

# MISKOLC



## KÖZÖSSÉGI GYŰLÉS

**Air!**

We pollute it, we inhale it! What can we do together  
to improve the air quality in Miskolc?



DemNet

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## FOREWORD FROM THE EXECUTIVES OF MISKOLC

### Together - from the very beginning

We would like to thank the work of the chosen 50 in advance! Even though the institution and mechanisms of democratic decision making have been a part of the public administration in Hungary for a long time, we are often forced to realize that they are still only in their infancy. That is the reason we, as the executives of the city, defined it as our common goal to renew the local political culture. We have dedicated ourselves to strengthening the communities, to introducing up to date mechanisms for democratic decision making, to creating the so called Open City Hall. What we have decided to achieve will have implications for the far future. We hope that in time we will be able to transform the way public affairs are dealt with. The aim is to prevent any investment, planning, construction from going ahead without the input of those that will be affected by it. „Nothing about us without us!” – that is how we can most simply, plainly sum up the essence of our endeavor.

We view the path before us as a sort of learning process, an opportunity for the Municipality, the office and the locals to collectively learn about the methods that can serve as the basis for joint action. The first Miskolc Citizens' Assembly held in the autumn of 2021 was nothing less than a milestone in this voyage. It took place locally, right before our eyes and with the active participation of all of us.

We believe it is very important that we decided in the beginning we would use the methodology for enhancing citizen participation when planning the processes we wished to launch. With regard to climate policy, holding a citizens's assembly was the very first step we took. Fifty people deliberated on how air quality could be improved. They represented the opinions of altogether 155,000 people who

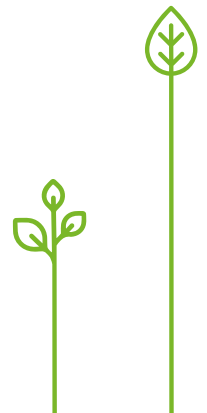
live in Miskolc. The complicated way in which the members of the citizens' assembly were chosen also served the purpose of guaranteeing that they would represent the whole of the community. This means that they had to work under the pressure stemming from this huge responsibility and we are very thankful for the significant recommendations they have prepared.

Now it is our turn to deliver, it is up to the authorities of the city and the people living in Miskolc to make the next step. Let us listen to the received feedback, heed the warnings and consider the recommendations. In the future let us try to take the roads marked as best by „collective wisdom”. We are on untrodden paths. We wish to make the participatory approach our own by learning the appropriate methods and tools from those who already know them and use them.

We hope that by doing so we can give a boost to participatory democracy, we can renew the way the Municipality works and can find ways to better incorporate the citizens of Miskolc into local decision making. Consistently, deliberately, transparently, not with an intent to divide or to gain victory by using the power of force but by building on consensus within the community. Together from the beginning to the point of taking joint action.

**Pál Veres**  
*the Mayor of Miskolc*

**Andrea Varga**  
*the Deputy Mayor of Miskolc*



## FOREWORD FROM THE ORGANIZERS

### On new paths for a new democracy

Let's try to imagine a Hungary where people don't only get to have their voices heard once every 4-5 years. A place where the active participation of citizens doesn't purely mean casting a vote on general elections. Where discussing public issues isn't synonymous with arguing. Where we can make collective decisions about our future. Is it hard to imagine? Yes, it is but it is far from impossible to realize. And in Miskolc at least it already seems to have become a reality.

Building on the experience and lessons learned from last year's citizens' assembly in Budapest, this autumn Miskolc decided to host the second citizens' assembly in the country. Fifty locals and through them indirectly many more citizens of Miskolc had the chance to experience what living in a world we have described above would feel like.

The months spent with organizing the Miskolc Citizens' Assembly were a very important and deep experience not only professionally but also emotionally. It isn't every day one gets to see so many people with different backgrounds, world views and values engaging in a joint, constructive dialogue, but we don't think it has to be a unique phenomenon. The Citizens' Assembly has proven that decisions based on dialogue can work in Miskolc just as well as in many other parts of the world and this is a realization that can be and must be capitalized on. The next step, however, is just as important as the preparation phase and holding the citizens assembly itself was.

Now all eyes are on the Municipality to see how it will best incorporate the directions and plans articulated by the citizens into the way the city works. Our task in

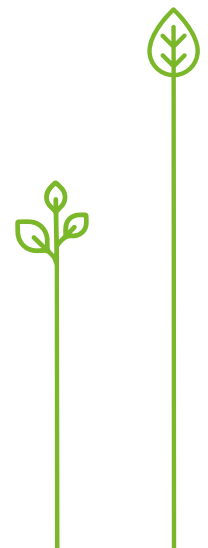
the meantime is to ensure that participation doesn't become just another empty catch phrase instead of one that expresses actual, high level professional work and action. We trust that in the next years further citizens' assemblies and other tools of deliberative democracy will help restore people's faith in democracy and that these will become an integral part of our everyday lives both at the local and the national level. In fact, we hope that not very far down the line the actual question we will be asking ourselves is: How could we have ever existed without them?

**Éva Bördös**

*the Director of DemNet*

**Áron Csere**

*the President of Dialóg Egyesület*

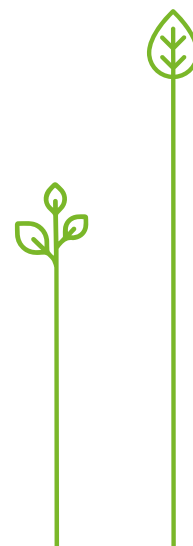


### AIR!

## WE POLLUTE IT, WE INHALE IT. WHAT CAN WE DO TO COLLECTIVELY IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF AIR IN MISKOLC?

That is the question 50 randomly selected citizens were trying to find an answer to collectively over the course of two weekends (2021 September 18-19 and October 1-2.) during Miskolc's first - and Hungary's second - citizens' assembly organized jointly by DemNet, Dialóg Egyesület and the Municipality of Miskolc. Ten thousand randomly selected citizens were issued invites to the Citizens' Assembly in August. From the 420 individuals who replied we once again randomly selected fifty people in a way that ensured they would be representative of the overall population of Miskolc above the age of 18 in terms of age, gender, educational degree and location of residence. Eventually 46 people took part in the citizens' assembly. During the first weekend of the event the participants were given information connected to the topic. They listened to altogether seven lectures and three panel discussions. Beyond providing them with an understanding of the basic terminology (i.e. climate change, global warming, pollution etc..) the aim of the lectures was to introduce members to the main sources of emissions (i.e. traffic, solid fuels etc.), important correlations and best practices. Members of the assembly discussed the topic of the lectures in smaller groups with the help of experienced facilitators. During the second weekend, following a joint deliberation, the assembly made more than thirty recommendations related to improving local air quality. Seven were chosen from these by secret ballot. The ones

that received the most votes were discussed in detail by the members of the assembly, they were drawn out in detail and eventually became a part of the set of recommendations handed over to the Municipality. After careful consideration the citizens' assembly recommended that the Municipality reconsider its public transportation system, that it launches a direct communication campaign and a program to increase green urban areas, that it establishes a North-South direction electronic public transportation system, that it improves the infrastructure for pedestrians and people who get around on their bikes, that it sets up a network of one-stop energy consultancy offices and finally, that it launches a pilot project enabling the replacement of inefficient furnaces.



## WHAT IS A CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY?

Citizens' assemblies are relatively new in Hungary but in many other countries they have already proven to be successful tools for getting citizens, the members of a given community, better and more effectively involved in public matters, policy making and strengthening democracy. Its aim is to get randomly selected members of the community - who, on the whole, represent the community in terms of traits such as gender, age, level of education - to think about and deliberate certain issues collec-

tively following a learning process and eventually have them come up with recommendations and solutions to an important issue concerning the given community. Although it is easy to accommodate and tailor them to the given circumstances, citizens assemblies are constructed in accordance with strict methodological criteria and recommendations. They are organized independently from political decision makers and with the guarantee of being balanced policy-wise.

### Organizing citizens' assemblies helps

- ◀ strengthen democracy,
- ◀ reduce political inequality,
- ◀ boost the culture of political debate,
- ◀ facilitate a more productive cooperation between citizens and policy makers,
- ◀ increase public trust in democratic institutions, and
- ◀ create policy decisions that are genuinely supported by the community.

In the past two decades, they have held almost 400 representative deliberative processes (amongst others, citizens' assemblies) in more than 20 countries all over the world on local, national and international levels. In Hungary, the first Municipality level citizens' assembly supported by policy makers was realized in Budapest in the autumn of 2020. After Budapest, Miskolc was the second city in the country to include this innovative tool in its policy making.





## THE FIRST CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY IN MISKOLC

### Preparations and planning involved in organizing the first citizens' assembly in Miskolc

DemNet, the Municipality of Miskolc, and the Miskolc NGO, Dialóg Egyesület, started to discuss plans for holding the citizens' assembly in February 2021. Preparation for the assembly went on for months with the three partners in constant and close cooperation. A coordinating board, made up of the members of the three organizations, was set up and responsibilities and tasks were clearly marked and allocated. Two lead experts and the lead facilitator also took part in certain parts of the process. During the planning of the first citizens' assembly in Miskolc, organizers relied heavily on the experience and knowledge gained from the citizens' assembly held in Budapest in the autumn of 2020 as well as the lessons learned from other Municipality level citizens' assemblies held in other countries.

Finally, after several months of preparation, the first citizens' assembly of Miskolc was held on 18-19 September and 2-3 October 2021, at the Francis II Rákóczi County and City Library in Miskolc.

### THE TOPIC OF THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

One of the first steps in preparing the Citizens' Assembly was for the three parties organizing the event to sit down together and hold several meetings where they would discuss the challenges facing the city, the topics which - based on experience - divide locals the most, and the policy goals the Municipality would like to achieve. The purpose of these talks was to identify a topic for the Citizens' Assembly that would help the city's sustainable development, that is particularly important for the residents of Miskolc, and can help the Municipality in planning future policies. Following the discussions and with the help of additional consultation involving outside experts, the organizers finally identified local air quality as one of the most urgent challenges facing Miskolc and one for which finding a solution could be greatly aided by holding a citizens' assembly.

The question of air quality, air pollution is something that can be understood and tackled at the local level. One which every resident experiences personally and which also has a larger scale impact. Air pollution and global warming go hand in hand. Often they stem from the same sources and many of the air pollutants are also responsible for the greenhouse effect. Therefore, if we succeed in decreasing air pollution, we will also be able to slow down global warming.

Miskolc is far from being the only city that has problems with air pollution, but it must be noted that just as Eastern Europe is still separated from Western Europe by a smog curtain, the situation regarding the quality of air is worse in North Eastern Hungary and Miskolc than it is in other parts of Hungary.

Solving this problem is not only a challenge for the Municipality and local residents, it also holds opportunities. If they can find a way to improve local air quality this will have a beneficial effect on the life quality





## OPEN CALL FOR CONTRIBUTING TO THE PROGRAM

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In order to make sure that all important aspects and recommendations were included, we made an open call at the beginning of August to allow all organizations and experts connected to the topic of the Citizens' Assembly to be able to signal if they had opinions or ideas they would like the assembly to take into consideration.

We also reached out directly to several groups and organizations which are involved with local environmental issues and ways in which the lives of the residents of Miskolc can be improved. The lead experts of the Citizens' Assembly then made every effort to include the received feedback in the program of the event.

## DATA PROTECTION

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In accordance with existing data protection regulations to make sure that the safety of the personal data of all individuals willing to take part and eventually taking part in the Citizens' Assembly is ensured throughout the process, the organizers created a complex data protection protocol during the planning phase of the event.

## COMPENSATION

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Organizers also agreed that in order to thank participants for devoting serious attention, work, and two complete weekends to the project, they should receive 32 000 HUF in cash and a gift package.

## FACILITATION

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The lead facilitator of the event was Melinda Vári. She worked together with altogether eight fully trained, independent facilitators (Mónika Bálint, Katalin Bartos, Áron Csere, Éva Fekete, Anita Kátai, Krisztina Leba, Anna Molnár, Katalin Sánta) who all set at different tables. It was the task of the team of facilitators to make sure that during the two weekends of the Citizens' Assembly the work being done was productive and the process was going according to plan taking into consideration any wishes and desires that the participants might have. The lead facilitator was also responsible for making sure the event was being carried out according to the appropriate methodology, for drawing up the detailed program, and to preside over the days of the assembly.

## TÁRSALGÓ

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Together with the Association for Community Development (Köfe), we created a platform within the online service TársalGÓ specifically for members of the Citizens' Assembly and those who would be collaborating with them (organizers, facilitators, experts).

Through the platform, participants could share their thoughts and views with one another even between the weekends of the assembly. The platform also served as a kind of site where all news in connection to the discussed topic, as well as articles written by the experts and all information regarding the process of the Citizens' Assembly could be stored. The platform of TársalGÓ remained an active forum for debate even after the Citizens' Assembly and it will stay accessible in the future to every member and all organizers of the event.

## SELECTING PARTICIPANTS FOR THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

A core methodological element of organizing citizens' assemblies is the multi-stage, random selection process through which participants are chosen. This is how one can ensure that all members of the given community – in our case all grown up residents of Miskolc – have an equal chance to be chosen to participate in the citizens' assembly. Let us now look at the exact steps and tools involved in the process.

### THE STEPS INVOLVED IN SELECTING PARTICIPANTS

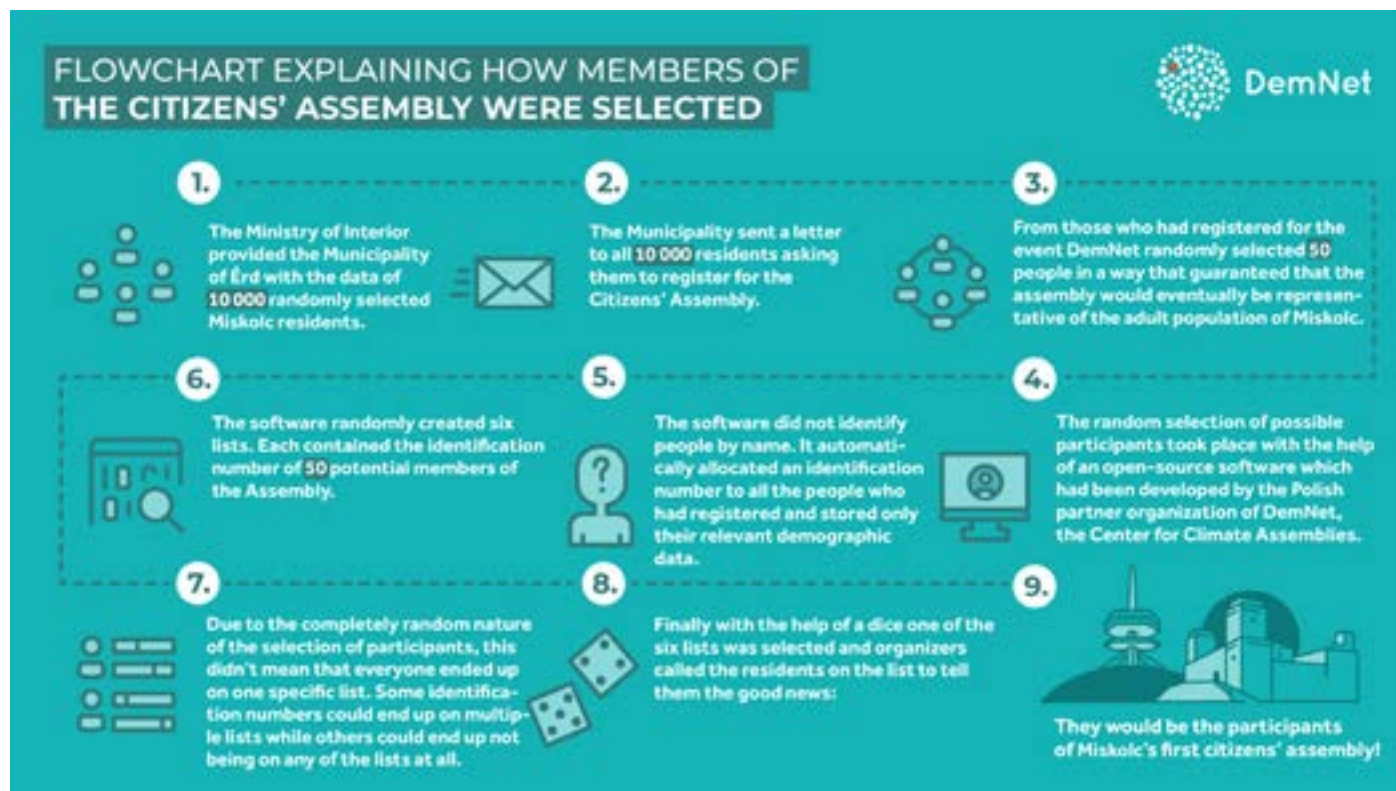
#### REQUESTING DATA

The Municipality of Miskolc contacted the Ministry of Interior Deputy State Secretariate for Data Registers in June 2021, and requested that they supply the address of 10 000 randomly selected Miskolc citizens who - based on their age, gender and place of residence – are representative of the overall city population. On August 18th, the mayor and deputy mayor of Miskolc, Pál Veres and Andrea Varga, sent the selected 10 000 residents an invitation asking them to register for the citizens' assembly. Neither the Municipality, nor DemNet or Dialóg Egyesület had any role in determining who the initially chosen 10 000 people would be.



## REGISTRATION

Those who received invitations could register for the Citizens' Assembly until September 2nd. For the duration of the registration period, organizers created a special telephone line through which people could register. This telephone service was maintained by the Municipality and it, along with the members of DemNet and Dialóg Egyesület, would also provide answers to any questions people might have in connection to any aspects of the event. It would also provide people with technical assistance if needed for registering online.



All registrations were recorded through the HubSpot system which was handled by DemNet. This was also the case if the given person signaled his or her desire to participate through the call service. This HubSpot system automatically allocated a random identification number to all the people who registered. Those who registered had to provide information about their level of education. This was necessary so that the Citizens' Assembly of Miskolc would eventually be representative of the overall population not only in terms of age, gender and place of residence but the level of education. To make the necessary calculations for this, we used the relevant data available from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH).

DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATOR		NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO REGISTERED	TARGET NUMBERS	PARTICIPANTS (those originally selected by lottery)	PARTICIPANTS (those who actually took part in the Assembly)
Gender	<b>Female</b>	243 (58%)	27 (54%)	27 (54%)	25 (54%)
	<b>Male</b>	177 (42%)	23 (46%)	23 (46%)	21 (46%)
Level of education	<b>Basic</b>	59 (14%)	16 (32%)	16 (32%)	13 (28%)
	<b>Intermediate</b>	194 (40%)	21 (42%)	21 (42%)	20 (43%)
	<b>Higher</b>	167 (40%)	13 (26%)	13 (26%)	13 (28%)
Age group	<b>18-29</b>	43 (10%)	6 (12%)	6 (12%)	6 (13%)
	<b>30-49</b>	91 (22%)	18 (36%)	18 (36%)	15 (33%)
	<b>50-64</b>	104 (25%)	12 (24%)	12 (24%)	11 (24%)
	<b>65+</b>	182 (43%)	14 (28%)	14 (28%)	14 (30%)
Age group	<b>3501, 3515, 3517, 3558</b>	3 (0,7%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	0
	<b>3508</b>	19 (4,5%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	2 (4,3%)
	<b>3516</b>	14 (3,3%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2,2%)
	<b>3518</b>	13 (3%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2,2%)
	<b>3519</b>	6 (1,4%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2,2%)
	<b>3521</b>	8 (1,9%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2,2%)
	<b>3524</b>	23 (5,4%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	3 (6,5%)
	<b>3525</b>	40 (9,5%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	3 (6,5%)
	<b>3526</b>	27 (6,4%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	3 (6,5%)
	<b>3527</b>	12 (2,8%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2,2%)
	<b>3528</b>	18 (4,2%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	3 (6,5%)
	<b>3529</b>	50 (12%)	7 (14%)	7 (14%)	7 (15%)
	<b>3530</b>	37 (8,8%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	2 (4,3%)
	<b>3531</b>	25 (6%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	3 (6,5%)
	<b>3532</b>	35 (8,3%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	3 (6,5%)
	<b>3533</b>	21 (5%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)	3 (6,5%)
	<b>3534</b>	38 (9%)	5 (10%)	5 (10%)	5 (11%)
	<b>3535</b>	31 (7,3%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	4 (8,7%)

**Remarks:**

We based our understanding of the composition of the adult population of Miskolc on the Ministry of Interior's population register and the 2016 microcensus carried out by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH). Determining the people's level of education: basic level: elementary school 8th grade (previously: 4 public or 4 high school classes, in the new system: 9-10 grade, unfinished high school) or vocational training certificate, exam, certificate of mastership, journeyman's certificate, school of professional training Intermediate level: successful final exam from high school or vocational secondary school (none completed higher education) and specialization tied to successfully passing the high school final exam (but not apprenticeship exam), (secondary) technical school, training termed advanced Higher level: college or university diploma.



## LOTTERY

One of the questions that most people were most interested in during the registration period was how participants for the Citizens' Assembly would be chosen. DemNet and the Municipality received numerous questions on the topic both from members of the public and the media. It was also something that would come up the most in the comments left on social media pages (Facebook, Instagram). That is why we made it a priority to not only rigorously follow the established steps of the selection process but also to devote enough time and energy to explain the process to locals and ensure that it is as transparent as possible. To strengthen public trust, we devoted a separate section on the DemNet blog specifically for this topic and made sure to update people on the developments of the process through social media platforms.

During the allocated period, we received 420 valid registrations for the citizens' assembly. Registrations made by people who wanted to take part but hadn't originally received an invitation to participate and those who tried to register but were late to do so were considered invalid. These were also not taken into account during the random selection of the participants. People who could attend the Citizens' Assembly were chosen by means of a lottery with the help of an open-source software. The software had been developed by the Polish partner organization of DemNet, the Center for Climate Assemblies and it had already been used to select participants for a number of citizens' assemblies held in Poland.



The software did not identify people by name. It stores only their relevant demographic data.

The software randomly created six lists which each contained the identification numbers of 50 people. The lists would have fixed slots adhering to different demographic criteria that would ensure that the overall composition of the list was representative of the given community. Due to the completely random nature of the selection of participants, this didn't mean that everyone ended up on one specific list. On the contrary, some identification numbers could end up on multiple lists while others could end up not being on any of the lists at all.

Finally, with the help of a die, one of the six groups was selected. To ensure maximum transparency we live streamed the selection process. We made sure that every step of the process could be followed and also recorded so that anyone could revisit the steps later on. Finally, we called the 50 people who were in the selected group and informed them about the wonderful news that they would get to be the participants of the first ever citizens' assembly in Miskolc.

During the telephone calls seven people said that they could not come to the event after all. To find replacements for these people we held another

lottery containing the identification numbers of possible participants with the same demographic profiles. From the 50 selected participants on the day before and the morning of the first day of the assembly three more people told us they would not be able to make it due to health or family reasons. That is why in the end the event kicked off with 47 participants. One of the participants decided to leave the assembly during the morning hours of the first day, however, the remaining 46 were present until the very end of the program thus ensuring that the assembly would still be representative of the adult population of Miskolc.





## THE DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

### THE FIRST STAGE: **LEARNING** (18-19 SEPTEMBER 2021)

During the preparation of the program for the Citizens' Assembly it was an important aspect that the participants of the event would, by the end of the learning stage, have a thorough understanding of what pollutants and greenhouse gasses are and what negative effects these could have. During the days of the learning stage, the participants had a chance to listen to altogether seven expert lectures and three panel discussions. Following the short, 15 minute lectures participants could discuss what they heard in smaller groups of 7-8 people. After this each group could ask the given expert two questions related to the given topic. If the group had more than two questions to ask they could send these to the experts and the experts would answer them in writing before the second weekend of the assembly.

All of the expert lectures and panel discussions are available to watch on DemNet's Youtube channel and also on the following link: <https://kozossegyules.demnet.hu>

The morning of the first day of the Citizens' Assembly was open to members of the press and observers could also freely take part on both days on the first weekend. The group of observers was made up of mainly NGOs, members of academic institutions, and members of the local government who were interested in the methodology of citizens' assemblies. Journalists and observers were forbidden to eavesdrop on the discussions going on in the smaller groups. The reason for this was to prevent the participants from being hindered in their work or influenced in any way. If members of the press or the observers had questions the organizers were willing and ready to answer them.

To create an atmosphere of trust, members of the Citizens' Assembly stayed at the same table and conversed and worked with the same people during the whole course of the first day. The lectures explained to the participants what the biggest sources of greenhouse gas emissions are. They talked about pollution stemming from traffic and the burning of solid fuels but they went beyond purely pointing out the problems. The experts also introduced participants to possible solutions. For example, they talked about the ways



the Municipality could reform traffic and rehabilitate large territories, how they could increase energy efficiency, work towards eliminating energy poverty and increase public participation and awareness.

During the first weekend of the Citizens' Assembly, organizers feared that perhaps participants would get overwhelmed by the complexity of the problem that they, as members of the citizens' assembly, would eventually also have to try finding solutions to. However, during the second weekend, when they had to come up with specific recommendations for improving local air quality, participants also discovered that, though they are faced with a complex problem, there are a vast number of possibilities for intervening and making improvements to the existing system. They also gained a deeper understanding of how these steps towards achieving better air quality could be taken and what they would require. That some would be easier, cheaper or quicker to implement while others might cost more money and take more time, even decades. But they also understood that, however long achieving specific results would take, planning the necessary steps for achieving change together could start immediately, and wouldn't cost a thing.



## THE LEAD EXPERTS AND LECTURERS OF THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

**Dóra Csernus and Péter Vigh were the two lead climate experts responsible for planning the topics to be discussed during the event and professionally coordinating the assembly.**

**Dóra Csernus** is an expert on climate policy. She has been working in the field of environmental policy making and within that mainly air quality protection and water protection for 15 years. She is a seniorexpert of the Climate Strategy 2050 Institute (Klímastratégia 2050 Intézet).

After obtaining a degree in economics from the University of Szeged and studying geopolitics in Paris, she worked for the Hungarian government between 2006 and 2016 as an advisor on environmental politics. During this time, Dóra Csernus participated in creating national strategies and modifying legislations as well as assessing EU and UN level documents. Since 2018, she has been an independent expert who has taken part in several climate protection oriented projects.

**Péter Vigh** is an expert on climate communication. He is the founder and head of Másfélök - an online platform and news site created to help the public understand climate change and encourage public awareness. His field of expertise is explaining scientific results in a way that can be understood by everyone and making society more sensitive to the topic of climate change. Previously, he took part as a climate-policy advisor in the EU LIFE program. He holds a PhD in literature and cultural sciences.

## THE LECTURERS OF THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

**István Bart** has a background in law. He is a climate policy expert and has been focusing on climate policy, the effects of the climate crisis on the population, reducing emissions and the question of adapting to climate change for twenty years. He is the global climate director of the Environmental Defense Fund and the founding director of the Climate Strategy 2050 Institute (Klímastratégia 2050 Intézet), the board member of the Energy Klub (Energiaklub), and the external advisor for the Equilibrium Institute (Egyensúly Intézet). Between 2011 and 2015, he was the founding executive of the Hungarian Energy Efficiency Institute (Magyar Energiahatékonysági Intézet). From 2005 to 2011, he worked in Brussels for the European Commission's Directorate-General for Climate Action focusing on questions related to European and international climate policy. From 2002 to 2005, he worked for the Hungarian government helping the implementation of the EU Emissions Trading System.

**Zoltán Massay-Kosubek** is a qualified Hungarian lawyer. In 2011, Zoltán worked on international and European affairs at the Ministry for Health of Hungary, including the 2011 Hungarian EU Presidency period. Before that, he was a lawyer-linguist at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg, as well as a clerk at Hungarian national courts in Budapest, in both civil and criminal matters. He worked for the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) for nine years where he was in charge of the Clean Air campaign. In 2021, he became the Programme Manager for the Climate Planning and Laws Programme at the European Climate Foundation.

**Amanda Imola Szabó** studied geoscience at the Eötvös Loránd Science University (ELTE) and obtained a master's degree from Meteorology majoring in climate research. She was able to expand her knowledge in the field by working in Vienna, Prague, and Victoria, in Canada. Currently she is a PhD student at the ELTE Climatescience PhD School. The topic of her dissertation is climate and climate change in the Carpathian region. She is also one of the regular contributors to Másfelfok, the news site dedicated to explaining the results of scientific research in a way that can be understood by all and improving public awareness.

**Csongor Báthory** is a PhD student in his final year at the Materials Science and Engineering Faculty of the University of Miskolc. He is the Project Manager of the university's HungAIRy project. Previously, he worked for Vibrocomp Kft. where he made air pollution control related measurements and also wrote expert opinions. He gained experience in the field of administration when, shortly after obtaining his diploma, he became an air pollution control expert for the National Inspectorate for Environment, Nature and Water which, at the time, was an independent agency.

**Dezső Nagy** lives in Miskolc and is an environmental protection expert. He obtained degrees from biology and ecology and is one of the founders of the Ecological Institute for Sustainable Development Foundation (Ökológiai Intézet a Fenntartható Fejlődésért Alapítvány) in Miskolc where he spent many years. Since 2012, he has been working for the local Municipality as environmental protection rapporteur. He was also in charge of preparing the HungAIRy project and is the project's lead expert.

**Dr. Katalin Uramné Lantai** originally obtained a degree from the Heavy Industries Engineering University (which today is called the University of Miskolc) and after four years passed the environment protection engineer exam. She worked for the environment protection authority for 21 years, during 15 of which she was Head of the Air Pollution and Noise Control Department. She has an air pollution control expert certification and has used her knowledge in the field on multiple occasions to prepare action plans with regards to air pollution protection. In 2017, she obtained a PhD from the University of Miskolc. In March 2020, she was appointed the Project Coordinator for HungAIRy.

**Balázs Édes** is an economist. He graduated in 2006 from the Corvinus University of Budapest and later obtained a PhD from Transportation and Logistics, Materials, and Supply Chain Management at the same university. Through the years his main focus has been on controlling network based industries in the field of traffic, communications and postal services. He has taken part in specifically traffic oriented projects for over fifteen years as both an advisor and an expert. Previously, he worked for MÁV (Hungarian Railway Company) for the office of the President and Chief Executive. Until 2014, he worked for the Chief Executive of BKK. Balázs Édes regularly takes part in research focusing on the city and NGO projects that promote public corporations. Balázs Édes is also the Curator of the Contemporary Architecture Centre (Kortárs Építészeti Központ). Currently he is working with traffic related issues as a researcher and a freelance advisor.

**Anna Szilágyi** is an economist who obtained her degree from the University of Miskolc. From 2004 to 2014, she taught at the Budapest Metropolitan University, and was also the Director Responsible for Tenders at the institution. However, she gradually became more and more interested in topics related to city life and city development. That is why she went on to study urban development and, after gaining a degree in the field, worked for different NGOs as a volunteer for a few years. Since 2020, she has been employed by the Budapest Center for Development (Budapest Fejlesztési Központ) where she is currently the Head of the Department for Participation.

**Ádám Harmat** is the Head of the Hungarian Climate Change and Energy Program at WWF Hungary. In the past five years he has become well versed in the topics of climate strategies and climate policy. Currently his main focus is on the sustainability of solid biomass which is also the topic of his PhD research at the Department of Physical Geography at ELTE.

**Nóra Feldmár** is a Policy Lead at Habitat for Humanity Magyarország. Her main area of expertise is housing and energy poverty. Her work consists of several different tasks from analyzing statistics to conducting research and taking part on field projects such as installing effective wood stoves or repairing adobe brick houses.

**Tibor Derdák** is the Principle at the Dr. Ámbédkar School in Miskolc. He originally obtained a degree in French and Sociology from ELTE and then spent twenty years working with the Roma communities in the small towns of Baranya County. The goal was to help underprivileged children continue their education well beyond elementary school. In 2007, János Orsós founded the Dr. Ámbédkar School and asked Tibor Derdák if he would be willing to lead the institution. The school is trying to build on the experience of the Dalits, the lowest stratum castes in India. The institution would like to implement the strategies in Hungary that had led to success for the Dalits in the field of education and civil rights movements in India. The school is currently undergoing a transition and will soon become a technical institute.

**Ádám Pirity** obtained his diploma in Architecture from the Budapest University of Technology and Economics in 2020. That same year, he was accepted to the Csonka Pál Doctoral School. While conducting his PhD research he is also working for an architecture company which designs public buildings.

**Judit Sonkoly** is a biologist and ecologist from Miskolc. Currently she is carrying out research in the field of plant ecology at the Ecology Department of the University of Debrecen.

**Sándor Fülöp** is a lawyer and a university lecturer. From 2008 to 2011 he was the Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations. From 1998 to 2003, he was first a member and later the Deputy Head of the National Environmental Protection Council. Between 2002 and 2008, he was a member of the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee.

## FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS FOLLOWING THE LEARNING STAGE

**What did you find the most useful from the lectures?**

**What are your impressions following the first weekend of the Citizens' Assembly?**

”

“Most of what I heard was new to me and it made me realize that the biggest problem in my case is the lack of knowledge!”

„“We need to take immediate action, there is no time left!”

“I heard a lot of new information about the polluting effects of both heating and traffic. I was sort of aware of these but I never thought about them this deeply.”

“We can only be effective in countering air pollution and climate change if we act together. This means that both individuals and the Municipality have an important role to play.”

“I really liked it and it was very interesting. It also really motivated me.”

“Several of the topics piqued my interest. I hope that this first citizens' assembly - which I believe turned out great – will be followed by more citizens' assemblies. I am pleased with the organizers, the lecturers, the topics, the service and the fellow participants.”

“I found it very positive that we were also given examples of possible solutions.”

“The planning and implementation of the event is very professional. The lectures are interesting and we have been able to receive honest opinions about topics relevant to the public.”

“I was given a lot of new information even though I am quite knowledgeable.”

“If we want to change anything first and foremost we need a cohesive community. It would also be important to supply people with the appropriate information and for them to see more of the world before they make a decision.”

“I am concerned about the future of the environment therefore from now on I will try to be even more conscious with regard to improving air quality.”

“Spreading awareness and enlightening people is very important. It's important for us to take steps to prevent air pollution both as individuals and as a community.”

”

## THE SECOND STAGE: DELIBERATION (2-3 OCTOBER 20219)

The second weekend of the Citizens' Assembly was about drawing up proposals and decision making. To get into the spirit of things, participants of the assembly were first asked to create a vision for Miskolc in different table groups using the world café method. Afterwards, building on the knowledge received during the first weekend and the inspiration gained from creating a vision for the city, the participants had to start thinking about what a proposal package for the Municipality might contain in connection to improving air quality. During the discussions within the table groups, participants would often refer back to things that the lecturers had said but they would also complete these with their own experience and thoughts.

The two lead experts of the Citizens' Assembly were constantly at the participants' disposal and, if requested, they would help the given table group with their brainstorming.

In line with the topics of the lectures, the proposals drawn up through deliberation were also mainly related to traffic, heating, solid fuels, energy efficiency, energy poverty, and green spaces. They were a combination of the general changes the participants would like to see and the specific changes they felt would be necessary to specific locations, spaces, and streets.

In terms of the topic of traffic, there was a huge demand for expanding and consolidating the public transport system with regard to everything from time tables to monthly passes. Beside smaller scale proposals aimed at improving for example the cycling infrastructure, there were also some big scale, time and money consuming proposals that made it to the final list of official proposals for the decision makers. The necessity for traffic reduction in general and creating car free zones were also voiced. In terms of the proposals concerning improving energy efficiency, participants said those Miskolc residents who have the funds but lack the knowledge to carry out an in-depth renovation of their home should receive help. Some of the table groups also came up with ideas concerning the residents of the city who, due to their social situation, can not yet actually afford to replace their current, environmentally more harmful mode of heating.

During the collective brainstorming, it became clear that members of the Citizens' Assembly feel there are several possibilities for achieving change through the cooperation of the Municipality, residents, and entrepreneurs.

This approach, through participation, can improve the level of dedication to the cause in case of those citizens who will be joining the process. It provides positive feedback and provides people with the experience of taking direct action.

This was especially reflected in the proposals made related to maintaining, expanding, and promoting green spaces.

Though the topic had not been specifically discussed during the lectures, it was evident that members of the Citizens' Assembly considered educating people about climate change and air pollution, raising public awareness, and communicating intensively and effectively about these topics on every possible platform from classrooms to the advertising spaces of local bus services of vital importance. Participants felt that this should happen through the media outlets of the local government and with the help of citizens and NGOs.

Beside programs focusing and motivating and providing support to locals, it was also voiced that the local government could itself show the way and implement exemplary practices in a number of fields ranging from improving energy efficiency to developing green surfaces.



## PROPOSALS BORN FROM COLLECTIVE BRAINSTORMING

1. We should be the "city of fruit trees"! Each tree that is cut down should be replaced with a fruit tree which would be adopted and cared for by locals!
2. The pavements suitable for alternative modes of transportation (bicycle, roller skates, skateboards, scooters) should be renewed in order to enhance road safety.
3. Establishing a Southern bicycle route along Kiss Ernő Street. The Northern cycle route should be improved and extended to Diosgyőr city center. In both cases, an appropriate pavement should be created for pedestrians.
4. All machinery used for urban maintenance running on natural gas or petrol should be phased out gradually. This should also be the case for the machinery used by the city council and its partners.
5. The speed limit next to tram lines should be universally limited to 30 km/h!
6. The means for community composting should be created in an easily accessible location. There should also be a system put in place that rewards people for taking their waste to the community compost. They could for example get a discount on their monthly pass for public transportation. The product created by the community compost should be used in some form or another. It could be used as biomass for heating, as fertilizer or the gasses created by the process could become a source of energy!
7. Calculations should be made in order to establish how additional income could be generated through creating a consistent ticket and pass system for both the city and the agglomeration. The secured additional funding could be used to expand the number of available transportation services!
8. The car free zone should be expanded and instead of car roads, protected cycle routes should be created. Pavements that fit accessibility requirements and lead to public transportation stops should be built!
9. The Municipality should investigate which parts of the city could be incorporated into the district heating system. Currently there is a study underway which will give an assessment of how much this shift to the district heating system could decrease energy poverty.
10. Launching public green space projects which are acknowledged and also promoted by the Municipality (e.g. community gardens, making the roofs of apartment blocks green, balconies). There should be competitions and prizes for these projects, they should be professionally aided and also given publicity.
11. The Municipality should partner with shop owners and entrepreneurs to keep the green spaces surrounding business green. "Terrace tax" and 5 percent of business tax should be allocated to maintaining and developing green spaces.
12. The Municipality should sponsor the Green Heart (Zöld Szív) movement. They should reward successful green projects carried out by schools with open-air school programs which could be held at holiday homes belonging to the city.
13. An education campaign should be launched focusing on road safety targeting ALL citizens.
14. There should be a separate, reduced-priced monthly pass available to children between the age of 6-14 and all those who have a driver's license.
15. Creating regulation that allows owners of houses and gardens to be publicly acknowledged for keeping their environment tidy. The efforts of these homeowners should be acknowledged by granting them certain advantages.

16. The local Municipality should provide aid for underprivileged citizens to be able to install air filters.
17. A municipal technical preparatory commission should be set up for environment protection related issues.
18. A pilot project for the replacement of outdated heating systems should be launched targeting those affected by energy poverty in specific territories. This should be complemented by education of the proper combustion technologies.
19. A communication program aimed at expanding residents' knowledge regarding environment protection should be launched using the city's communicational channels such as MINAP (municipal newspaper), Miskolc TV, public transportation stops, different displays, the city's homepage etc.
20. Green surfaces should be created in the place of ruinous buildings and ill-kempt plots.
21. The energy upgrade of buildings belonging to the city (i.e. rental apartments, public institutions) should begin.
22. A bicycle path should be created in Kiss Ernő Street along the shore of the Szinva creek. It should be connected to the existing bicycle network in a way that is in line with flood prevention guidelines.
23. Creating a one-stop support desk for all energy related issues.
24. The city should partner with local educational institutions and join national tree planting programs (instead of flying balloons during graduation ceremonies).
25. The Municipality should draw up an action plan reviewing possible tools available for gradually expanding car free zones.
26. The Municipality should conduct research involving all affected parties to figure out how coach services could be redirected and devise an alternative use for Búza square in the future.
27. Rethinking how people can get access to social support and devising a one-stop help desk system (which can be reached outside of office hours and provides up to date information on available forms of social assistance).
28. Preventing suburban sprawl: prioritizing brownfield investments, if possible, limiting the investments that reach beyond the borders of Miskolc.
29. Transforming existing city buildings (i.e. dormitories) into social housing units thus helping those living in energy poverty to relocate to homes that are already linked to the district heating system.
30. Dynamic and effective public transportation: Rethinking timetables with the interest of the masses using the public transportation lines in mind. Prioritizing public transportation over the use of cars.
31. Launching a comprehensive program which involves citizens in making the city greener. Building on public participation in caring for trees.
32. Bringing public awareness to the causes of air pollution, its effects and possible solutions to the problem through the advertising surfaces belonging to the city.
33. Creating stricter laws regulating how one can build on land within the city borders in order to protect green territories.
34. Creating a North-South electric public transportation line.

### 3RD STAGE: DECISION MAKING (3RD OCTOBER 2021)

Following the joint brainstorming session participants of the Citizens' Assembly had to vote about which of the proposals are the most important and should definitely be included in the proposal package submitted to local policy makers.

Since many of the proposals put forward were very similar in terms of their topic and their aim, based on the suggestion of the lead experts of the Citizens' Assembly and supported unanimously by participants of the event, certain proposals were eventually merged. This ensured that during the vote very similar proposals wouldn't eventually cancel out each other.

#### ORIGINAL PROPOSALS (PROGRAMS AIMED AT EXPANDING GREEN SPACES):

1. Launching public green space programs which are acknowledged and also promoted by the Municipality (e.g. community gardens, making the roofs of apartment blocks green, balconies). There should be competitions and prizes for these projects, they should be professionally aided and also given publicity.
2. Green surfaces should be created in the place of ruinous buildings and ill-kempt plots.
3. Launching a comprehensive program which involves citizens in making the city greener. Building on public participation in caring for trees.

#### The merged proposal:

The Municipality should have a comprehensive green program (which includes the handling of ruinous buildings and ill-kempt plots). This should acknowledge public initiatives (such as creating community gardens, making the roofs of apartment blocks green, and creating beautiful balconies) and the city should actively involve citizens in realizing the aims of the program.

#### ORIGINAL PROPOSALS (REGARDING ESTABLISHING BICYCLE ROUTES):

1. A cycle path should be created in Kiss Ernő Street along the shore of the Szinva creek. It should be connected to the existing bicycle network in a way that is in line with flood prevention guidelines.
2. Establishing a Southern bicycle route along Kiss Ernő Street. The Northern bicycle route should be improved and extended to Diosgyőr city center.

#### The merged proposal:

Creating a bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, building a network from these routes, correcting and maintaining these routes where necessary. This program should also entail creating a bicycle route in Kiss Ernő Street along the shore of the Szinva creek and connecting it to the existing bicycle network in a way that is in

line with flood prevention guidelines. The Northern bicycle route should be more serviceable and should be extended to Diósgyőr city center.

After merging the above ideas for proposals participants of the Citizens' Assembly had to vote for the ten ideas that they found most important from the final list. Organizers then counted the votes. The following seven received the most votes:

1. The Municipality should have a comprehensive green program (which includes the handling of ruinous buildings and ill-kempt plots). This should acknowledge public initiatives (such as creating community gardens, making the roofs of apartment blocks green, and creating beautiful balconies) and the city should actively involve citizens in realizing the aims of the program.
2. Dynamic and effective public transportation: Rethinking timetables with the interest of the masses using the public transportation lines in mind. Prioritizing public transportation over the use of cars.
3. Creating a bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, building a network from these routes, correcting and maintaining these routes where necessary. This program should also entail creating a bicycle route in Kiss Ernő Street along the shore of the Szinva creek and connecting it to the existing bicycle network in a way that is in line with flood prevention guidelines. The Northern bicycle route should be more serviceable and should be extended to Diósgyőr city center.
4. A communication program aimed at expanding residents' knowledge regarding environment protection should be launched using the city's communicational channels such as MINAP (municipal newspaper), Miskolc TV, public transportation stops, different displays, the city's homepage etc.
5. Creating a North-South electric public transportation line.
6. A pilot project for the replacement of outdated heating systems should be launched targeting those affected by energy poverty in specific territories. This should be complemented by education of the proper combustion technologies.
7. Creating a one-stop consultancy office network for all energy related issues.

**These seven ideas received the most votes closely followed by the following two:**

*The Municipality should draw up an action plan reviewing possible tools available for gradually expanding car free zones.*

*Bringing public awareness to the causes of air pollution, its effects and possible solutions to the problem through the advertising surfaces belonging to the city.*

Following the voting participants of the assembly formed smaller groups and discussed in detail each of the proposals, their possible benefits, costs and the amount of time it would take to implement them. They also talked about the different challenges that the acting parties might encounter during the implementation.

After they finished deliberating there was another round of voting. This time the goal was to see what the exact level of support for each of the proposals was. Participants had to grade all seven proposals on a scale of 1 to 5. Results of the vote were the following:

1. Dynamic and effective public transportation: Rethinking timetables with the interest of the masses using the public transportation lines in mind. Prioritizing public transportation over the use of cars. – 90 % support
2. A communication program aimed at expanding residence knowledge regarding environment protection should be launched using the city's communicational channels such as MINAP (municipal newspaper), Miskolc TV, public transportation stops, different displays, the city's homepage etc. – 89 % support
3. The Municipality should have a comprehensive green program (which includes the handling of ruinous buildings and ill-kempt plots). This should acknowledge public initiatives (such as creating community gardens, making the roofs of apartment blocks green, and creating beautiful balconies) and the city should actively involve citizens in realizing the aims of the program. – 86 % support
4. Creating a North-South electric public transportation line. – 86 % support
5. Creating a bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, building a network from these routes, correcting and maintaining these routes where necessary. This program should also entail creating a bicycle route in Kiss Ernő Street along the shore of the Szinva creek and connecting it to the existing bicycle network in a way that is in line with flood prevention guidelines. The Northern bicycle route should be more serviceable and should be extended to Diósgyőr city center. – 77 % support
6. Creating a one-stop consultancy office network for all energy related issues. – 73 % support
7. A pilot project for the replacement of outdated heating systems should be launched targeting those affected by energy poverty in specific territories. This should be complemented by education about the proper combustion technologies. – 70 % support

To round up the Citizens' Assembly the event ended with the participants reflecting on and sharing with each other what they had learned during the past two weeks about their city and themselves.





# ADOPTED PROPOSALS



DemNet





## DYNAMIC AND EFFECTIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The transport sector is one of the biggest sources of air pollution in Hungary. The rapidly expanding number of vehicles and the fact that in many households there is now more than one car is proving to be a great challenge for traffic management and a huge problem in terms of air pollution. Making public transportation more effective and more attractive to car users is an indispensable part of making our cities more pleasant to live in.

**The aim of the proposal is to encourage rethinking of the way public transportation in Miskolc works today in order to make it more dynamic and effective by 2023 thus offering people an attractive option for traveling and commuting.**

Currently some of the public transport lines are overcrowded while others are unused and often the different timetables are not well coordinated to each other. The aim would be to make main bus services more frequent and establish services connecting certain parts of the city that are currently not part of the bus route. Ideally, electric buses would service these new routes.

The goal is for passengers to be able to plan their commute on the basis of a reliable time table. Rethinking public transportation includes several elements which don't need large funding but would themselves already vastly improve the way people think about public transportation and how attractive they find it as an option to get around.

The Citizens' Assembly proposes that the Municipality, with the help of citizens and passenger counters, evaluates the needs of the public in terms of the different service routes during the different hours of the day. Having done so, they should involve traffic experts to optimize the utilization of these services. They should reduce the frequency of bus services that run basically empty during the day, or switch to smaller buses on the less popular routes and increase the frequency of services or switch to larger buses when and where the number of passengers indicates the need for such changes.

They should create junctions at schools, health institutions, and places that employ many people while at the same time coordinate the different services and install digital boards that provide passengers with the necessary travel information.

The large-scale increase of passengers during the beginning of the school year could be eased - in cooperation with the schools - by creating school bus services and/or shifting the time when teaching starts.

The Citizens' Assembly proposes furthermore that the Municipality creates several P+R parking places on the border of the city thus promoting the use of the public transport system.

The Municipality, in collaboration with its partners, should also help passengers by reforming the ticket and pass system. It should simplify the types of passes that are currently available and, if possible, make them less expensive. It could motivate the use of public transportation services if free or discount tickets were available for the weekends or for passengers under the age of 14.

Since the aim of the proposal is to encourage people to switch from using cars to using the public transportation system, certain restrictive measures must also be taken: For example certain streets could be closed off from car traffic or speed limits could be introduced for the city center. Other options include decreasing the number of available parking spaces within the city and raising parking fees.

Since implementing such changes in a way that is acceptable to members of the public can only be achieved by supplying people with appropriate information, the Municipality must, through targeted communication and with the help of experts, improve the traffic morel standards and explain to the public the links between pollution and health. They should also redesign the image of public transportation to increase its appeal to people.

**Implementing this proposal helps improve air quality, traffic safety and wellbeing in the city.**

## + ADVANTAGES

- + If public transportation is effective and affordable many people will switch to using buses or trams instead of their cars.
- + It will improve air quality and make the city a nicer place to live in.
- + With the decrees of vehicles on the roads, traffic safety will improve.
- + It will be easier to get to certain parts of the city, and parking will no longer be an issue in the city center.
- + Certain elements of the proposal, such as coordinating the different public transport services, do not require substantial funding.

## - CHALLENGES

- It takes serious organizing to be able to analyze how residents of the city travel and commute and to re-think and coordinate the public transportation services.
- Increasing the frequency of certain services, changing vehicles and creating P+R parking places might require larger funding.
- Decreasing the price of tickets and passes would mean a loss of revenue for the public transport company which would not be fully compensated for by the possible increase of passengers.
- Parking fees would increase but it must be investigated whether the revenue that this produces could in some way be channeled into the financing of the public transport system.
- Since most stops and public transport services are not accessible to people with reduced mobility, for many switching to the public transport system will not be a realistic option.
- The existing buses are in bad shape which is an issue when it comes to keeping to the time tables.



## LAUNCHING A COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Although one might easily believe that the risks of climate change and air pollution are evident to all, the decisions we have to make on a daily basis prove otherwise. That is why participants of the Citizens' Assembly think it is very important to keep a constant focus on the topic of environmental protection. They believe the Municipality must communicate intensely about the topic drawing on the expertise of environment protection experts, NGOs and volunteers.

Led by a communication expert, **working together with journalists of municipal media outlets must be a part of the focused communication program. These outlets must receive help in order to be able to create relevant content on the topic and residents and NGOs must also be given a chance to take part through different tenders.**

The goal is to bring the attention of the residents of Miskolc to the problem through creative and – at times perhaps even shocking – messages so that they understand that air pollution is something that affects everyone.

**To keep the topic on the agenda, it is necessary for members of the Municipality and political figures to get involved and show dedication to the cause. That is why the Citizens' Assembly suggests that the Municipality uses the advertising surfaces at its disposal (i.e. the sides of buildings, advertising slots on public transportation services) for presenting these messages.**

Many existing online platforms (i.e. MINAP, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, newsletter) are already available and can be used for communicating about environment protection but further platforms must also be created in the future. The goal is to deliver the message in the right form to everyone from school children to the residents of care homes.

The assembly also proposes that politicians and local representatives who feel responsible for Miskolc include information about air pollution and the possible solutions to the existing problems in their speeches and comments.

Communication should not be limited to online space. Leaflets containing relevant information could also be made available at, for example events and on public transportation services. The message could also be packaged in a more light hearted, playful form. Information could be accessed for example with the help of your phone after scanning a QR code at one of the stops.

If the need arises a separate mobile application could also be developed specifically focusing on air quality and life in Miskolc.

**By implementing the proposal, the residents of Miskolc would become more knowledgeable and they would become more climate aware. It would also strengthen the relationship between the different sectors (residents-Municipality-NGOs-press). This would all contribute to making Miskolc a nicer place to live in.**

### + ADVANTAGES

- + Compared to other kinds of public communication surfaces, the strategy suggested in the proposal doesn't require much funding.
- + If implemented successfully, it would provide a large part of the residents with relevant information.
- + It would spread knowledge and raise public awareness simultaneously.

### - HÁTRÁNYOK

- The assigned municipal media (i.e. MINAP) are not universally respected and so they aren't capable of reaching a large part of the residents of Miskolc.
- The public is not yet fully receptive to the topic and thus can not be expected to actively look for and seek out information related to it.
- The question of credibility: One must consider how credible people see a medium or the agency behind it. The question is whether locals will be open to the intended messages.



## LAUNCHING A GREEN CAMPAIGN

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Whether we like living in a certain place is influenced by several things, our wellbeing is based on numerous factors. Whether we are actually living in a green environment impacts us both physically and mentally. If there is an abundance of green spaces in our city it improves the quality of air: The plants produce oxygen, capture carbon dioxide, they also filter out dust, help decrease the urban heat island effect and with their roots they provide protection against the possible damages caused by a sudden downpour of rain. At the same time, the benefits they have on our mental state are also significant. The simple fact that we are surrounded by green improves the way we feel.

**The Citizens' Assembly proposes that the Municipality create a comprehensive green program which would be launched in the spring of 2023. It should take into account climate change and acknowledge public initiatives. The city should actively involve citizens in realizing the aims of the program.**

The basis for the green program must be a green strategy containing detailed surveys and expert proposals. The Citizens' Assembly proposes that the Municipality create a detailed list of territories which can be integrated into the program. When they have compiled the said list they should rank these territories according to relevance. The Municipality's research should also extend to ruinous buildings and ill-kempt plots and the question of ownership of these.

Public initiatives – such as community gardens working on a membership basis or making the roofs of apartment blocks green – should be a core part of the program.

Within the program, the Municipality should supply different forms of help to residents for them to be able to obtain necessary plants. Some of the plants should be handed out freely by the city, but the Municipality should also organize seed and seedling exchange events as well as flower markets in some of the districts.

The Citizens' Assembly believes it is vital for residents to also be involved in caring for the territories transformed through

the program. The Citizens' Assembly suggests therefore that residents – or existing communities, such as schools or care homes – be able to compete for the right to adopt these spaces. Their tender must contain their idea about how the given territory could be made greener, how they would realize their vision and how they would care for the territory and maintain it in the future.

The Municipality should acknowledge this kind of public participation in some form. They could for example hand out gift tokens from a horticulture company or give out titles, perhaps they could even organize an educational day for the public when residents could learn tricks and tips for gardening.

The Citizens' Assembly also proposes that the city hold competitions where those who are best at making their environment green receive money prizes. There could be separate categories. (These could include smaller and larger gardens, patches in a community garden, shared gardens belonging to apartment blocks or schools etc.)

Informing residents about the program is an important part of this proposal. It is also vital that during the program, people are presented with useful information, good examples and best practices, and also insight into how these affect climate change.

The Citizens' Assembly proposes that, in order to secure the necessary funding for the green program, the Municipality reviews its options beyond allocating funds for the program from its budget. It should also consider issuing tenders, holding citizens' assemblies, securing company assistance or introducing a minimal fee for the use of community gardens.

The program can only be successful if local representatives, regardless of their party background, support the initiative and the Municipality manages to incorporate all interested parties on a scale as wide as possible: green NGOs, local representatives, residents, schools, teachers, institutions caring for the elderly, clubs, members of the construction sector who can demolish the ruinous buildings and horticulture companies.

**Implementing the proposal would enable the city to become green. It would improve local air quality and also the physical and mental well being of residents.**

## + ADVANTAGES

- + The size of green territories will grow improving the cityscape
- + Air quality will improve, green territories capture carbon dioxide and filter out dust while also producing oxygen.
- + It decreases the urban heat island effect.
- + Plantation provides shade, making the roofs of apartment blocks green helps keep buildings cool.
- + It improves the life quality and mood of residents.
- + Plants help the soil retain water and the roots provide protection against flash floods.
- + The experience of caring for plants brings people together and thus has a therapeutic effect. Also, the created green territories can serve as spaces for other community programs (i.e. the Kapuzőrtők initiative by the Esély és Részvétel Közhasznú Egyesület)
- + The expansion of collectively maintained green spaces enhances public safety
- + There are many free, unused territories which could be made green in front of and between houses.
- + Community gardens give children a chance to get to know plants and they can serve as an escape from screens. Community gardens can even inspire young people to choose agriculture or horticulture related jobs later on. Not least, these gardens can also contribute to families' self-preservation efforts.
- + Creating gardens in closed courts can also serve as a specifically therapeutic tool for people with special needs. At Vargahegy the flowerbeds are tended to by people with autism.

## - CHALLENGES

- A study must be conducted into how flat roofs can be planted on. The maximum load capacity has to be determined as well as how the plants can be watered. The question of how to access and exit the given space is also a question that has to be reviewed.
- Watering, caring for and maintaining shared gardens is a complex task.
- Due to climate change draughts are increasing therefore creating a system for collecting rainwater and examining the quality of the soil is also very important.
- The condition of houses and buildings as well as the question of their ownership could cause difficulties.
- An agreement must be reached between the residents and the Municipality which could cause an administrative burden.
- It might occur that the size of certain spaces fit for creating community gardens is not big enough to host all the people who originally indicated that they would like to take part in the project. If this should be the case it means the way the territories are allocated has to be reconsidered.
- The opposite could also occur. Perhaps in certain cases the lack of interest or motivation on the locals' part could pose a challenge. This might be explained by the fact that many people have little time to spare.
- The gardens and territories that had been planted on must be protected from vandalism. Perhaps in certain cases they might even need to be guarded.
- Taking joint care of green spaces – especially in the case of community gardens – is only feasible if they are located close to where the people live, which means that this aspect also has to be taken into consideration during planning. Motivation has to come from within the community.



## CREATING A NORTH-SOUTH ELECTRIC PUBLIC TRANSPORT LINE

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

In Hungary, one of the biggest sources of gas house emissions and air pollution is the transport sector. According to predictions, the need for mobility will keep increasing in the future and so it is very important for us to reduce the amount of emissions resulting from our travels. Developing electric public transportation systems could substantially help our efforts. If it became an attractive alternative for people who are currently using their cars, it could drastically curb the level of local air pollution.

**The aim of this proposal is to improve the quality of public transportation thus helping residents make the change from cars to public transportation and reduce the number of cars on the road.**

In Miskolc, there is a tram line connecting the Western part of the city to the Eastern part, however, there is no such line between the Northern and the Southern parts of the city. During the meetings of the Citizens' Assembly, it was suggested that such a line could be established between Miskolc Airport and the part that is known as the University Town or perhaps the line could even end at Miskolctapolca.

It was suggested that the line could be extended at the Miskolctapolca junction point thus making it possible for passengers to reach Hejőcsaba or even the shopping mall beyond it. P+R parking lots could be created near the final stations, bicycle storage units could also be installed and maybe there could even be a minibus station.

The line could run through Búza square or through Villanyrendőr or even the city center. It would also be necessary to close certain streets to car traffic. It was also added to the proposal that perhaps there could be a few electric bus lines that run perpendicular to existing tram lines since this would make it possible for the North-South and East-West

electric public transportations lines to meet in more than one place.

Depending on the findings of the feasibility studies, the selected public transportation vehicle could eventually be a tram, a trolleybus, a trolleybus that is battery-powered or a tram-train (in which case the line could even be connected to the Kazincbarcika train). Another alternative that was also mentioned was establishing a funicular line between the city center and Avas (a hill of volcanic origin within Miskolc). Improving the city's electric system is probably inevitable, whichever of the options is eventually realized and new switchyards will also have to be built.

The Citizens' Assembly believes that the elements of the proposal should be realized in the span of about ten years in smaller proportions. This amount of time should be enough for the whole process including securing EU funds for the project through tenders and drawing up the necessary documentation. The Assembly therefore suggests that the Municipality starts preparing the tenders and project without delay and that the city involves skilled and experienced proposal writers, a planning office, the local transport company and the Magyar Közút Nonprofit Zrt. in the process. The Municipality should also prepare a high quality environmental and cost efficiency analysis as well as inform the public about the project and involve the residents in it.

**By creating an electric transportation line between the Northern and Southern parts of the city, certain places within Miskolc – which currently can only be reached by either car or bus – will become accessible by zero emission public transportation vehicles. This will help reduce noise pollution, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and it will increase public safety and wellbeing.**



## + ADVANTAGES

- + A big advantage of this proposal is that it can be scheduled: It can not and does not have to be implemented all at once. This reduces the chance of inconveniences during the chance of inconveniences during the execution phase.
- + If the line is established along already existing roads (regardless of whether trams or trolleybuses will eventually service the line), there is no need to purchase any further properties to be able to implement the proposal.
- + In case of a successful tender the Municipality can secure funding for developing its electronic transportation system from the Integrated Transport Operational Programme (ITOP) which was created for the EU funding period of 2021-2027.
- + The project improves public transportation, makes it easier for university students, factory workers and people who have to get to the hospital to reach their destination and it can also have a positive effect on tourism.
- + It can reduce air and noise pollution since it can serve as an alternative to both bus services and car transportation. Less cars on the road mean less and smaller traffic jams, more predictable traffic and all together a better quality of life.
- + Since elements of the proposal could replace car traffic to an extent, it would also become justifiable to close certain streets to cars (only allowing local residents to enter by car). At the same time bypass routes must be provided.
- + The proposal creates a long term, sustainable mode of transport for both current and future residents of Miskolc.

## - CHALLENGES

- Residents usually have a hard time getting used to changes and traffic will most likely stall from time to time during the execution of the project since certain roads will have to be closed temporarily.
- The proposed measures require extensive funding. Although, according to plans, the city will be able to secure EU funds for the development of its electric transportation system, preparing a successful tender is a huge task and requires a lot of planning. It is also important to plan the project in a way that allows it to fit into the wider city development strategy.
- The developments will, without doubt, anger certain members of society who prefer to travel mainly by car. Intense reactions can be expected.
- The problem with a lack of space does arise: In case of trams, tracks need space, and trolley buses are a most effective mode of transport when they can use a separate lane. If the road needs to be widened, some trees might have to be cut down and it could also cause significant loss of green territory in the section between Népkert and Miskolctapolca.
- Both trams and trolleybuses have pros and cons. What these exactly are will become more apparent to experts once the feasibility study is completed.
- The problems affecting the construction industry (such a shortage of qualified workers and materials) do pose a risk factor for the project.
- Tram-trains run on tracks that are different to the old railway tracks which can still be found at the university or the Hejőcsaba cement factory but have been out of use for a long time.
- It could cause a problem if there are private properties (i.e. the pharmacy in Hejőcsaba) on the planned transportation line. The question of the ownership of roads beyond the city borders could also cause difficulties.

## CREATING A BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN INFRASTRUCTURE, BUILDING A NETWORK FROM THESE ROUTES AND CORRECTING AND MAINTAINING THEM

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The level of emissions stemming from traffic have been increasing in Hungary for years and are a contributing factor to air pollution. That is why it is urgent for the city to rethink its use of space and promote the use of low and zero emission modes of transportation as widely as possible.

**The goal of the proposal is for the Municipality to create a network from the existing pedestrian and bicycle routes, to maintain and make this network safer, and extend it according to local suggestions.**

Miskolc already has a bicycle network but in many places it isn't connected and the quality of its surface is also insufficient. The Citizens' Assembly proposes that the Municipality take steps to fix the roads where necessary thus improving traffic safety. It also suggests that the city, based on an assessment of what the residents would like, draws up possible options for further extending this network.

But improving bicycle routes can not come at the cost of pedestrian traffic. Sidewalks should not be erased or made narrower. In case of sidewalks that run along bicycle routes the city should also add a synthetic rubber running lane.

The Citizens' Assembly proposes that to improve the safety of bicycle traffic bicycle routes should not be constructed along main roads but rather, where possible, they should be established next to less busy roads or on green territories.

Along already existing routes and ones that will be created in the future, venues should be set up where people can rent bicycles and scooters. The profit stemming from these rentals could be used for the maintenance of the roads.

Bicycle repair stations could be established along these routes which could also function as resting points and public fountains should be made usable and accessible to travelers and commuters. In order for this to happen, the city must first assess the condition of the fountains and decide which functioning public fountains can be incorporated into the project. If funding allows, in order to avoid wasting

water, automated fountains should be installed with touch sensors.

The Citizens' Assembly also suggests that the Municipality begin talks with experts concerning when and how the following new or alternative bicycle networks could be created:

- ◀ in the East-West direction from Mindszent Square to Diósgyőr Castle and from there all the way to Majális Park (Southern alternative route)
- ◀ from Búza Square to Felső-Majláth (Northern alternative route).

These two alternative routes would be connected at the following points located in the North-South direction:

- ◀ Szemere-Kazinczy meeting point,
- ◀ Thököly line,
- ◀ Gyula Street and its vicinity,
- ◀ Maros Street and its vicinity,
- ◀ Bertalan-Lorántffy meeting point.

The Citizens' Assembly proposes that bicycle traffic should be directed away from the Újgyőr Central Square. This is the place where traffic is the most dense and so it must be avoided. It should be considered whether extending the current bicycle route to Majláth is a viable option.

A cycle path can be created along the shore of the Szinva creek (maybe in part following the tracks of the forest railway) but an expert study must first be conducted. This study has to examine the existing flood protection guidelines and determine how close a concrete road can be built to the stream.

The Citizens' Assembly also recommends that bicycle storage units be installed along already existing and future bicycle routes as well as close to public institutions and companies which employ many people. In case of the latter, the Municipality should strive to establish a partnership with the given company to convince it to motivate its employees to bicycle.

Bicycle lockers and bicycle rentals should also be set up close to P+R parking lots and at the Tisza Railway Station. This would allow people to dynamically switch between modes of transportation.

The Municipality and the transport company should examine which forms of public transportation allow for people to take their bicycles on board and under what conditions.

#### + ADVANTAGES

- + Pedestrian and bicycle traffic do not create emissions. They facilitate a healthy lifestyle thus indirectly reducing medical costs and improving residents' well being.
- + Cars will be physically separated from other modes of transportation which reduces the number of traffic accidents and increases life expectancy.
- + Those who already regularly use their bicycles will have more routes at their disposal organized into a more consistent network making the city easier to navigate.
- + It reduces car traffic. Hopefully a number of people will decide to switch from driving to cycling.
- + Expanding the bicycle infrastructure helps develop local infrastructure and also carries economic potential (i.e. resting points for cyclists, service stations get built).
- + The shore of the Szinva will become more appealing to tourists. This is something that the city could build on.

To improve transport culture, the Citizens' Assembly proposes that the Municipality – in partnership with NGOs – launch an educational and sensitivity inducing program for all parties participating in traffic. A mobile application should also be developed that shows bicycle routes and their viability as well as contains information about the time tables for public transportation services (helping users switch between modes of travel).

**By implementing the proposal Miskolc the bicycle infrastructure in Miskolc would become more coherent, safer and more attractive which could further inspire people to switch to zero emission mode of transport. The city's air quality would improve as well as the health of the residents, it would make it easier for people to get from one point to the other and dynamically switch between modes of transportation.**

#### - CHALLENGES

- Certain resistance to the planned changes can be expected from car drivers.
- If most people keep using their bicycles for mostly recreational purposes, the planned changes will not have a significant effect on car traffic.
- Developing, renewing and maintaining the infrastructure requires substantial funding (i.e. the section between Görömböly and Tapolca requires landscaping and renewing, a new path must be created at Újgyőr Main Square)
- During the project, if certain sections turn out to be private property, it could cause problems in terms of landscaping.
- Constructing the bicycle path that is planned to run along the shore of the Szinva might mean that a few trees have to be cut down, the territory would have to be paved with asphalt and the changes would also affect the local plots designated for walking dogs.



## CREATING A ONE-STOP CONSULTANCY OFFICE FOR ALL ENERGY RELATED ISSUES

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Low energy efficiency often stems not from the lack of money but from the lack of knowledge. A deep renovation (which truly does make a difference in terms of emissions and energy consumption) is a very complex process that involves several experts and is something that most residents are afraid of. So they either don't do it, or, in a worse case scenario, **do renovate their home but not in an efficient way thus actually conserving the original emission levels and low energy efficiency for many years to come.**

This is exactly the kind of situation the Citizens' Assembly would like to prevent by proposing that one-stop consultancy offices for energy related issues be created throughout the city. These should be set up in buildings that already exist so as to avoid having to build new ones specifically for this purpose.

The consultancy offices should not simply be set up in proportion to the number of residents living in a given territory. Instead the residents of Miskolc must be surveyed and the offices established where there is a specific need for their services. The location of the offices would in this way reflect which parts of the city are currently lagging behind with the necessary modernization.

The consultancy offices could be set up and operated in partnership with local entrepreneurs who could take part in the renovations.

Counseling by the energy efficiency experts would not be a free service but the offices would have to provide a free of charge initial consultation. The Citizens' Assembly suggests that beyond receiving counseling at the office, residents should have the option to request counseling at a flexible time and outside of the office.

The consultancy offices should employ energy and architect counselors who hold the appropriate qualifications for the job. The offices should strive to give work to as many local experts as possible. The Citizens' Assembly also proposes that, after a while the experts replace one another, in this way ensuring that there is no convergence between the counselors and contractors.

The professionals who are referred to clients by the counselors must first be evaluated by a Supervisory Committee of experts. The offices can request a commission from referred

contractors in this way ensuring the financial stability and sustainability of the service provided by the consultants.

Beyond offering technical help (i.e. carrying out software based calculations, giving advice regarding the optimal thickness of insulation etc.) the consultant would also draw up a payment strategy to cover the expenses of the renovation. If someone would like to take advantage of the consultant's expertise beyond the above listed services, they could do so for a discount price.

Although the one-stop consultancy network would provide a paid service, the Assembly believes it should have to take into account the social background of each client. That is why the Assembly thinks it must necessarily work together with the members of different social institutions. The consultancy network could for example provide help to people in need with furnace replacement or the social firewood program.

The pricing of the services provided by the consultancy network could be based both on the target group or the given service specifically.

The Citizens' Assembly believes that awareness-raising should be a core part of the consultancy offices' work and also its image. People must be made aware of the existence of the consultancy network in order to be able to make use of its services therefore it must be given publicity with the help of local media.

The consultancy network should organize workshops and lectures to raise awareness about energy efficiency at schools, service providers and utility companies. It should create relevant content on the topic and show residents examples of how certain homes had been effectively renovated to be more energy efficient.

**With the network of consultancy offices the residents of Miskolc would get access to a service that they currently don't have or can't access easily. The energy efficiency of buildings would improve. Heating and cooling related energy consumption would decrease as would the emissions produced by these activities. The quality of life for residents living in homes renovated to improve energy efficiency would improve while they would also be able to reduce their living costs. The network of consultancy offices could also promote all other programs related to energy efficiency and energy poverty.**

## ✦ ADVANTAGES

- ✦ Sharing knowledge will result in renovations that actually make the homes of Miskolc residents more energy efficient. This decreases emission levels, energy consumption and air pollution.
- ✦ The consultancy offices simplify administration processes and also make them accessible.
- ✦ It enables people to carry out a complex deep renovation who otherwise would not have had adequate information or sufficient online access for handling such a big project.
- ✦ The offices create workplaces, they enliven smaller local construction enterprises and many of the local centers for expertise (i.e. The Combustion Technology Research Institute at Miskolc University) can also be integrated into their work.
- ✦ The proposed network could be incorporated into the existing Government Customer Service structure.
- ✦ It would provide a chance to filter-out unfit contractors and professionals which would increase the number of high quality energy efficiency renovations.
- ✦ It could also help clarify how, under what circumstances and with what conditions monuments and historic buildings can be renovated and modernized.

## ✦ CHALLENGES

- ✦ There is a risk that not many residents of Miskolc will be interested in the service provided by the network of consultancy offices (perhaps because they are not aware of its existence). Maintaining the network and paying the employees could pose a problem.
- ✦ If the demand increases for the services provided by the network there could be a shortage of constructors and professionals.
- ✦ There is a risk that the constructors and professionals referred by the consultants do a bad job which would damage the credibility of the whole project.
- ✦ It could occur that the offices and the contractors collaborate in a way that distorts the market and harms the interests of residents. They might not be dedicated to providing high quality services to improve energy efficiency.
- ✦ The offices provide a high quality, expertise based service which is expensive. The residents might not be willing to pay that much for this service.



## PILOT PROJECT FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF OUTDATED HEATING SYSTEMS TARGETING THOSE AFFECTED BY THE ENERGY POVERTY IN SPECIFIC TERRITORIES AND COMPLEMENTED BY EDUCATION ABOUT THE PROPER COMBUSTION TECHNOLOGIES

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Energy poverty occurs when energy bills represent a high percentage of consumers' income, or when they must reduce their household's energy consumption to a degree that negatively impacts their health and well-being.

According to the so-called 2M indicator used in the Elosztó Project – which was launched with the aim to review energy poverty in Hungary – in 2015, 10 percent of local households were affected by energy poverty. This constitutes almost half million people. Heating is a large contributor to air pollution: It is often due to poverty that families burn wet wood or waste instead of high quality fuel and they also regularly use ineffective furnaces to try to create heat.

**If we do not tend to the problem of heating with solid fuels and energy poverty then not only the poorest members of society but all of us will have to suffer the consequences: We will all keep on breathing bad quality, polluted air. It is our joint interest therefore to help those less fortunate to switch to a heating option that is less polluting. In this specific case it is especially true that success can only be achieved through social sensitivity and collaboration.**

The aim of the proposal is to provide help to the families living in energy poverty (perhaps people with small pensions or elderly people living alone) in upgrading their outdated, low efficiency and heavily polluting heating systems.

The Citizens' Assembly proposes that the Municipality select a given part of the city (for example Lyukóháza, Hejőcsaba, Görömböly, Martinkertváros or Szirma) to test a 12-24 month long pilot project. They should first assess the conditions of the local families living in poverty (i.e. financial situation, mood, level of motivation) and the condition of

their homes (type of building, size of building, the condition of the chimney etc.)

Next the Municipality should enter into an agreement with 20-25 of the local families setting down exactly what the requirements for taking part in the program are.

During the program the city should secure fuel for these families for the length of the heating season from the wood deposited at the Municipality's premises. The wood should be delivered to the families every week or every other week.

The existing agreement between the parties should contain the appropriate, intended use of the fuel.

To promote the effective use of municipal furnaces assigned to families, and boost motivation a project should be launched which enables the families to eventually buy the furnaces through making small but regular payments.

To procure and install the furnaces the Municipality should enter into a strategic partnership with the appropriate manufacturer and/or trader.

The manufacturer and/or trader should not only install the heating system but also – in collaboration with chimney cleaners – provide annual maintenance and inspection. During this inspection it could be determined whether the family is using the furnace appropriately. Inspection could also be aided by the data secured from the air quality monitoring stations established as a part of the LIFE HungAIRy project.

In its proposal the Citizens' Assembly mentions using solid fuel furnaces for the project but they also suggest that the benefits and challenges of using gas furnaces should also be weighed.



There is great focus on education within the program. To learn the appropriate combustion technologies and understand the health implications of using polluting fuels for heating, the families must take part in a course.

Ideally, the course would be held for groups with the members present from disaster management services, experts in the field of combustion technologies and NGOs.

To ensure that the program is successful, the Municipality must bring onboard appropriate partners. These could be experts from Habitat for Humanity Hungary,

social workers, representatives of the network of district nurses, members from organizations representing the Roma communities, people from the Dr. Ámbédkar School, the Északerdő Zrt., the Kertváros Idősek Klubja, furnace manufacturers and traders and local experts of the LIFE HungAIRy Project.

Thanks to the proposal, heating-related air pollution could decrease, the quality of life of the families taking part in the pilot project as well as those living in their vicinity will improve equally.

### ✦ ADVANTAGES

- ✦ It will decrease air pollution locally, improving the quality of life for residents.
- ✦ It reduces the health risks which threaten the families participating in the program and those living in their vicinity.
- ✦ It expands participants' knowledge about the topic.
- ✦ Illegal logging will decrease and fuel utilization will become more effective.
- ✦ It sets a positive example and helps social inclusion.
- ✦ If participants get a chance to learn how furnaces are installed from the experts, the project could indirectly provide locals with skills and jobs.

### ✦ CHALLENGES

- ✦ Selecting families, finding the appropriate communication channel and contact person might be difficult since communication difficulties might arise with the families taking part in the project.
- ✦ Many different parties have to work together to realize the project. The parties supplying the personnel and funds must be identified and motivated.
- ✦ There is a risk that, due to the lack of knowledge about the topic, locals might not be interested in the program.
- ✦ It is hard to coordinate the work of all parties involved, to organize the continuous supply of the appropriate quality fuel and regular maintenance of the furnaces.
- ✦ If HungAIRy plants air quality monitoring stations on the territory selected for the pilot program, the maintenance of these might be problematic.
- ✦ Checks, keeping to the rules and sanctioning are all important factors to ensure that the participants of the program don't end up selling the furnaces, the fuel or destroy the equipment by not using it in the appropriate manner (by using it to burn waste for example).
- ✦ Some families taking part in the program might move away to another place before the end of the program.



## WHAT THE FIGURES TELL US

### Prior to the Citizens' Assembly

No indicator can better determine the success of an initiative based on methods advocating participation than the opinions and impressions of the participants themselves. To find out how participants of the Citizens' Assembly felt about this democratic tool which had never before been used in Miskolc, we asked them to fill out a questionnaire anonymously before the event. Filling out the questionnaire was voluntary.

The fact that local residents want to have a say in public affairs is evident from their response to why they decided to participate in the event. Based on their answers, they were motivated by local patriot sentiments much more than the daily fee.

23 percent of those who filled out the questionnaire answered that they registered for the Citizens' Assembly mainly because they wanted to do something for the city. Another 23 percent indicated that wanting to do something for the city was the second most important factor in their decision to take part. 16 percent of the respondents said that the main reason they decided to attend was because they consider the topic of the Citizens' Assembly (local air quality) to be very important. 23 percent marked this as the second most important factor in their decision to participate in the event. Only 7 percent of the respondents said that the daily fee was the prime reason for their attendance and 3 percent indicated that the daily fee was the second most important factor for them. 19 percent didn't mention the daily fee at all when it came to listing their reasons for registering for the event.

The citizens' desire to have a say in public affairs is also exemplified by the fact that when asked to rate the importance of policy makers paying attention to citizens on a scale from 1 to 5, the average score given by the respondents was 4.7. Also three fourths of the respondents agreed wholeheartedly with the statement that in a democracy it is important for citizens to have a say in the most important decisions. 70 percent also completely agreed with the statement that it is important in a democracy for parties with dissenting opinions to find a common ground.

However, most of the respondents (54 percent) said they think that currently this is impossible in Hungary and that the Hungarian political system allows citizens only a little say in politics while one third of the respondents specifically said, they think it allows ordinary citizens absolutely none.

Since one of the central elements of the methodology of citizens' assemblies is giving reliable information, knowledge, and professional support to participants, it is a very important indicator that 94 percent of the participants of the Miskolc Citizens' Assembly said afterwards, that their knowledge base concerning air pollution had expanded during the event and that they feel that, following the assembly, they are much better versed on the topic of climate change.



These results also reflect that the participants were satisfied with both the lecturers and the lead experts. The latter were given no less than 4.7 points on average on a scale of 5 when participants were asked to grade the quality of their work.

The positive feedback that participants gave organizers of the event during table discussions and breaks were also echoed by the results of the questionnaire: 89 percent of the participants of the Citizens' Assembly said they would be willing to take part in another assembly and 94 percent said they would encourage others to do so if given the chance.

Participants gave 4.7 points to the way the event was organized and how organizers and participants communicated, and acknowledged the facilitators' efforts with 4.9 points.

It also became clear from the results of the questionnaire that, all in all, participants had a very positive opinion about the event: Two thirds (67 percent) said that it was better than what they had initially expected and one fourth (24 percent) of the respondents said it was basically what they had expected. Therefore, altogether 91 percent of the participants left the event after it was over feeling pleased.

## After the Citizens' Assembly

Following the Citizens' Assembly, we wanted to find out whether the residents of Miskolc had heard about the event and, if they had, what people thought about this initiative. That is why DemNet and Pólusok Association conducted a joint online survey between 26th of October and the 6th of November, in which they asked for feedback from 720 randomly selected Miskolc residents. The residents who participated in the survey were representative of the complete adult population of Miskolc in terms of gender, age and level of education.

According to the survey results, news of the Citizens' Assembly did reach many of the residents of the city: 47 percent said they had heard that there was a Citizens Assembly in Miskolc in the autumn of 2021, which focused on the ways to improve local air quality. The probability that the respondent had heard about the event corresponded to the respondent's level of education: Those with a higher level of education were more likely to have heard about the event than the average, while in the case of respondents with a lower level of education, the opposite was true.

A majority (62 percent) of Miskolc residents approved of the fact that the Municipality had decided to involve residents in the preparation of decisions linked to local air quality through a citizens assembly. Only 12 percent of the respondents disapproved of this. 64 percent said they believe that the Municipality will make better choices in the future regarding decisions affecting local air quality because it will take into consideration the proposals made by the Citizens' Assembly.

However, the residents of Miskolc seem to believe that it is not only the decisions affecting air quality that they should be able to have a say in. Echoing the sentiment expressed by the participants of the Citizens' Assembly, the majority (81 percent) of people who took part in the survey also agreed that in a democracy it is very important to ensure that citizens have a chance to weigh in on decisions regarding the most important issues.

## RESULTS BEYOND THE NUMBERS

*"It is hard to reach a consensus but absolutely worth it!"*

– These are the words that one of the participants spoke as she got ready to go home after the event and there could be no better way of summing up the essence of participation. Based on feedback, for the majority of the participants, the experience of coming together with people of different ages, genders, social backgrounds and being able to – while mutually respecting one another's opinions – collectively think about ways to improve their shared environment was very defining. *"Now I know that I would gladly take a more active part in our city's public life."* – said another one of the participants. Many of the Miskolc residents who took part expressed that feeling like *"they also mattered"* meant a lot to them.

During the two weekends of the Citizens' Assembly, it was clear to the organizers, facilitators, and experts that the participants of the event did indeed take their job very seriously. The urge to do something, professional curiosity and the desire to understand each other were what determined the whole of the event.

But the question of how sustainable the results and impacts of an initiative are is always a central one. In the case of the Citizens' Assembly in Miskolc the Municipality took a huge step to ensure that it would be so: Participants of the event who want to can be so-called *"climate diplomats"* in the future.

Until the middle of November, 17 of the people who had taken part in the Assembly volunteered for the job. They will take part in different public forums in the next year to share the lessons of the Citizens' Assembly and bring attention to the created proposals. As one of the participants phrased it: *"Communities have a big role in society and now we are one as well. It would be worth continuing this work together"*



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"I remember how enthusiastic I became when I first read about the methodology of citizens' assemblies which seemed innovative, complex and effective.

When the leaders of Miskolc said yes to organizing a citizens' assembly it was the start of a year long intense, exciting and exhausting work. Having experienced what a large part of the population was interested in the event and how much they expected from it, seeing the constant flow of positive feedback from the participants and having read the proposals aimed at improving local air quality, I can say that it was obviously worth it! I am proud to have been able to take part in it!"

*/Kamilla Kovács, Municipality of Miskolc,  
Participation Rapporteur/*

"It means a lot that they integrate the community, ordinary people. I am also happy to be able to contribute to things like this."

*/István, one of the participants of the  
Citizens' Assembly/*

"This is a completely new experience for me but I really like it, it is very nice! The last time I had an experience similar to this was perhaps in elementary school when we had to solve tasks collectively."

*/Marci D., one of the participants of the  
Citizens' Assembly/*

"I have to say that regardless of the initial difficulties we can work together very well. It's great that everyone here is in a different phase of their life, everyone is coming from different places and everyone is good at different things. The fact that there are so many diverging opinions and experiences really adds to our conversations."

*/Roberta, one of the participants of the Citizens' Assembly/*

"I had imagined a chaotic, synod-like thing where people are shouting out that they want this, or that they want that. What is actually happening here and how well the whole event is organized is a very positive surprise for me."

*/Marci N., one of the participants of the Citizens'  
Assembly/*

"The Miskolc Citizens' Assembly demonstrated that there is a place for deliberative methods in Hungary not just in the capital but in other, rural places as well. The residents of Miskolc are very curious people who are driven by an urge to want to do something. They even created a proposal addressing how this method could be used more widely in the future in a way that would integrate people living in difficult conditions. It was wonderful to witness the enthusiasm that defined the table discussions every single day."

*/Melinda Válf, Lead Facilitator /*

„As an environment expert I live in a bubble where this is the most important topic for everyone. The real challenge is to help people recognize connections and links for whom this is not a priority but who are still nevertheless open to the questions concerning environment protection. The Miskolc Citizens' Assembly has provided an opportunity for that: I met open, curious people who want to understand problems in their entirety. People that I could also learn from. I am still able to marvel at what incredible power discussions can have. Let's draw up collective solutions to collective problems together! When decision makers feel our support they dare to dream bigger, to take bigger steps to create a better life for us all in the long run."

*/Dóra Csernus, Lead Expert/*

"This initiative has to be continued and people should be given more such possibilities so they don't just sit at home thinking, they are nothing but passive spectators of events and that they have no say in the things happening around them! If people feel that there is a meaning to taking action and they too are able to do something, then they will!"

*/Mária, one of the participants of the Citizens' Assembly/*



"For many people the concentration of greenhouse gasses or the level of particulate matter in the air is still an abstract problem as are the solutions to these challenges. But the truth is that there are deeply personal stories here. For example, for some making public transportation an attractive option comes down to first making it accessible for people with disabilities. Or that, when we talk about energy efficiency we are actually talking about people living in poorly insulated, cold, leaking flats. Beside creating the professional results the Citizens' Assembly provides a glimpse into these human destinies enforcing the conviction that effective and productive air quality programs and environment and climate protection improves all of our lives. And if space, time and a framework is provided, even the least similar people are capable of meeting halfway and working together for their shared goals."



*/Péter Vigh, Lead Expert /*





## CONCLUSION BY THE ORGANIZERS

One of the biggest advantages of using deliberative methods is that by doing so we gain access to *“the wisdom of the masses”*. We get a more precise, realistic picture of what a community needs and wants. Citizens’ assemblies offer the chance for citizens to have deep, impactful conversations both with each other and decision makers.

The Citizens’ Assembly held in Miskolc was the latest step and, indeed, a milestone in the process that is meant to encourage such discussions in the city. But the Miskolc Citizens’ Assembly didn’t come out of nowhere. Dialóg Egyesület has been trying to give new momentum to participatory democracy in the city for the past year and a half, and promoting the methodology of citizens’ assemblies in Hungary has been a substantial part of Dem-Net’s mission for years.

These initiatives found a partner in the form of the Miskolc city leaders who were open and ready to give way to a new kind of local governing.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that in Hungary Miskolc was the second city to host a citizens’ assembly. Its significance extends beyond the event itself.

If the participants of the event – mapping the city in smaller version – were capable of working together in a steadfast manner, to achieve compromises and create propositions for a greener, healthier Miskolc, we have every reason to hope that this wisdom – with the support of the city – will serve the interests of the whole city and all its residents with everyone’s participation.

After Budapest, the Miskolc Citizens’s Assembly also proved that citizens’ assemblies do have a place in Hungarian public life. On the one hand it showed that – though it will never be possible to universally satisfy everyone – with the help of citizens’ assemblies, huge steps can be taken to achieve social cohesion and a better understanding of each other. On the other hand it demonstrated that if the citizens are directly supplied with information from experts in an orderly predictable manner, they are capable of catching on quickly and are ready to act. And that is something that is more than promising not only for Miskolc but for Hungary in general.



## MISKOLC CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY, 2021

**Air!**

**We pollute it, we inhale it! What can we do together to improve the air quality in Miskolc?**

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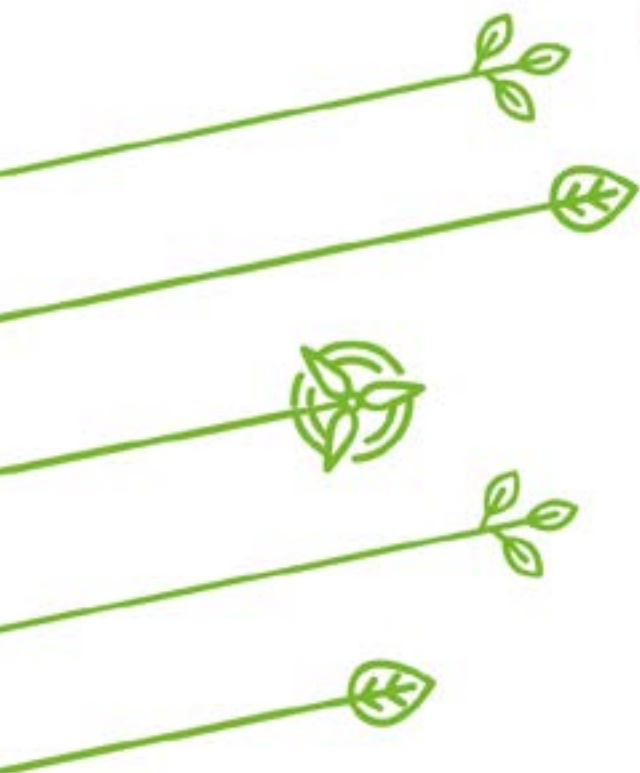
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