Funds in construction HU03-Bilat-2017, we were determined to apply for grant. As geothermal resources are indigenous and often quite economical in the long term in comparison with fossil based energy resources, in addition to being environmentally friendly, their utilization has the potential to increase energy security, contribute to savings on community and/or family scales, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality, it was obvious that we submit the application form, and our application was successful.

Three colleagues of the City Development Department of Municipality of Kaposvár participated in the workshop organized between 18-22 September on Iceland, Reykjavik. On 19-20 September we listened to lectures about geothermic energy, furthermore, on the last day we had on the spot visits.

On the first day lectures were held in Orkustofnun (National Energy Authority in Iceland). The colleagues of Orkustofnun talked about the current energy situation of the world and the problems we have to face such as the lack of non-renewable energy resources. After they introduced the possible solutions: the symphony scenario, where energy policy is government controlled with strong policies and incentives, and jazz scenario where energy policy is market controlled. They assumed that the symphony scenario leads to the growing use of renewable energy and sustainable countries. As a result, Orkustofnun drew our attention to the fact that local municipalities can play an important role in developing energy efficiency.

On the second day, we also attended lectures at Orkusotfnun, and afterwards we had an opportunity to visit companies dealing with renewable geothermic energy. There was a company where the lecturer lived in Hungary for 10 years, so he was able to give country specific advices to us. He explained that drilling is the riskiest part of geothermic projects, as they are quite expensive, and even if drilling is well prepared, a well might not be found at the located area. So, it is important that the European Union and other national funds subsidy the drillings, not only the implementation part of geothermic projects, as if you already have the well, it is more safer to start an investment. This is a very important information for Municipalities to start lobbying at national level.

On our last day we visited geothermic places such as the Hellisheiði Power Station, perfect example for using geothermic energy, and Gunnuhver hot springs. We also saw greenhouses operated by the Agricultural University of Iceland, where they grow tomatoes for instance, which is otherwise impossible to grow in Iceland. Finally, we arrived at the Blue Lagoon, which is a geothermic bath, using the waste water of Svartsengi Power Plant.

Altogether this workshop was very useful. It was interesting to get know a country with such a different environment. Although these differences mean that we can’t do everything the same way as Iceland does, but the way they are thinking about environmental protection is the thing that we should learn from them. Environmental protection and sustainable development is really important for them. If we study their point of view, we can reach our goals by 2050.