

Measurements by NGO Levegő Munkacsoport and Greenpeace have shown that the situation is much worse than the data delivered via official measuring stations would suggest, the statement said.

The green NGO Levegő Munkacsoport (Clean Air Action Group) said that it would refuse the Budapest metropolitan council's For Budapest award because it had failed to achieve a reduction in the "severe level of pollution" in the capital city. The NGO said in a statement that despite more than three decades of efforts for cleaner Budapest air, they were getting "further away from achieving their goal". The level of pollution is regularly above what is considered to be acceptable in terms of human health.

European Environment Agency figures show that more than 13,000 Hungarians die prematurely each year due to air pollution, losing ten years of their lives on average. A recent study in the professional magazine of the European Society of Cardiology showed that a quarter of coronavirus deaths was also linked to poor quality air, it added.

András Lukács, Levegő Munkacsoport's director, said in the statement that despite several of their proposals to the government and local municipality making their way to official documents over the decades, little progress had been made and several setbacks had occurred.

He added that the NGO would be glad to accept the award if the concentration of air pollution remained below the permitted level at all air-quality measuring points over the period of a year.

At the same time, the Levegő Munkacsoport has offered its cooperation to Budapest representatives to achieve "an improvement in air quality within a relatively short time at acceptable costs".

Mayor Karácsony: refusal 'not an insult but a warning'

Budapest Mayor Gergely Karacsony responded by saying "this dissatisfaction is exactly what civil organisations are for." The message, he said, was "clear: Budapest is not yet worthy of awarding the prize". The refusal is "not an insult but a warning ... we have a long way ahead of us, but we won't turn back," he added. The city will continue to increase green areas, dampen traffic in the inner districts and modernise public transport, he said. Cooperation with Levego is an important help in that work, he said.

Source: hungarytoday.hu