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AUDIT ON THE MEASURES AIMING AT THE PROTECTION OF AIR QUALITY HAS ENDED

Summary for the press -

Audit on the measures aiming at the protection of air quality (18006)

The State Audit Office of Hungary has finished the audit on the measures aiming at the protection of air quality concerning the period between 2014-2016. The SAO stated that the organisations responsible for air quality had performed their activities in accordance with their scope of competence and responsibility. The annual average concentration and total emission of air pollutants decreased significantly, therefore measures aimed at the improvement of air quality were effective. The audit detected that the concentration of particularly dangerous air pollutants was related to the incineration of household wastes. Based on the above, the SAO notes that the air quality may be significantly increased with the suppression of household waste incineration.

The maintenance of adequate air quality is a transnational task which shall be performed continuously. Poor air quality is an issue affecting broad sections of society, while air pollution is one of the most significant health risk factors. Taking into account the particular importance of this field and promoting the implementation of sustainability objectives, the SAO assessed measures affecting air quality within the framework of an international cooperation.

In Hungary, the most important issue relates to small dust pollution which arises from the transport, the energy sector and increasingly the heating, especially retail solid combustion. Conceptual and strategic documents identified as prioritized tasks the objectives related to the improvement of air quality, as well as the means necessary for the attainment of such objectives.

The compliance and performance audit of SAO aims to assess whether measures promoting the improvement of air quality and the fight against air pollution sources have been efficient. In this context, the SAO assessed whether measures aiming at the establishment of directives promoting air protection, the regulatory and institutional system and the scopes of competence and responsibilities have been properly implemented, and whether information concerning air quality and health-related impacts of air pollution have been fully available. The audit covered the period 2014-2016, and in terms of findings related to performance audit, the data concerning the period 2007-2013. Audited entities included the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for professional management, as well as ministries, government offices and institutions performing tasks in the system of air protection.

The SAO found that during the elaboration of the objectives set by the Parliament and the Government, the planned measures and the indicators, they had taken into account the assessments and analyses on air quality. The organisations responsible for air quality had performed their activities in accordance with their scope of competence and responsibility. The Ministry of Agriculture established the necessary legal regulations, performed its supervisory and management activities appropriately, and complied with its duties related to data provision. Government offices carried out their official and supervisory tasks appropriately. The issue of air quality protection permissions, the assessment of air pollution level and the operation of measuring stations were appropriate, the review of the placement of measuring stations was performed. The National Public Health Center regularly and fully assessed risk factors endangering the health state of the population and the health-related impacts of air pollution. Competent ministries introduced several measures for the attainment of the objectives and monitored the implementation of such measures. The measures covered transport, industrial, agricultural and retail sectors.

The audit found that the concentration and total emission of air pollutants had decreased significantly, and the long term efficiency objectives of National Environmental Protection programs had been attained pro rata temporis. Limit values targeted for 2020 have been achieved with one exception. Indeed, emission of volatile organic compounds exceeded the limit value, especially in the winter months, which is related to the incineration of household wastes. In the case of small dust pollution with significant importance in terms of public health positive changes were implemented with a decreasing ratio of expenditure, which means that the measures were efficient.

The SAO drafted recommendations to the Minister of Agriculture and the president of the Hungarian Meteorological Service, to which they shall prepare an action plan within 30 days after receipt of the report.

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