Access to Safe Water in the Outskirts of Gyula City

Analysis of local environmental conflicts by the Hungarian Ombudsman for Future Generations
Background

- The new settlement is located 3 kms from the central part of the city
- Building a pipeline would be too expensive
- While the wells’ water contain too high level of arsenic compound
- The local municipality posted labels on the public taps with the warning ”non-potable”
Policy measures

• The citizens tried the official ways: environmental and public health authorities – in vane
• They turned to FGO, we examined the case
• We highlighted the mandatory nature of the relevant rules in the Water Management Act and in the Local Government Act as well
• We traced back the spatial planning procedure, too, that lies at the core of the conflict
Results achieved and remaining challenges

• The city joined a regional association of municipalities to find common solutions
• Applies for governmental and EU funds to finance the pipeline
• Established a continuous service of bottled water for the region till the above solutions work
• The new settlement has access to water under the same financial conditions than the old city
• This is still not reasonable financially and from general environmental aspects
Success factors & lessons learned

• Clarifying all the legal ramifications (not only the rules on drinking water, but the spatial planning provisions and the constitutional rights, too), professional and local policy implications, and sharing the results with a network (citizens, NGOs, authorities, media, professional organisations)

• Sending a signal: municipality councils are in vicious circles concerning urban sprawl