

Contribution of Hungary to the Secretary-General's report requested by General Assembly Resolution 74/124, entitled "Follow-up to the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond" on emerging issues relating to SDG16

The Government of Hungary believes that one of the most beneficial strategies in the long run to eradicate poverty is to support families, as well as the upbringing of children, because with the help of such a policy, essential pillars of sustainable development can be successfully reinforced.

The Fundamental Law of Hungary (i.e. the Hungarian constitution) attaches special importance to the notion of the family. It aims at protecting the institution of marriage and states that the foundation of family is based on marriage and the relationship between parents and children. It declares that Hungary shall support the citizens' intention to have children.

The most important dimension of the Hungarian family policy is to strengthen families with all possible means at its disposal by taking into account the different needs and expectations of families. Apart from supporting the overall quality of life of families, the Hungarian Government has taken several steps since 2010 for promoting work-family balance, creating affordable, accessible and good-quality childcare facilities, as well as strengthening inter-generational relations. Families are offered outstanding support: both in 2019, and in 2020, 4.6% of the national GDP has been transferred to families raising children. Between 2010 and 2019, the Hungarian Government had doubled the budget designated for the support of families from 960 billion HUF to 2004.2 billion HUF. As a comparison, the amount of support provided for a family with (a) minor child(ren) had been 784,000 HUF on average in 2010, while in 2019, the amount in question was 1,838,000 – almost 1,000,000 HUF higher than a decade ago.

In the framework of **family-oriented policies, enhancing inter-generational interactions and supporting grandparents** are also priority themes, regarding which the following measures of the Hungarian Government should be emphasized.

A **new pension option** was introduced **for women** in 2011, called 'Women 40'. Under this policy, regardless of their age, women are entitled to full pension if they have at least 40 years of eligibility period. (The eligibility period is calculated by taking into consideration service periods based on gainful activity, and childcare periods to a certain extent). This pension option is exceptionally popular, as it helps women to take part in their grandchildren's life and helps younger mothers re-enter to the labour market.

From 1 January 2020, **grandparents who are currently not retired** are **eligible for childcare benefits** (up to 2 years of age of the child). The grandparent is entitled to child care benefit if both parents are (or the single parent is) working, the parents comply with the child care benefit's general eligibility criteria, and the child is taken care of in the parents' household. The childcare benefit is provided for the grandparent, not for the parents. The purpose of the programme is to encourage

grandparents to become more active in the upbringing of their grandchildren. Only one of the grandparents can be eligible, but the benefit can be provided after more grandchildren.¹

The **National Old Age Policy** (2010-2035) covers issues such as voluntary work, active old age, awareness raising, conscious preparation of younger generations for older age, self-reliance, cooperation between generations, and social involvement. As a tool to recognise the work and activity of local authorities for senior residents, the Senior-Friendly Municipality Award is announced every year since 2004.

During the 2012 campaign of the **European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations**, conferences and programmes had been organised, and applications had been encouraged, continuing in the following years. For example, within the “Family-Friendly Country” project, announced in 2015, value-creating activities had been carried out jointly by older and younger people.

The program of Sure Start Children’s Houses is a good example of investment in **parental education to enhance children’s well-being**.

The aim of the Sure Start Children’s Houses is to ensure healthy development and the compensation of developmental delays of disadvantaged children (including Roma children), as well as to strengthen the child-raising skills of parents, and to give them support in returning to the labour market. The main function of Children’s Houses - as an element of the child welfare system - is to focus on children aged 0-3 who could not be reached by institutional care. This way, the Houses work to fill the gaps in the child protection system. The positive effects on the social and emotional development of children, on parent-child relationships as well as on the cooperative attitude of parents are clearly visible - parents learn to communicate openly and without conflict with the professionals dealing with their children.

The establishment of Children’s Houses, in 2003, was modelled after the United Kingdom’s Sure Start Program. After a pilot project phase, the process had accelerated between the 2007-2013 EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework period, and 115 new service institutions had been established primarily in the most disadvantaged regions, as well as in the settlements densely populated by Roma. It was a significant step that, from 2012, the operation of the Houses established in the framework of European Union projects have been financed from the central budget of Hungary, and from 2013, they have been incorporated into the Child Protection Act. Currently, there are 110 Children’s Houses in Hungary, which are operating with the support of the central budget, and there are 70 the operation of which is funded from EU contribution. The Houses serve around 2500 children with their parents per year.

When it comes to measures **preventing all forms of violence against children**, the following steps of the Hungarian Government are worth to be emphasized.

First of all, there are several **Prevention programmes** out of which two good examples are summarized in this report.

¹ That is, after siblings, only the same grandparent’s eligibility applies (grandmother or grandfather of the grandparent couple), however, if they have multiple grandchildren from multiple children, the other grandparent may also be eligible for this type of childcare fee.

A programme to prevent victimization has started in 2012, with the support of the Ministry of Human Capacities, addressing the 14–18 age group. The initiative reached around 3,600 students between 2012 and 2015. The year of 2016 is considered to be a landmark, because that year, the programme evolved into a national one through the utilization of resources provided by the European Union. Currently, 17 civil society organizations are involved in its management. Based on the experiences of professionals involved, the knowledge of youngsters about domestic violence and abuse is rather superficial and thus tends to be insufficient, which further aggravates their exposure and vulnerability. Tackling victimization is complicated by the fact that it is considered to be taboo, youngsters do not dare to talk about it. In many cases, they cannot even identify that they themselves are victims, or do not know whom to ask for help, and this is exactly what the programme is addressing.

The Hungarian Police has launched a number of crime prevention programs in cooperation with public education institutions in the framework of which the participants (including teachers) are being trained following a voluntary application and a subsequent selection process. The trainers and school crime prevention advisers teach skills and signalling techniques related to violence against children and pay special attention to the students concerned.

Apart from the already existing **legal provisions**, numerous new steps have been taken by the Hungarian Government in recent years both legally and in the form of new programmes in order to tackle child abuse.

As a result of these steps, the criminal proceedings are to be conducted as a matter of urgency in case the victim or the defendant is under the age of 18. Since 2014, sexual violence (criminal offences listed under *Chapter XIX of the Criminal Code on criminal offences against the freedom of sexual life and sexual morality*) bear no statute of limitation, and it is punishable more severely than 5 years of imprisonment if the victim of the criminal offence has not reached the age of 18 years at the time the crime was committed.

The Criminal Code renders several criminal offences to be punishable gradually more severely if they are committed against a child under the age of 18, 14 or 12. Such crimes include especially sexual offences, child labour or endangering a minor.

In 2014, the Child Protection Act has introduced confidential data management for incentivizing the reporting of cases. The data of the institute or person reporting a case of child harassment or neglect to the guardianship authority must be managed confidentially, even without a request to that effect.

According to a restriction introduced in 2017, offenders who infringe minors in their freedom of sexual behaviour and commit sexual violence against them shall be definitively banned from pursuing any profession or activity related to the education, supervision, nurturing, or medical treatment of a child.

From 2018, the cases of child abuse in special child protection institutes and juvenile halls shall be investigated and treated in adherence to the institutional, operational and sectoral methodology approved by the Minister of Human Capacities.

From 1 January 2019, territorial child protection services are tasked with the examination and therapy service of neglected and abused children based on the so-called **Barnahus-model**. The model aims to protect child victims of sexual abuse from re-traumatization by multiple hearings during the criminal proceedings as well as from other traumatizing factors during the proceedings. The key objective of

the model is to make sure that the child's best interest is the primary concern in child abuse proceedings, ahead of all other considerations.

Several **efforts at promoting non-violent forms of disciplining children** have been taken by the Hungarian Government in recent years, beyond the already existing legal provisions.

In line with the Fundamental Law, the personality, human dignity and rights of children shall be respected.

The Criminal Code states that the person who is given custody of a minor - to maintain and care for the person in his charge - and who seriously violates the obligations arising from such duty and thereby endangers the physical, intellectual, moral or mental development of the minor, is guilty of a felony punishable by imprisonment between 1 to 5 years.

Based on the public education law, children should be protected against physical and mental violence. Discipline by teachers has legal boundaries in all cases, as under no circumstances can they use methods that would violate the rights of children to human dignity and physical integrity. Any form of corporal punishment in educational institutions is prohibited. The teacher or educator, who uses any physical punishment, commits a serious criminal offence. In such case, the perpetrator will be punished for the commission of assault in the proceedings of a person performing public duties. In 2017-2018, a 30-hour mental health training had been carried out for pedagogues, where participants could learn techniques of managing various conflict situations.

In 2016, a pilot programme was launched for the so-called 'KiVa' prevention and intervention programme. One component of the programme is a 90 minutes group activity per month, which aims to train possible future bystanders of a violent act to become protectors, and to reject all kinds of exclusion and harassment. In the framework of the intervention element of the programme, if the members of the 'KiVa-team' become aware of an assault incident, they immediately handle the case with the abuser, the victim and the witnesses separately, and perform a special activity with them.

The Hungarian family policy reflects the important value the Government attaches to families. The support of families in need, including by enhancing inter-generational cooperation, as well as taking steps to end all forms of violence against children, is a crucial part of these policies. The above-mentioned measures are part of a long-term commitment of the Hungarian Government to keep family policy at the centre of its vision of the future. Hungary will continue to make efforts to implement the objectives of the International Year of the Family, and invest in family-oriented policies and programmes.

In conclusion, it shall be emphasized that, in order to attain sustainable development, the fundamental unit of society, the family should be supported and reinforced, so that their members can contribute in merit to the well-being of the whole of society.