



## **Note on the content and format of the first round of the biennial reports on implementation of the European Child Guarantee (ECG)**

October 2023

The attached annotated outline aims to support the Child Guarantee Coordinators in preparation of the first round of their reports on progress in implementation of the Council Recommendation ([EU 2021/1004](#)) establishing a European Child Guarantee (ECG). As stipulated in § 11 (f) of that Recommendation, *the Member States are recommended to report every two years to the Commission on the progress in implementing this Recommendation, in line with the national action plan referred to in point (c)*.

### **TIMING**

In line with § 11 (c) of the ECG Recommendation, the action plans for implementation of ECG should have been submitted to the Commission within nine months after adoption of the Recommendation, i.e. by 15 March 2022. This date serves as the reference point for the deadline for submission of the reports requested in § 11 (f). Consequently, Commission expects to receive the first round of the reports by 15 March 2024, and the second round by 15 March 2026. Such timing will allow for timely preparation of the Commission's report to the Council, which in line with § 12 (e) is due on 14 June 2026 (i.e. five years after the adoption of the Recommendation). The 2024 reports should cover activities carried out and measures implemented since adoption of the ECG Recommendation, i.e. since 14 June 2021.

### **PUBLICATION OF THE REPORTS**

The reports should be sent by email to [EMPL-CHILD-GUARANTEE@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EMPL-CHILD-GUARANTEE@ec.europa.eu). While it is not a formal requirement, the Commission would appreciate if the reports are presented both in the national language and in English. This would facilitate mutual learning among the Member States, discussions at the EU level, wider dissemination and publicity. The Commission will publish the received reports on the [ECG website](#).

### **SOURCES AND REFERENCES**

The reports should draw on involvement of the national stakeholders, whose participation role is highlighted in § 11 (e) of the ECG Recommendation. Where relevant, the Member States are also expected to reflect on the observations sent by the Commission on the national action plans. Important reference tool is also the EU monitoring framework for ECG, covering all Member States as well as access to all the key ECG services, which is currently discussed in the Indicators Sub-Group of Social Protection Committee and will be finalised by end of 2023.

There are also other sources that can be used in preparation of the reports, such as the reports by the [European Social Policy Analysis Network](#) on the access for children in need to the key services covered by the ECG. Publications by other organisations (e.g. [Unicef](#), [Eurofound](#), and [Eurochild](#)) can also be relevant.

# **Annotated outline for the first round of the biennial progress reports on implementation of the European Child Guarantee (ECG)**

## **Hungary**

### **1. CONTEXT**

Indicative length: 2 to 3 pages

This section should provide the general information on ECG and its implementation in the reporting Member State. Topics to be addressed:

- The overall national approach to fighting against combatting child poverty and social exclusion (incl. the national child poverty reduction target, linked to the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU by at least 15 million until 2030, at least 5 million of whom should be children).

In order to achieve the EU's 2030 poverty reduction target of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan, Hungary undertook to reduce material and social deprivation for families with children by about 10 percentage points to 13% compared to 2019, which – other conditions remaining the same - corresponds to a reduction of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion by about 290,000 people. Since the commitment is already aimed at reducing child poverty, Hungary has not set a separate child poverty goal. According to the latest available data for 2022, the value of material and social deprivation for families with children is 17.5%, which means that that Hungary is on track to meet the target.<sup>1</sup>

- Ongoing or planned budgetary or legislative reforms to combat child poverty and social exclusion, and to support children in need.
- The institutional context of ECG implementation in the reporting Member State, such as affiliation, mandate, and resources of the Child Guarantee Coordinator (incl. changes in this post, if applicable), the division of responsibilities among various levels of administration (both horizontally and vertically).

The National Action Plan on guaranteeing children's rights aims to improve the well-being of children and reduce poverty by ensuring the access to quality and inclusive public services for all children, with a particular focus on early childhood education and care, education, health care, healthy nutrition and adequate housing.

The Ministry of Interior delegates the national coordinator, as the Ministry's responsibilities

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc\\_mdspd02\\_custom\\_10208969/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_mdspd02_custom_10208969/default/table?lang=en)

include many areas covered by the Council Recommendation: public education, health, child protection services as well as social issues. The person of the appointed national coordinator remains the same, who has no specific mandate or resources as head of unit in the Ministry of Interior, but is supported by the Ministry in all means. In the implementation, the national coordinator works closely with the relevant departments of the Ministry and the relevant ministries – the Ministry of National Economy -responsible for employment policy - the Ministry of Culture and Innovation - responsible for early childhood education and care and the adoption system - the Ministry of Energy - responsible for energy policy - and the Ministry of Construction and Transport - responsible for transport -in a mainly coordinating role.

- Any existing or planned evaluations of the ECG implementation.

Point 6 of the Government Decision 1202/2023 (22 May) on the adoption of the National Action Plan 2030 to guarantee children's rights calls on the Minister of Interior to report to the Government every 2 years on the implementation of the tasks set out in the Action Plan, initially by 31 May 2025, then by 31 May every 2 years. Thus the first internal evaluation of the ECG implementation will take place in mid-2025.

- Arrangements made for consultation with stakeholders, including both various government departments and governance levels, as well as civil society. The actual stakeholders' contributions and their involvement in the implementation and monitoring phase should also be described.

The cooperation of the actors involved in the implementation of the National Action Plan is continuously ensured. Since its submission in May 2023 , the circumstances of the drafting and implementation of the National Action Plan were presented at the meeting of the Interministerial Committee for Social Inclusion and Roma Affairs on 6 November 2023.

- Possible modifications of the action plan. Description of the modifications should be concise and explain their rationales. In case of modification of the action plan, the new version should be attached as a self-standing document, so that it can be published online.

The Action Plan has not been amended, its planned national review could be scheduled following the completion of the first government report in 2025, if necessary.

- Progress with implementation of the cross-cutting measures, which were included in the action plan but cannot be presented in a quantifiable manner.

The National Action Plan was adopted by the Government on 22 May 2023<sup>2</sup> and submitted to the European Commission on 25 May 2023. The Government Decision sets out the 13 actions to undertake in order to implement the Council Recommendation, the ministries responsible for each action, the deadline for completion and the source of funding. Implementation of the National Action Plan has started accordingly.

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<sup>2</sup> Government Decision 1202/2023 (22 May) on the adoption of the National Action Plan 2030 to guarantee children's rights

In this report we provide a review on the progress and the current state of

- the 13 measure included in the government decision, as well as
- the measures already taken and planned for the way forward in relation to some of the points of the Council Recommendation in Chapter IV of the National Action Plan responding where possible to the observations received from the European Commission on the content of the National Action Plan.

The availability of data for the year 2023 is currently limited, but they are included if possible.

**Government Decision Annex 1 - Measure 1: Establishment of a working group of experts to identify the challenges posed by the eligibility for regular child protection benefit; the classification of disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged status, and to review the existing legislation as necessary - deadline: 31 December 2023.**

The working group of experts held its inaugural meeting on 5 December 2023, with the participation of experts from the relevant departments of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, and the Ministry of Energy.

The working group has defined the main directions of its future activities along the following lines. The aim is to review

1. which sectoral rules define the concepts of regular child protection benefit, disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged status and how they relate to statutory services, measures, benefits, and support;
2. what budgetary expenditure is associated with the elements under the legislation in force;
3. how the number of persons concerned has evolved over time and space;
4. what causes are identified in the reports, minutes and research directly or indirectly related to the benefits, which have an impact on the development of the number of those affected;
5. based on feedback from the field (e.g. from service providers), what are the problems caused by changes in the number of people covered in reaching the target population of each sector;
6. how, in the case of a service, measure or programme funded from the national budget, the discipline concerned has modified its targeting in order to maintain its original focus;
7. what other funded (e.g. EU) programmes identify persons receiving regular child protection benefit, the disadvantaged and the multiply disadvantaged as target groups;

The work of the working group of experts is continuous. It is planned that the working group of experts will formulate possible proposals for amendments, presenting the impact of the amendments, and summarise their work in a progress report.

The paragraphs on page 6-8 of the National Action Plan describing the notions of regular child protection benefit, being disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged are completed by the following:

Eligibility for regular child protection benefit may be established if the monthly income per person in the family caring for the child does not exceed 165% of the social reference base (HUF 47,025 in 2024), or 180% (HUF 51,300 in 2024) in special cases (single parent, child with a long-term illness or severe disability, of age child in full-time education).

The main support elements related to the entitlement for regular child protection benefit:

- free/discounted meals provided by institutions, as well as free/discounted meals during school holidays if additional conditions are met,
- in August/November, receiving basic or increased monetary support - the amount of which is determined in the current act on budget - ,
- other benefits defined in separate legislation (e.g. dormitory fee discount, to-be-protected consumer status, free nursery and ‘mini-nursery’ care, etc.).

Eligibility for regular child protection benefit is also one of the basic conditions for determining a disadvantaged or multiply disadvantaged situation. Factors determining the disadvantaged or multiply disadvantaged status, in addition to the eligibility for regular child protection benefit are the following: low educational level of the parent/guardian; low employment status of the parent/guardian; inadequate housing environment or housing conditions. A child eligible for regular child protection benefit who has one of these conditions is considered disadvantaged; a child eligible for regular child protection benefit who has at least two of the three conditions is considered multiply disadvantaged.

According to data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO), on 31 December 2022, the number of children eligible for regular child protection benefit was 202,987, of whom 195,522 were under the age of 18.

**Government Decision Annex 1 - Measure 2: Develop a common set of criteria to facilitate the assessment of the measures included in the Action Plan - deadline: 31 December 2023. The set of criteria will be used to assess whether the interventions included in the Action Plan reach children living in poverty and children belonging to specific subgroups - deadline: 31 May 2025.**

Preparation for a study based on the Hungarian country profile<sup>3</sup> produced by the European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN) is underway.

## **2. TARGET GROUPS**

Indicative length: 2 to 4 pages

In line with § 4 of the ECG recommendation, the Member States should guarantee effective (resp. effective and free) access to several key services for children in need, who are defined in § 3 (a) *as persons under the age of 18 years who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion*. Taking this in consideration, the report should discuss the evolution of the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), including its components.

In addition, § 5 of the ECG recommendation calls upon the Member States to take into

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<sup>3</sup> András GÁBOS – Zsófia TOMKA: Access for children in need to the key services covered by the European Child Guarantee. DG for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion

account, wherever appropriate in designing their national integrated measures, specific disadvantages experienced by certain categories of children in need. Further, § 11 (b) of the ECG recommendation asks to identify children in need. Therefore, the Member States should report, which of the identified target groups have been reached in the early period of ECG implementation.

The National Action Plan focuses on the following target groups among those covered by the scope of the Council Recommendation in Article 5:

1. children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), including children who are homeless or living in gravely inadequate housing conditions, Roma and children from precarious family situations (together: 'children living in poverty').

In addition, the following categories are identified as AROPE sub-groups of children:

1. children with disabilities,
2. children with mental health issues,
3. children in alternative (especially institutional) care, and
4. children from third countries in vulnerable situation.

### **Trends in the number and proportion of AROPE children**

According to the latest indicators, the poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) for children under the age of 18 in Hungary in 2022 (according to the data provided in 2021) was below the EU average (18.4%), as it reached 18.1%. For each dimension, the income poverty rate was 10.1%, the rate for children living in a quasi-unemployed household amounted 5.8%, while the rate for children living in severe material and social deprivation was 12.0%<sup>4</sup>.

The number of children under the age of 18 eligible for regular child protection benefit is 195 522. Age composition of the total target group: 12.6% 0-2 years, 17.8% 3-5 years, 49.8% 6-13 years, 19.8% 14-17 years<sup>5</sup>.

The number of children in receiving regular child protection benefit who were classified by the notary as disadvantaged due to low education level, low employment, the parent(s)' or the guardian's inadequate housing environment or housing conditions was 81,241, and the number of children classified as multiply disadvantaged amounted to 74,219, for a total of 155,460. Age composition of the total target group: 15.9% 0-2 years, 22.4% 3-5 years, 62.6% 6-13 years, 25% 14-17 years<sup>6</sup>.

Due to their disadvantage in terms of income, this group is the primary target for meals for children provided by institutions and child catering during school holidays. All children who receive regular child protection benefit are entitled to benefits for institutional child catering: they can apply to free meals in nurseries, kindergartens, and primary schools, and they can receive a 50% discount in high schools. Disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged children are also entitled to free meals during school holidays even if they are not enrolled in an educational institution (e.g. children under 3 who do not attend nursery school, children over

<sup>4</sup> Source: [https://www.ksh.hu/stadat\\_files/ele/hu/ele0034.html](https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/ele/hu/ele0034.html)

<sup>5</sup> Source: HCSO 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Source: HCSO, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

16 for whom it is no longer mandatory to attend school).

The number of children in alternative (mainly institutional) care is 21,175, of whom 70.2% are in foster care, 28.3% in children's homes and 1.5% in social care institutions<sup>7</sup>.

All measures for specialised child protection services are aimed to serve this target group.

### 3. ROLL-OUT OF SERVICES

Indicative length: 6 to 12 pages

In this section, the implementation of all quantifiable policy measures listed in the action plan should be reported. In particular, numbers of children in need who have been reached and who benefit from the respective services should be stated. In cases where the relevant data is not available, the report should briefly explain. Furthermore, the impact of the implemented measures on children in need should be described. For each measure, it should be clarified whether this is a measure introduced as a response to the ECG recommendation or a one, which had existed before. The report should also assess the pace of implementation and, where relevant, explain the delays.

The progress on non-quantifiable measures that are specific to a particular service covered by the child guarantee should be also briefly discussed in the respective sub- sections.

For measures listed in the action plan but not yet implemented, an explanation should be given indicating whether the implementation will start at a later moment (if so, was it scheduled like this in the action plan, or has it been delayed?), or whether the respective measure has been scrapped or replaced (if so, why?).

Potential additional measures (i.e. those, which were not listed in the action plan) should also be mentioned in this section, supported by a more detailed annex if needed.

**Government Decision Annex 1 - Measure 12: Further develop community service spaces for inclusion to promote access to services for families at risk of poverty and to increase children's educational opportunities - deadline: 31 December 2027.**

**Linked to point 7.a) of the Council Recommendation and points 5), 6) and 8) of the action plan (pages 51-52), and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

The measures and interventions in the field of inclusion have always been targeted primarily at service areas at the frontiers of traditional care systems. Community spaces targeting different age groups have been created as sites for these programmes and services, in line with the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy 2030 measures. The community spaces are known by several names, with several functions and purposes to those working in the field and in the border professions<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Source: HCSO, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2022.

<sup>8</sup> In the 2014-2020 EU funding period, the following calls for proposals have been launched for professional

The 'Municipal Complex Children's Programmes - Community Spaces for Inclusion' scheme, which is currently being planned under the Human Resources Development Operational Programme (HRDOP) Plus, will be responsible for the implementation of the intervention.

As defined in the adopted HRDOP Plus, the target group of the scheme is children and young adults under the age of 24, including Roma, who receive the regular child protection benefit and/or are subject to a child protection or care measures, and/or live in a segregated or segregation-prone environment, as well as their close relatives and professionals working with them, and children and young people who are not involved on the criterion of need in order to strengthen integration. In the case of community spaces for inclusion, beside the aforementioned groups, adults living in segregated or segregation-prone neighbourhoods, adults not in need involved in promoting inclusion, and specialists are welcome.

The expected publication of the call for proposals will be subject to the availability of HRDOP Plus funding under the annual development framework.

### **3.1. Early Childhood Education and Care**

This subsection should report on the key indicators, such as participation rates in childcare (of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion), broken down by age group (up to 3 years old, and from 3 years old to mandatory school age). Additional analysis on participation of children from particular disadvantaged groups can also be included.

The information on financial arrangements for participation of children AROPE should be provided: is their access free of any charge?

The progress with implementation of relevant aspects of recommendations given in § 7 (a), (d), (e), (g), and (i) of the ECG Recommendation should be briefly described. References to implementation of the Council Recommendation of 8 December 2022 on early childhood education and care (the Barcelona targets for 2030) are also pertinent in this section. In particular, the intensity of participation, inclusion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and closing the participation gap between children at risk of poverty or social exclusion and the overall population of children could be reported.

### **Linked to point 7. a) of the Council Recommendation and points 2) and 4) (pages 50-51) of the Action Plan, and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

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activities that create community space.

- HRDOP - 1.4.2 -16 Integrated Regional Children's Programmes
- HRDOP 1.4.3-16 A Good Place - Sure Start Children's Centres and complex children's programmes in small towns
- HRDOP -1.6.2-16 Combating segregated living situations through complex programmes
- HRDOP -1.5.1-17 Infinite Opportunity - Pilot programme for the territorial cohesion of the most deprived districts
- In addition, community spaces called 'Presence Points' have been created under the long-term programme for Emerging Settlements, modelled on the pilot programme 'Infinite Opportunities'.



The National Action Plan contains a full response to the Commission's comments (pages 6, 10, 17, 38, 42-43, 50-51 and 61 of the Action Plan).

In Hungary, participation in early childhood education and care is not compulsory for children under the age of 3, it is voluntary and depends on the parents' choice. If the parents of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) enrol them in nursery care, access is free of charge (see pages 42-43 of the Action Plan for details).

According to the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HCSO) for 2021-2023, AROPE children accounted for 2.6% of enrolled children in 2021, 2.4% in 2022 and 2023, i.e. their participation rate is stable. Also according to HCSO data, 70% of all children (AROPE and non-AROPE combined) enrolled in nurseries received free day-care. The reason for this is that in most of the institutions no fees were introduced, and where fees were introduced, law exempted those in need. Around 60% of all children enrolled in nurseries also received free meals provided by the institution in 2021 and 2022, compared to 65% in 2023.

The development of places providing nursery care through various tenders (e.g. Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus (TOP), RRF) is ongoing, resulting in steadily improving access across the country.

The percentage of children under the age of 3 for whom day care is not available in their place of residence, has been gradually decreasing over the years from 26% in 2017 to 16.7% in 2023.

On this basis, we consider that the existing domestic measures are in line with the Council Recommendation.

During the review of the European Child Guarantee Monitoring Framework, we have repeatedly pointed out to the Commission that the EU-SILC database is not suitable (biased) for monitoring voluntary early childhood education and care (ECEC) schemes based on parental choice, and that the data from Member States are not comparable due to different system characteristics. A substantive review of the data source is recommended as part of the monitoring exercise to assess whether the Barcelona targets for increasing the participation of children in ECEC are being met.

**Government Decision Annex 1 - Measure 4: The participation of children living in poverty in the OkosÓvoda [Smart Kindergarten] 2.0 Programme and the Kortárs [Contemporary] NETMENTOR Programme must be increased by promoting the inclusion of kindergartens and schools with a high proportion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular those in Emerging Settlements.**

**Linked to point 7. h) of the Council Recommendation and point 53) of the Action Plan (page 63), and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

According to the observation letter of the European Commission, Measure 4 in Annex 1 of the Government Decision is a relevant response to the recommendation that all children at risk of poverty or social exclusion should have effective and free access to early childhood

education and care. However, in the case of Measure 4 of Annex 1 to the Government Decision and the measures in the Action Plan, it cannot be confirmed whether the whole target group benefits from such access<sup>9</sup>. On the other hand, the OkosÓvoda [Smart Kindergarten] Programme and the Kortárs[Contemporary] NETMENTOR Programme<sup>10</sup> are not designed to provide early childhood education and care, but is rather linked to section 6.2. Responding to the challenges of digitalisation of the Action Plan.

The Digital Welfare Non-Profit Ltd., responsible for the Contemporary NETMENTOR Programme, ceased to exist on 1 May 2023, and its state tasks were taken over by the Government Information Technology Development Agency [Kormányzati Informatikai Fejlesztési Ügynökség - KIFÜ) as its legal successor. The termination and transfer of tasks took place on the basis of Government Decree 103/2023 of 30 March 2023, which entered into force on 31 March 2023, and Government Decision 1113/2023 (30.3.2023), which entered into force on 1 May 2023.

Due to restructuring and lack of resources, the Kortárs NETMENTOR Programme could not be launched in 2023. If funding is provided in the central budget, the Programme can be continued in the next academic year, extending it to students in the Emerging Settlements For the same reasons, the OkosÓvoda 2.0 Programme could not be launched in 2023. If funding is available, in addition to the website service, education of kindergarten teachers

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<sup>9</sup> Measure 2 of Annex 1 of the Government Decision aims to assess whether the children covered by the Council Recommendation are actually reached by existing government measures or measures aimed at implementing the Recommendation

<sup>10</sup> Since 2018, we have been offering free website services to kindergartens and nurseries in Hungary as part of the **OkosÓvoda** Programme. The institutions selected in the tender process can develop their website as a unified service with modules containing ready-made design elements according to their own needs. There are currently 454 active **OkosÓvoda** websites in the national network.

Over the past years, a total of 18 institutions in municipalities involved in the Emerging Settlements programme have won the competition. And of the municipalities on the list of beneficiary municipalities, a total of 168 municipalities have a nursery school that has won the competition, 116 of which are still active.

Under the Digital Well-being Programme Since 2018, the **Kortárs NETMENTOR Programme – ‘Knowledge Transfer at eye level’**, which trains 9th grade students to become knowledgeable Internet literacy sessions, mentoring and coaching mentor their peers and those younger than them. Read more: <https://digitalisgvermekvedelem.hu/netmentor>

**During the academic year 2021/22:**

- During the school year 2021/22:
- Faculty training for 20 vocational education and training institutions
- 770 teachers and school leaders reached
- 246 ‘Netmentor’ training and 143 NETMENTOR sessions, with a total of 2,825 upper secondary school students participating during the school year.

**Total results so far since the programme's launch in 2018:**

- Total results so far since the programme's launch in 2018:
- 83 participating institutions: 44 secondary schools, 39 primary schools
- 1170 teachers
- 493 trained peer ‘Netmentors’
- 235 ‘Netmentor’ sessions
- reaching around 4000 students.

and parents and the development of digital competences of preschool children could be implemented.

**Government Decision Annex 1 - Action 11: Early childhood interventions aimed at the healthy development of the foetus and the young child must be launched in the Emerging Settlements. - deadline: 30 June 2029.**

(For relevant actions under the Emerging Settlements programme, see pages 39-41 of the report.)

**3.2. Education and school-based activities**

This subsection can be further divided in descriptions of implemented measures, which (A) guarantee that children AROPE have free access to education, and those (B) related to school-based activities.

In the education part, the progress with implementation of relevant aspects of recommendations given in § 7 (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (g), (h), and (i) of the ECG Recommendation should be briefly described.

In the part dealing with school-based activities, the progress with implementation of relevant aspects of recommendations given in § 7 (j) and (k) of the ECG Recommendation should be briefly described. In addition, information on the indicative number of children AROPE who have free access to school-based activities should be provided.

**Government Decision Annex 1 - Measure 5: In line with the key objective of the Public Education Strategy 2021-2030, on the basis of a more detailed examination of early school leaving without a qualification for certain regions and groups of pupils, 85% of Year 5-12 pupils (11-19 year-olds) and all teachers must be provided with modern ICT devices, including for their personal use. These tools must be provided initially to disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged pupils, where possible, taking account of the needs of children with disabilities. There is also a need to improve pupils' success rates and to develop key competences in order to create opportunities. To that end, 700 educational units must be included in a comprehensive institutional development programme aimed at reducing early school leaving. – deadline: ongoing**

**Linked to points 7 .h) and 7 .g) of the Council Recommendation and points 53) (page 63) and point 48) (page 62) of the Action Plan, and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

**In order to provide modern equipment that can be given for personal use, a call for tenders was launched in 2021 to allow for the procurement of such equipment, in a 5-year phased approach for each grade.**

In the first phase, 120,000 digital notebooks were purchased and delivered to public education institutions in the school year 2021/2022. The target of providing at least 90% of disadvantaged pupils who needed the device with notebooks was also met, as 100% of them received them. It was also achieved that at least 90% of teachers in schools with an above average proportion of disadvantaged pupils would receive a notebook.

In 2023, an additional 140,000 notebooks were distributed to students and placed in IT classrooms.

The beneficiary Klebelsberg Centre has developed a strategy for the distribution of digital notebooks to pupils, based on the principle of need, and published it in December 2022. The strategy specifies that disadvantaged pupils and pupils without digital notebooks should have the highest priority in receiving such devices.

**Amendment to measure 48):**

The National Public Education Portal has been significantly revamped with a new look and functions, with new smart textbooks available on it. 202 smart textbooks and 19 smart collections are currently available on the platform, still free of charge, to students and teachers. The portal has also been expanded with a wide range of interactive activities, animations, and short films.

Within the framework of the project for the development of digital curricula in vocational education and training, 279 digital syllabi were completed and available to vocational education and training students and trainers by 31 August 2023. 22 digital syllabi for mathematics, 30 for history, 1 for financial and economic culture and 226 for vocational education and training, of which 127 digital syllabi were accredited. All the digital learning materials are available free of charge in the Digital Collaboration Space<sup>11</sup> of the 'KRÉTA' system to all students enrolled in any of the vocational training institutions and to all trainers of enterprises participating in vocational training institutions and dual training. A further 421 digital learning materials have been produced through other vocational educational training development projects.

**The continuation of the complex institutional development programme to reduce the drop-out rate of pupils**, involving new public education institutions, could not yet be launched in an organised way because the programme's start-up with EU funding is uncertain due to obstacles to the adoption of horizontal eligibility criteria. Domestic funding will continue to help institutions that have already received support.

**Government Decision Annex 1 - Measure 6: Improvements must be initiated in 35 educational units to modernise educational conditions so as to ensure that opportunities are created for disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged pupils exposed to poverty and that they have access to higher-quality education. - deadline: 31 December 2026. Linked to point 7. e) of the Council Recommendation and points 38-40 (page 60) of the Action Plan, and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

The RRF-funded project is in the planning stage. A survey of primary school places in public education establishments has been carried out, on the basis of which, out of the planned 35

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<sup>11</sup> You can download a list of the learning materials here:

[https://api.ikk.hu/storage/uploads/files/digitalis\\_tananyagok\\_ginop\\_624pdf-1701085378227.pdf?\\_gl=1\\*1o8z5ta\\*\\_ga\\*MTQ0NDY1NTYyOC4xNjg2ODIyNzA3\\*\\_ga\\_Khttps://api.ikk.hu/storage/uploads/files/digitalis\\_tananyagok\\_ginop\\_624pdf-1701085378227.pdf?\\_gl=1\\*1o8z5ta\\*\\_ga\\*MTQ0NDY1NTYyOC4xNjg2ODIyNzA3\\*\\_ga\\_K4RNLHW8G3\\*MTcwMTE3ODEwOS4xMzYuMS4xNzAxMTc5NTgyLjYwLjAuMA..4RNLHW8G3\\*MTcwMTE3ODEwOS4xMzYuMS4xNzAxMTc5NTgyLjYwLjAuMA](https://api.ikk.hu/storage/uploads/files/digitalis_tananyagok_ginop_624pdf-1701085378227.pdf?_gl=1*1o8z5ta*_ga*MTQ0NDY1NTYyOC4xNjg2ODIyNzA3*_ga_Khttps://api.ikk.hu/storage/uploads/files/digitalis_tananyagok_ginop_624pdf-1701085378227.pdf?_gl=1*1o8z5ta*_ga*MTQ0NDY1NTYyOC4xNjg2ODIyNzA3*_ga_K4RNLHW8G3*MTcwMTE3ODEwOS4xMzYuMS4xNzAxMTc5NTgyLjYwLjAuMA..4RNLHW8G3*MTcwMTE3ODEwOS4xMzYuMS4xNzAxMTc5NTgyLjYwLjAuMA)

establishments, the first 5 institutions and the higher-quality inclusive school have been selected to be reorganised. In the upper secondary classes with a small number of pupils, reorganisation can ensure that disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged pupils at risk of poverty have opportunities and access to higher quality education. The 5 pilot institutions have been reorganised for the school year 2023/2024. Further action can be taken once the call is published.

**Government Decision Annex 1 - Measure 7: Methods must be devised for the development of children receiving specialist educational services or children with special educational needs receiving inclusive education, with the involvement of at least 45 000 children and pupils with special educational needs or receiving specialist educational services. The quality assurance and accessibility of the specialist work must be supported so as to strengthen the support role of special-needs educational institutions and the work of specialist educational institutions and to improve access to quality specialist educational services. Deadline: first quarter of 2026, end of 2026 for institutional development.**

**Linked to points 7. d) and 7. k) of the Council Recommendation and points 30), 33-34) (pages 58-59), and point 71) (page 67) of the Action Plan, and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

A needs assessment for equipment, services, and teachers for children with special educational needs has been prepared and published, based on the schools' individual development plans. The RRF-funded call for proposals has been designed. Further actions can be completed once the call is published.

**Government Decision Annex 1 - Measure 8: As part of the renewal of further teacher training, preference must be given to participation in Mental Health Basic Training among teachers working with the target group of the Child Guarantee Programme in public education institutions affected by school violence. The basic training is aimed at strengthening teachers' approach to mental health and broadening their methodological knowledge and problem-solving and stress-management techniques. - deadline: ongoing**

Due to obstacles to the adoption of horizontal eligibility criteria, the start of the programme using EU funds is uncertain.

**Government Decision Annex 1 - Measure 9: As part of the renewal of further teacher training, preference must be given to teachers working with the target group of the Child Guarantee Programme in public education institutions affected by school violence. The mainstreaming of the ENABLE professional programme based on classroom activities must be supported in the public education institutions concerned. - deadline: ongoing**

Due to obstacles to the adoption of horizontal eligibility criteria, the start of the programme using EU funds is uncertain.

**Linked to points 7(a) and (c) of the Council Recommendation and point 7) (pages 51-52 and 56), point 26) of the Action Plan, and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

**Measure 7:** Extracurricular programmes support the aims of educational institutions through non-formal and informal learning.. Activities under this measure will be organised as part of the pedagogical activities of the schools, in order to achieve the curricular objectives of the schools, aiming to provide experiential and interactive learning. These activities are organised and implemented by the schools.

Due to obstacles to the adoption of horizontal eligibility criteria, the start of the programme using EU funds is uncertain.

**Measure 9:** According to the October 2023 statistics, there are 2044 students in the János Arany Talent Support Programme and 541 students in the János Arany Boarding School Programme.

The Government decided to postpone the Foreign Language Learning Programme in 2020 and 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic, and it could have started in 2022 at the earliest, in accordance with Government Decision 1880/2020 (XII.4.) on the implementation of the Foreign Language Learning Programme. However, due to the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the unpredictable global economic and security environment, the Government decided to postpone the Programme for a later date for security reasons and it did not start even in 2023.

In the framework of the Roma Ethnicity Study Scholarship competition, the current applicants are always awarded scholarships for 2 academic years, i.e. in 2023 for the academic years 2023/2024 and 2024/2025. 18 students from 6 secondary educational institutions were awarded scholarships in the amount of HUF 10.800.000.

In Hungary, the state provides state-subsidised access to two professions and one qualification for everyone. The first two professions, including participation in the preparatory course and workshop school, are free of charge until the first vocational examination is completed. In the case of the second profession, for up to three academic years, and the first vocational qualification related to the vocational training organised in a vocational training institution is free of charge until the first qualifying examination is completed.

**Linked to point 7. b) of the Council Recommendation and points 10-13) (pages 52-53) and point 20) (pages 54-55) of the Action Plan, and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

**Measure 10: An early warning and pedagogical support system** <sup>12</sup> for the prevention of early school leaving in public education is ongoing. The Early Warning System identifies and provides personalised support for pupils at risk of dropping out and schools with high drop-out rates. The scheme encourages schools to develop a comprehensive development plan and to use pedagogical methods based on pupils' needs in order to improve performance, with the aim of fostering a supportive school environment that takes into account individual characteristics. Based on the data and experience gained so far, the introduction of the signalling system at the institutions has led to greater attention being paid to the support of pupils at risk of dropping out, and the institutions themselves are looking for forms of support

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<sup>12</sup> Government Decree 229/2012 (VIII. 28.)

that can make schools more effective. Based on data on the operation of the system, the percentage of pupils at risk of dropping out was 4.82% in 2022 and 4.05% in 2023<sup>13</sup>.

**Measure 11:** In the 2022/2023 school year, the percentage of pupils at risk of dropping out reached or exceeded the high level of 45% in 29 places of assignment. The Educational Authority, which operates the indicator system, has made suggestions for areas that need sustained intervention. The managers of institutions with a high drop-out rate were informed separately of the need to take further measures and reinforce them. The recommended interventions included, for example, that heads of institutions should make more intensive use of the opportunities offered by the expert advisory system. This would enable them to implement targeted, preventive interventions tailored to specific problems, whether in the areas of subject support, institutional development, assessment and evaluation, education of pupils with special needs, conflict management, etc., and to participate in further training.

**Measure 12:** In the framework of the HRDOP 3.1.5-16-2016-00001 project ‘Support for institutions at risk of early school leaving’, the institutions participating in the project received professional support in 2023 to maintain the results of the educational system to prevent early school leaving. The aim of the professional support for the schools was to plan for the period September 2023 - August 2024 to maintain their current development results, to continue and develop innovative processes and structures, and to incorporate them into their everyday practices in order to prevent early school leaving and early school drop-out.

**Measure 13:** As a result of the development, a ‘Complex Basic Programme’ nurturing and educational programme has been created, which teachers can acquire in the framework of 120 hours of in-service training. The methodology has been introduced in more than 700 schools, affecting more than 10,000 teachers and 130,000 pupils. According to the feedback, the new pedagogical method is of great help to teachers in engaging students of different abilities together as well as in dealing with learning and behavioural problems.

Amendment to **measure 20:** The Apáczai Scholarship Programme (GINOP-6.2.9-VEKOP-20) provides financial support for disadvantaged talented students to stay in education, based on need and good academic performance. In addition to financial support, a mentor helps the student to achieve better results. In the academic year 2022/2023, a total of 4,428 students in full-time vocational education and training in grades 9-11 received scholarships and mentoring support.

In line with the main objectives of the GINOP-6.2.2 project, the methodological development and cooperation activity implements complex, mutually reinforcing activities to improve and modernise the quality of vocational training. The activity develops methodologies related to the development of learners' basic skills. Based on the experience of research aimed at establishing the pedagogical-professional content and methodology of basic skills improvement, professional-methodological innovations were developed. Eight training programmes are being approved.

As a related element, teaching and assessment aids embedded in professional environments and subjects aimed at developing basic skills will be developed, which are based on traditional, digital, learner-centred, cooperative and complex programmes and the experience

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<sup>13</sup> Source: Educational Authority, 2023.

of other equally effective teaching methods.

A further task of the project is to supplement the early warning and pedagogical support system already in place with specific elements to meet the needs of vocational education and training. It was implemented by the ESL module developed within the 'KRÉTA' system.

**Linked to point 7 c.) of the Council Recommendation and point 31) of the Action Plan (page 58):**

**Measure 31:** The projects in the Action Plan have been merged, so the last two sentences have been changed: *'...Project planned to improve the system: ...The project "Support for the professional development of institutions for children and pupils with special educational needs, those undergoing long-term medical treatment and those requiring specialised pedagogical services" is aimed at the following target groups: institutions for the developmental education of children with severe and multiple disabilities, specialised pedagogical services and networks of itinerant special needs teachers, itinerant teachers, specialised pedagogical services and institutions for developmental education.'*

Furthermore, infrastructure improvements for the same institutions are already available with the support of TOP Plus.

On the basis of the Vocational Education and Training Act, persons with special educational needs or disabilities and students with difficulties in integration - learning and behaviour- receive developmental pedagogical care and specific exemptions for the vocational examination and also during the preparation for it. The vocational training institution is obliged to organise differentiated development for the unfolding of talent, for the catching-up of disadvantaged pupils and persons in training, and for pupils with integration, learning and behavioural difficulties.

**Linked to point 7. d) of the Council Recommendation:**

In vocational education and training institutions, a school psychologist is available on a compulsory basis, in addition to the teacher and the school health service. According to the tasks defined in the law, the primary goal of the school psychologist is to develop the personality of the student, to protect their mental health and to help the effectiveness of professional education. The school psychologist provides direct support to the teacher for professional teaching. In the vocational training centre, developmental pedagogical care, health and pedagogical habilitation, rehabilitation, school psychology and librarian teacher services are available.

**Linked to point 7. e) of the Council Recommendation and points 38-42) of the Action Plan (pages 60-61):**

In order to promote the success at school of disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged groups of pupils and to prevent early school leaving, **basic programmes and guidelines for creating opportunities**<sup>14</sup> were published in 2023. The programmes provide a set of institutional development tools that support educational institutions and their providers

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<sup>14</sup> [https://www.oktatas.hu/pub\\_bin/dload/kozoktatas/kerettanterv/Eselyteremto\\_programok\\_PDF.pdf](https://www.oktatas.hu/pub_bin/dload/kozoktatas/kerettanterv/Eselyteremto_programok_PDF.pdf)



through modern methods to foster students' progress, pedagogical activities to alleviate disadvantages resulting from socio-economic situations, tools for community development of students, and strengthening the relationship between the family and the kindergarten or school.

**Act LII of 2023 on the New Career Path of Teachers** introduced **the opportunity creating pay component from September 2023** (pursuant to Article 157 (13) and (14) of the Act on Teachers' New Career Path promulgated on 15 July 2023) with retroactive effect from 1 July. The aim of this wage incentive is to recognise the additional educational performance of teachers and educational assistants, which creates opportunities and compensates for the disadvantages of children and pupils who need extra help because of their socio-economic situation. Staff carrying out such teaching activities and/or working in favoured, Emerging Settlements are entitled to a higher salary, increased by 20% of the basic salary without supplementary allowance.

**Measure 38:** In order to reduce the risks of segregation, **Act XCII of 2023 on Anti-Discrimination Measures in Public Education** entered into force on 1 January 2024, which sets out to achieve a more proportionate participation in the provision of disadvantaged pupils by reducing the state school funding for primary schools with a markedly low proportion of disadvantaged children in multi-school settlements. The law provides for a 10% reduction in the standard state aid for primary schools in multi-school settlements in which the proportion of disadvantaged pupils is more than 20 percentage points lower than the proportion in the settlement set at the beginning of the 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 academic years, and 15 percentage points lower than the proportion in the settlement set at the beginning of the 2026/2027 academic year.

**The amendment of Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education**, which entered into force on 1 January 2024, aims to clarify the tasks of the maintainer related to ensuring an equal share of disadvantaged children and pupils. It is essential that, when implementing a reorganisation of the place of provision, the maintainers pay special attention to the even distribution of the proportion of disadvantaged children and pupils.

Pursuant to Paragraphs (2a) - (2b) of Article 84 of the Act on National Public Education, prior to the decision of the maintaining authority on the reorganisation of an institution, the maintaining authority shall examine whether, in the event of the implementation of the change, it is possible to establish a balanced proportion of disadvantaged pupils in the educational institution affected by the reorganisation, which does not exceed a 25% difference between parallel classes of the same grade, and whether the continuity of the provision of special educational needs pupils can be ensured. Where the maintaining authority decides to reorganise an institution, it shall monitor annually, during the enrolment of pupils in primary schools, whether a balanced proportion of disadvantaged pupils and the continuity of provision for pupils with special educational needs is ensured in the educational establishment concerned by the reorganisation and shall determine the measures necessary to maintain favourable conditions.

**Measures 40 and 42:** In order to reduce segregation risks, the law provides for monitoring activities in school districts following the implementation of institutional restructuring, and strengthens the impact assessment of each restructuring of schools, keeping in mind risk of segregation. The law applies to all schools, regardless of their maintainers.

**Linked to point 7. h) of the Council Recommendation, and the Action Plan, points 49) (page 62) and points 50) and 52) (page 63):**

**Measure 50:** By operating the Student Network, the Government Information Technology Development Agency provides broadband internet (100 Mbps for under 500 pupils and 1 Gbps for over 500 pupils) and WiFi to essentially all public education institutions sustained by each school district. Network traffic passes through a central filter to ensure that people visit websites and use internet services that are relevant to their educational purposes. The Government Information Technology Development Agency (GITDA) provides all students with access to the Eduroam network.

In vocational education and training, it is essential to develop the digital skills of trainers, which is why one of the main thematic groups of the specific programmes of the Teacher Training Scheme aimed at mandatory continuing training is Digital Competence Development Training<sup>15</sup>.

**Linked to point 7. i) of the Council Recommendation and point 57) (page 64) of the Action Plan:**

In Hungary, students with a student card can travel within the country at a reduced fare. The current country and county passes for students cost 1.890Ft and 945Ft respectively. The new season tickets offer an even simpler solution than before, as it is now sufficient to buy a single joint (bus+train) season ticket for daily commuting and weekend trips. The new county season ticket allows you to travel within the borders of the county and the national season ticket allows you to travel throughout the country on both local buses and trains.

**Linked to point 7j) of the Council Recommendation and point 67-69 of the Action Plan, on page 65-66:**

**Measure 69:** Due to obstacles in adopting the horizontal eligibility criteria, the launch of the programme with EU funding is uncertain.

In addition to compulsory courses, students can participate in optional and other/non-compulsory activities in the vocational training institution: they can set up student circles, which establishment and functioning are supported by the teaching staff, and they can set up a student council to represent their interests. The work of the student council is assisted by the teacher appointed for this purpose. It is also possible to participate in the sports club of the vocational training institution.

**Linked to point 7. k) of the Council Recommendation:**

VET institutions shall contribute to the prevention and elimination of pupils'

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<sup>15</sup> <https://ikk.hu/otr> - At the moment of reporting, the following 9 training courses are available for trainers: basics of the teaching profession in ICT; first steps in digital pedagogy; interactive whiteboards, WordWall3 task builder; basics of AI, role of AI; excel advanced; ICT tools in sectoral basic and vocational education; digital tools in hospitality and tourism; typing. Continuing education content will be added to the interface on an ongoing basis.

risks/vulnerability, in cooperation with the family and child welfare services, the child rights representative and other persons, institutions and authorities with a responsibility in the child protection system (e.g. Pedagogical Professional Services). Particular attention is paid to preventing the use of substances that lead to behavioural dependence and addiction, as well as to preventing abuse and aggression in vocational education and training institutions, and to promoting the integration of recovered addicted and abused students. In doing so, they cooperate with the school health service where appropriate.

**Increasing the participation rate of 15- to 24-year-old Roma students participating in higher education** is one of the quantified targets of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy 2030:

	<b>Initial percentage in 2019</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2030</b>
Proportion of 15- to 24-year-old Roma students participating in higher education	2,2%	3%	4%

The change by year of the proportion of 15- to 24-year-old Roma students participating in higher education<sup>16</sup>

Group/ year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Roma population*	0,7	0,4	1,7	0,9	0,8	1,3	2,2	1,3	1,0	0,9
non-Roma population	22,7	20,9	21,8	20,4	19,3	20,3	21,4	19,8	20,0	20,9

Source: Labour Force Survey of Hungarian Central Statistical Office (indicator system of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy 2030).

**Disadvantage compensation in higher education** – the higher education sector has a long-established system for tackling disadvantage situation and reducing the disadvantages resulting from that: Mentor programme (upper year student mentors admitted students for university life without assistance/ for unassisted university life), Bursa Hungarica Higher Education Municipal Scholarship (social benefit based on need only), regular social scholarship, exemption from dormitory fees, Road to a Diploma Scholarship (scholarship from the last year of primary school to graduation, which amounts 225.000 HUF per semester for component „A”, or up to 95% of the student's own costs for component „B”, up to a maximum of 400.000 HUF per semester; only one or the other can be used).

According to the Government Decree 423/2012 (XII. 29.) **on the higher education admission procedure**, all disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged applicants could receive 40 extra points after submitting a suitable certificate. Under the amended relevant rules of 2023, for the same title, the higher education institution may award institutional points to applicants, up to a higher number of points and to a wider range of applicants than before. Due to the changes in the higher education admission procedure, it is no longer necessary to have an advanced level school-leaving certificate to start higher education studies, the higher education institutions may set a lower minimum score. This has led to an

<sup>16</sup> The figures on the participation of the Roma population in higher education should be treated with caution due to the low number of items.

increase of 28% in the number of entrants to higher education in 2023, and a related improvement in the number of first-year disadvantaged students admitted, as follows:

Support categories	Autumn 2020/21	Autumn 2021/22	Autumn 2022/23	Autumn 2023/24
preferred	1634	1789	1541	2005
people with disabilities	831	820	864	1140
multiply disadvantaged	40	57	24	132
disadvantaged	117	103	61	123
<b>Total amount</b>	<b>2622</b>	<b>2769</b>	<b>2490</b>	<b>3400</b>

**The Medium-Term Policy Strategy 2016 called „A Gradual Shift in Higher Education”** (Higher Education Strategy) adopted by the Government aims to establish and develop performance-based higher education, to increase the quality of student inputs and outputs, to reduce the drop-out rate, to train professionals with competences and skills that meet labour market needs, and to continue the renewal of teacher education. In addition/parallel to measures targeting all institutions, teachers and students, specific measures will be introduced for students in need of opportunity-creating support.

One of the objectives of the Higher Education Strategy is the development of an education system that ensures the creation of opportunities, social advancement, and broad access, focusing on those residing in the beneficiary districts defined in Government Decree 290/2014, which are to be developed with a complex programme; those belonging to the Roma community; those living with disabilities; women (girl pupils and female students – university and below-); those who are below average according to the Family Background Index of the National Competence Survey. The objective promotes the reduction of the gaps in the analysed regional disadvantages, family background and especially the integration of Roma and people with disabilities, which is also targeted in separate strategies (Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy II (2011-2020) and National Disability Programme (2015-2025)).

In response to the Higher Education Strategy, the European Commission has proposed the introduction of an indicator and a target to support the participation of disadvantaged students in higher education. The plan document has been amended accordingly, with the addition of performance indicators for socially and economically disadvantaged students and their 2021 actual and 2030 targets. The target group includes pupils with special educational needs, pupils with integration, learning or behavioural difficulties, disadvantaged pupils or multiply disadvantaged pupils.

The measures under objective 1.2 "Strengthening the Higher Education System to Create Opportunities, Social Advancement, and Broad access" of the Higher Education Strategy Action Plan 2021-2024 provide time-bound steps for the implementation of the strategic objectives.

The Hungarian state concludes a 6-year public task financing contract with the **so-called model-changing and church-maintained higher education institutions** maintained by

public interest foundation. The contract contains performance indicators, among which the promotion of equal opportunities plays a key role. These objectives should also be taken into account in the development of infrastructure. From 2022 onwards, higher education institutions changing model will be able to spend HUF 2 billion per year on social inclusion.

**Operational Programme for Economic Development and Innovation Plus (GINOP Plus+) - planned funding: HUF 40.345 billion**

Higher education measures support equal access to quality and effective higher education and training, in particular for disadvantaged social groups, through both institutional and sectoral means. Higher education institutions should actively support their students to successfully complete their studies. For this, through the use of course-specific and learning support assessments, and support services implemented through the mentoring of students teachers, and other teaching support staff of the higher education institution, learning-focused services and programmes are implemented, supporting the learning environment, developing specific training content, preventing early drop-out, with an emphasis on the priority areas of training identified in the Higher Education Strategy (medical and health sciences, mathematics, science, engineering or information technology, agriculture, and teacher training). If necessary, the range of training areas can be extended in the drop-out programme.

The target groups of the measure:

- students with social and/or economic disadvantages, and:
- mobility programme: staff of higher education institutions
- drop-out reduction programme: students in the fields of medicine and health sciences, mathematics, science, engineering or information technology, agriculture, teacher training, and other fields of study where appropriate.

(The equal opportunities group also includes (potential) participants in higher education who are refugees from Ukraine.)

Two **RRF projects** support the renewal of content in higher education (RRF-2.1.3-22) and the testing of micro-certificates (RRF-2.1.3.B-24). For the latter a call for proposals is currently being drafted.

These projects will be complemented by the existing RRF-2.1.2-22 Call for Proposal on Infrastructure and Skills Development for Practice-oriented Higher Education. The project beneficiary is required to apply the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the implementation of the project in accordance with Council Decision 2010/48/EC. During project implementation, the basic human rights of persons with disabilities must be ensured, including through accessibility and the application of related standards.

In the case of the RRF-2.1.2-21 Call for Proposal on Infrastructure and Skills Development for Practice-oriented Higher Education, the general expectation of the call is to support the participation of women and disadvantaged groups, people with disabilities in the labour market (awarded funding: HUF 78.6 billion).

**Support for equal opportunities groups in higher education**

Legislation/Programme/Allowance	Target group	Comment
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<p><b>Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>disadvantaged students</b></li> <li>• <b>multiply disadvantaged students</b></li> </ul>	<p>A person under the age of 25 at the time of enrolment (application) who is considered <b>disadvantaged</b> as defined in the Act on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration. A person under the age of 25 at the time of enrolment (application) who is considered to be <b>multiply disadvantaged</b> as defined in the Act on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration.</p>
<p><b>Bursa Hungarica Scholarship for Higher Education</b> (Government Decree No. 51/2007 (III. 26.) on the allowances and certain reimbursements to be paid by students participating in higher education)</p>	<p>socially disadvantaged students</p>	<p>Bursa Hungarica Scholarships are available for full-time students who have been awarded a scholarship by the municipality of their permanent residence and are doing a bachelor's, master's, undivided higher education programme, or a higher education vocational programme.</p>
<p><b>regular social scholarship</b> (Government Decree 51/2007 (III. 26.) on the benefits of students participating in higher education and certain reimbursements to be paid by them)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people with a disability or in need because of their state of health</li> <li>• <b>disadvantaged</b></li> <li>• breadwinner</li> <li>• large family</li> <li>• orphan</li> <li>• disadvantaged</li> <li>• guardianship terminated on the grounds of majority</li> <li>• half-orphan</li> </ul>	<p>Monthly financial assistance for students with social disadvantages.</p> <p>Amount of the scholarship: fixed on the basis of need; min. 16 660 HUF/month (e.g.: who is disadvantaged, half-orphan); min. 33 320 HUF/month (e.g.: multiply disadvantaged, large family, orphan).</p>
<p><b>extraordinary social scholarship</b> (Government Decree No. 51/2007 (III. 26.) on the allowances and certain reimbursements payable to students participating in higher education)</p>	<p>a student whose social situation deteriorates unexpectedly</p>	<p>A one- time allowance may be paid in the event of an unexpected deterioration in the student's social situation. The monthly amount of the grant is determined by the regulations of the higher education institution</p>
<p><b>basic subsidy</b> (Government Decree 51/2007 (III. 26.) on the allowances and certain reimbursements payable to students participating in higher education)</p>	<p>students with social disadvantages</p>	<p>Providing financial support for students with social disadvantages entering higher education to start their studies.</p> <p>The amount of the scholarship: in higher education vocational training, bachelor's degree, master's degree: HUF 83 300 in master's degree: HUF 124 950</p>
<p><b>mentoring programme</b> (Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education; Government Decree 87/2015 (IV. 9.) on the implementation of certain provisions of Act CCIV of 2011 on National</p>	<p>disadvantaged students</p>	<p>For the preparation and preparation of disadvantaged students entering higher education, the student or lecturer of the higher education institution provides assistance during the</p>

<i>Higher Education)</i>		course of the training.
<p><b>Specialised boarding school/ Roma specialised boarding school</b> (Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education; Government Decree 24/2013 (II. 5.) on National Excellence in Higher Education; Government Decision 1882/2017 (XI. 30.) on the Establishment and Operation of the Roma Collegiate Council)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have the ability to perform above and beyond curricular requirements, and</li> <li>• disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged students</li> </ul>	<p>Within specialised boarding school system, the specialised boarding school certified as a Roma specialised boarding school is a special support for the <b>talents of Roma young people</b>.</p>
<p><b>Road to a degree scholarship and cost-sharing programme</b> (Government Decree 152/2005 (VIII.2.) on the Road to a Degree Scholarship Programme, Road to a Degree Call for Proposals 2019; Government Decree No 51/2007 (III.26.) on the allowances and certain reimbursements payable to students participating in higher education)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disadvantaged students</li> <li>• multiply disadvantaged students</li> <li>• students in institutional or external aftercare</li> <li>• Roma students</li> </ul> <p>(bachelor's, master's, undivided higher educational programme, higher vocational education)</p>	<p>The aim of the opportunity-creating scholarship and self-funding programme is to improve the equal opportunities and academic success of disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged students, especially Roma students, and to support their access to higher education.</p> <p>Considering the high proportion of Roma/Gypsy students among the students with the worst chances of further education, the programme should include, if the number of applicants allows, at least 50% of applicants who voluntarily declare their Roma origin.</p> <p>The amount of the scholarship: component "A": 246 566 HUF/person/per semester; "Component B: 95% of the student's own costs, up to a maximum of HUF 400 000 per person per semester.</p>

<p><b>Target groups in higher education mobility programmes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has been awarded extra points for being a disadvantaged or multiply disadvantaged student or for equal opportunities when applying to higher education</li> <li>• Bursa Hungarica Study Scholarship recipient(s)</li> <li>• Recipient(s) of a regular or exceptional social scholarship</li> <li>• (Is/was) a National Conference of Student Governments Mentoring Programme beneficiary student</li> <li>• (Is/was) a Beneficiary student of the "Pathway to Higher Education" - "Pathway to a Diploma"</li> <li>• Member of a Roma vocational college (ex)</li> <li>• Received a basic social school start-up grant when starting higher education</li> <li>• Sudden change in the applicant's social situation (in the context of COVID-19)</li> <li>• The student is a resident of one of the beneficiary municipalities defined by Government Decree 105/2015 (IV.23.)</li> </ul>	<p>Social support also aims to provide a more level playing field for outgoing mobility in higher education. In the form of a monthly supplementary allowance.</p>
	<p>for students or staff with a disability or a long-term illness studying/working in higher education who have been awarded an Erasmus+ mobility grant. The aim of the grant is to provide equal opportunities in higher education for special needs leavers in the Erasmus+ programme.</p>	<p>Students and institutional staff who have been awarded a scholarship are eligible to apply if they have a disability or a long-term illness requiring constant medical care and their illness can be shown to cause significant additional costs to the average cost of living abroad (e.g. visually impaired, mobility impaired, hearing impaired, diabetic, lactose or gluten intolerant or other medical conditions).</p>

**Let's Teach for Hungary Programme** - an initiative was launched on 5 December 2018 by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, the Ministry of Human Capacities, the Klebelsberg Centre and the National Conference of Student Governments - aiming to ensure that people living in disadvantaged small villages can also succeed, having the opportunity of obtaining a higher education degree and successfully integrating in the labour market



integration. The programme focuses on career guidance based on peer mentoring activities and on reducing early school leaving. The main target group of the programme were (tutored) primary school pupils living in small settlements. The role of the (tutor) students in higher education institutions working with them is to show the tutored that there are opportunities for fulfilment that they can achieve through learning based on their abilities.

The core activity of the Let's Teach for Hungary programme is the **university mentoring programme**, which is typically present in settlements with less than 5,000 inhabitants. The schools are selected on the basis of data provided by the Klebelsberg Centre on the number of disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged pupils in primary schools in the catchment area of each higher education institution. Once the population and accessibility of the municipalities have been assessed, the Programme will consult the institutions concerned on whether to join the programme.

The 2020/2021 school year was the first year that students graduated from the programme. Of these, 98% were admitted to secondary education. In the 2021/2022 school year, 12% of the mentored students continued their studies in upper secondary schools, 48% in vocational schools, 38% in technical schools and 2% in vocational schools and skills schools. The above shows that 98.5% of mentored students continue their education after the eighth grade.

#### **Current contributing organisations:**

<b>Universities</b>	<b>Other contributors</b>
1. Apor Vilmos Catholic College	1. Klebelsberg Centre
2. Corvinus University of Budapest	2. Debrecen School District Centre
3. Budapest University of Technology and Economics	3. Nyíregyháza School District Centre
4. University of Debrecen	4. Miskolc School District Centre
5. Reformed Theological University of Debrecen	5. Eger School District Centre
6. Eötvös Loránd University	6. Middle-Buda School District Centre
7. Eszterházy Károly Catholic University	7. Kecskemét School District Centre
8. Gál Ferenc University	8. Dunakeszi School District Centre
9. Károli Gáspár Reformed University	9. Szeged School District Centre
10. Hungarian University of Agricultural and Life Sciences	10. Pécs School District Centre
11. University of Miskolc	11. Vocational Training Centre of Debrecen
12. Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design	12. Vocational Training Centre of Miskolc
13. Neumann János University	13. Vocational Training Centre of Nyíregyháza
14. University of Nyíregyháza	14. Vocational Training Centre of Baranya County
15. University of Óbuda	
16. University of Pannonia	
17. Pázmány Péter Catholic University	
18. University of Pécs	
19. Széchenyi István University	
20. University of Szeged	
21. Tokaj-Hegyalja University	

At the start of the Let's Teach for Hungary programme, in the first semester, 185 mentors from 4 universities worked with 797 students in 35 small primary schools, in autumn 2022, the programme had 1,008 mentors from 17 universities working with 4,227 students in 110 primary schools. In 2023, the programme was present in 21 universities and more than 100 primary schools, with nearly 900 mentors and nearly 4,000 mentoring sessions.

According to the amendment of Article 54/A of Act CCIV of 2011 on National Higher Education, effective from 20 December 2022, **the Government supports the talent management and catch-up of disadvantaged pupils in primary and secondary education** through the Let's Teach for Hungary programme, the implementation rules of which are set in Government Decree 51/2007 (26.III.) (Rules and conditions for the awarding of scholarships under the Teach for Hungary mentoring programme).

The Government designated the **Let's Teach for Hungary Foundation** and the **National Talent Centre Non-profit Limited Liability Company** to implement the tasks related to the Let's Teach for Hungary Programme by Government Decree 69/2023 (10.III.).

### **3.3. Healthy meal each school day**

This subsection should state how many children AROPE receive a free healthy meal each school day, along with information, on how this service is organised (as part of universal or of means-tested provision, permanent or pilot/temporary etc.).

Information on provision of subsidised (i.e. not entirely free) meals for children in need can also be included in this subsection, with description of the means tests used and financial arrangements for participation.

#### **Linked to point 7. f) of the Council Recommendation and point 43) of the Action Plan (page 61) and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

The system of free, reduced-price child catering provided by institutions in Hungary was already in place when Act 31 of 1997 on Child Protection and Guardianship Administration entered into force and has since been extended in several steps, independently of the Recommendation.

With the amendment of the Child Protection Act effective **from 1 September 2015**, meals provided by institutions became free of charge for children in nurseries and kindergartens - children with long-term illnesses, children with disabilities, and children of families with three or more children - who are entitled to a 50% discount on the fee of the meal provided by institutions. **Furthermore, from 1 September 2015, healthy siblings of children with long-term illness or disabilities, and children of families with fewer than three children became entitled to free meal four times a day in nurseries and three times a day in kindergartens, if the family's per capita income is less than 130% of the net amount of the minimum wage.** (Prior to the extension of free meal in kindergarten and nurseries, children in nursery and kindergarten were entitled to free or 50% reduced- price meals provided by an institution under the same eligibility conditions as primary school-age children.)

Under the current rules, **the system of benefits for institutional catering - in nurseries, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, dormitories, and day care for disabled people** - is as follows.

**Free meals for children provided by an institution:**

- for a child in nursery or kindergarten, if
  - receives regular child protection benefit,
  - has a long-term illness or disability, or lives in a family where a child with long-term illness or disability is raised
  - lives in a family with three or more children,
  - lives in a family in which, according to the parent's declaration, the amount of the monthly income per person does not exceed 130% of the compulsory minimum wage less personal income tax, employee, health insurance and pension contributions (HUF 230,649 in 2024), or
  - is in foster care;
- for a pupil in full-time education in grades 1 to 8 (6-14 year-olds), if
  - receives regular child protection benefit, or
  - has been taken into foster care;
- for a child of the above-mentioned age group receiving regular child protection benefit and who is placed in a day care institution for disabled as covered by the Social Act;
- for a pupil in full-time education beyond grades 1 to 8 (6-14 year-olds), if
  - has been admitted to foster care or
  - receives aftercare.

**A normative discount of 50% is granted:**

- for a pupil in full-time education in grades 1 to 8 (6-14 year-olds), if
  - lives in a family with three or more children or
  - has a long-term illness or disability
- for a student in full-time education beyond grades 1 to 8 (14 year-olds and above), if
  - receives a regular child protection benefit,
  - has a long-term illness or disability

The examination of eligibility for child catering provided by an institution benefits is governed by Article 18 of Government Decree 328/2011 (XII. 29.) on the fee for basic child welfare services and specialised child protection services providing personal care and the evidence that may be used to claim them (according to the Child Protection Act). The application for child catering provided by an institution is made by filling in the relevant 'Declaration' documents in accordance with the annexes to the legislation, which must be attached as supporting documents, depending on the entitlement to the benefit:

- a copy of the official decision establishing entitlement to regular child protection benefit
- a copy of the official decision establishing entitlement to regular child protection benefit
  - a certificate from a specialist in case of long-term illness,

- the opinions of an expert and of the rehabilitation committee in the case of disability

In the case of families with three or more children, it is sufficient to declare the existence of this fact in the "Declaration" document, plus in the case of meals in nurseries and kindergartens the per capita income not exceeding 130% of the minimum wage, and no separate certificate is required.

In the case of a fostered child or young adult in aftercare, proof of eligibility must be provided by a certificate issued by the head of the institution providing the care (foster care network, children's home).

### Access to free, reduced-price institutional meals for children:

School year	Age group	Of which in nursery, kindergarten, and school	Receive meals provided by an institution	Receive free meals provided by an institution	Receive meals provided by an institution at a reduced price	Not eligible for a discount	Percentage of who receiving free or reduced-priced meals
<b>2023 /2024</b>	Under 3 years	43 499	43 499	27 530	0	15 969	63,29%
	3-6 years old	323 583	321 135	248 789	0	72 346	77,47%
	7-14 years old	738 470	551 184	109 417	167 612	274 155	50,26%
	15-18 years old	370 590	69 047	5 221	26 198	37 628	45,50%
	<b>in total</b>	<b>1 105 552</b>	<b>984 865</b>	<b>390 957</b>	<b>193 810</b>	<b>400 098</b>	<b>59,38%</b>
<b>2022 /2023</b>	Under 3 years	40 780	40 780	25 802	0	14 978	63,27%
	3-6 years old	322 868	320 706	246 854	0	73 852	76,97%
	7-14 years old	743 498	553 460	111 909	164 743	276 808	49,99%
	15-18 years old	369 721	69 129	5 116	26 023	37 990	45,04%
	<b>in total</b>	<b>1 476 867</b>	<b>984 075</b>	<b>389 681</b>	<b>190 766</b>	<b>403 628</b>	<b>58,98%</b>
<b>2021 /2022</b>	Under 3 years	39 696	39 696	25 239	0	14 457	63,58%
	3-6 years old	318 422	316 456	242 400	0	74 056	76,60%
	7-14 years old	746 023	559 513	133 343	157 223	268 947	51,93%
	15-18 years old	308 553	59 036	4 239	23 305	31 492	46,66%
	<b>in total</b>	<b>1 412 694</b>	<b>974 701</b>	<b>405 221</b>	<b>180 528</b>	<b>388 952</b>	<b>60,10%</b>

*Source: data on for under 3 year-olds from the HCSO Child Day Care Data Collection as of 31<sup>st</sup> May of the reference year; and for 3-18 year olds, data from the Public Education Statistics Data Collection and the Vocational Education and Training Information System as of 1<sup>st</sup> October of the academic year. The data source does not include data on entitlement to free and reduced-price catering.*

### 3.4. Healthcare

This subsection should describe the progress with implementation of recommendations given in § 8 of the ECG Recommendation, which include among others (A) early detection and treatment of diseases and developmental problems, including those related to mental health, and (B) health promotion and disease prevention programmes. Possible remaining gaps in timely access to free healthcare by children AROPE should also be listed in this section.

The report should primarily focus on measures to support access to healthcare for the children in need (rather than the general population).

**Government Decision Annex 1 – Measure 10: In order to achieve the three main directives of children’s mental health development – destigmatisation, stress management, and depression/suicide prevention – mental health promotion centres must be set up in the 23 health promotion offices that do not currently have such a department, and are mainly located in the disadvantaged districts listed in Government Decree No 290/2014 of 26 November 2014. Furthermore, to fully achieve these objectives, efforts must be made to expand the existing network of health promotion offices into a ‘national health promotion network’. - deadline: 31 December 2026**

**Linked to Council Recommendation points 8, 9. c) and d) and points 1-10) (pages 68-70 and 72) and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

#### **Status of the implementation of measure 10 of the Government Decision:**

First and foremost, health promotion offices need to be equipped to implement the Action Plan set out in the Government Decision. The main obstacle to this is that health promotion offices are currently not health service providers, so their legal status needs to be clarified in order to implement the tasks set out in the Government Decision. This can create the basis for the organisational, operational, professional-methodological changes that build on this. Thus, the network of health promotion offices will open up throughout the country, and the creation of mental health promotion function will become possible and available in the whole country, which is currently not operational in all health promotion offices.

The State Secretariat for Health has prepared a new draft law on the operation of the ‘national network of health promotion offices’, which comprehensively regulates the legal, organisational, operational, professional and financial situation of health promotion offices, allowing the integration of the health promotion network into the health system. Administrative consultation and adoption of the draft is planned for 2024. According to the draft document, the new organisational framework and the implementation of the tasks set out in measure 10 of the Government Decision would become possible from 2025.

Access to the ‘national network of health promotion offices (HPO) for all residents is also conditional on the availability of the funding. f At present, under the TOP Plus 3.1.3 call for proposals, it is possible to finance the activities of the HPO offices, which carry out

professional activities in addition to their defined core activities. Based on the negotiations with the European Commission and the guidance of the Managing Authority, no funds can be allocated for the HPOs. The organisational design is expected to be implemented in conjunction with several other organisational changes in the health sector.

With regard to the health care of children, **the continuous health care of minors - also within the institutional framework - is ensured**, taking into account the scope of the entitlements and obligations of the members of the signalling system (teachers, institutional educators, general practitioners, public health nurses, treating doctors, etc.), as a result of their cooperation and keeping in mind the opinions based on medical-professional grounds. As indicated in the Action Plan, from 2010 a series of health initiatives have been introduced to promote healthy lifestyle, such as the introduction and continuous improvement of a public health product tax, reducing and monitoring the trans-fatty acid content of foods, making public catering and school cafeterias healthier, a ban on the sale of energy drinks in school cafeterias and at school events organised for children. This also includes the National Centre for Public Health and Pharmacy's healthy eating promotion programmes (e.g. HAPPY WEEK - promoting drinking water). In the interest of children's health, Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education stipulates the provision of daily physical education -i.e. five hours of physical education per week- which makes Hungary a pioneer among EU Member States. The daily physical activity of 15-year-olds is above the OECD average (Hungary 17.5%, OECD average: 14.6%), in which the introduction of daily physical education has played a role.

On 1 January 2013, the Hungarian Student Sports Association launched the T.E.S.I. flagship project (developing a new strategy and a new system for measuring the pupils' physical condition, encouraging voluntary participation in the organisation of complex school physical activity programmes), one of the tasks of which was to develop a health-oriented fitness measurement and assessment system that could be operated uniformly in the Hungarian school system. The mission of the NETFIT programme is to promote and raise awareness of the importance of lifelong physical activity and the values of health-conscious living among school-age students, their families and public education.

In 2020 and 2023, the State Secretariat for Health, in close cooperation with the Hungarian Student Sports Association and the State Secretariat for Public Education, launched a complex prevention programme in schools, entitled 'School programme for the promotion of comprehensive health, mental health and the reduction of addictions'. The amount available for the complex programme was 300 million HUF in 2020, 199.7 million HUF in 2021 and 40 million HUF in 2023. The primary aim of the programme is to promote health improvement, prevent addiction and provide mental health and professional support for teachers.

In 2022 and 2023, summer lifestyle camps were also organised: summer day camps for two age groups: Junior and Lifestyle camps and student olympics for grades 1-4 (for 6-10 years-olds), while for grades 5-8 (for 11-14 years-olds) it was called the Student Olympics and Lifestyle Camp, where the topics of health promotion programmes to improve energy balance, healthy environment, social relationships, addictions and the digital world were discussed.

Also launched in 2010 and continued over the past years, a number of measures have been

taken to reduce smoking, which also protects young people and non-smokers. Direct and indirect advertising and free distribution of tobacco products is prohibited. Smoking and the use of e-cigarettes is prohibited in enclosed public places and public institutions. An amendment to the law on the protection of non-smokers came into force on 1 January 2012, banning smoking in closed and certain open-air public places (e.g. playgrounds, public transport stops). The restriction on the use of electronic cigarettes in the same places was adopted by Parliament on 20 May 2016. Tobacco products may only be sold in specialised shops under controlled conditions, distance and internet sales of tobacco products are prohibited. Price and tax measures have been introduced to reduce demand. Uniformed packaging for tobacco products was introduced on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022. Menthol has been banned as an additive in cigarettes and cigarette tobacco for any purpose from 26 January 2022. In order to improve the population's health, it is important to reduce the consumption of tobacco products and the regular use of other nicotine-containing products for pleasure (e.g. nicotine sachets), the use of which can be life-threatening, and therefore legislation has been issued on ingredients, maximum nicotine limits, additives, packaging, information on harmful effects, mandatory use of child-resistant locks, and strict regulation of the ingredients of herbal medicinal products for smoking. Operation of a smoking focal point: implemented activities aimed at preventing smoking addiction, nationwide dissemination of complex smoking prevention programmes (in kindergartens and schools) with the cooperation of county government offices and health promotion offices, in order to further reduce the proportion of young people exposed to smoking and passive smoking, by continuously expanding the toolbox of programmes, coordinated by the National Institute of Respiratory and Pulmonary Diseases.

To reach disadvantaged settlements and vulnerable target groups, the following programmes are being implemented in Hungary:

### **Reducing substance abuse in segregated areas and reducing substance abuse in child protection specialised care prevention programme**

1. From 2020 onwards, the government has a special programme to help reduce substance use in segregated areas. The programme has been being implemented with the involvement of the National Association of Addiction Counsellors in connection with the Emerging Settlements programme. As a key element of the programme, addiction counsellors directly assist in the prevention and treatment of addiction-related problems, supporting the work of local social workers through training programmes and personal presence. Following the training, specific and targeted professional assistance (prevention and intervention) tailored to the addiction problems encountered locally began.
2. The child protection specialised care programme was implemented with the aim of assisting the colleagues providing specialised care in eight child protection institutions with the presence of an addiction specialist delegated by the National Association of Addiction Consultants to prevent and treat addiction-related phenomena, alleviate addiction-related problems of the children served and increase health awareness. Implementation of the two programmes is ongoing, with a grant of 40 million HUF in 2024.

### **Support programme for children with parents suffering from addiction (Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta)**

In Hungary today, at least 400,000 children live in families where one or both parents are problematic drug users or addicts. According to international surveys, 35-40% of children raised in such families will themselves become addicted, and a further third will suffer from mental disorders of varying severity, at the latest in adulthood, if they do not receive the necessary psychosocial help and support. The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta's pilot programme focuses on caring for the children of addicted parents, with the aim of promoting mental health development in the target group, and providing early access to treatment. The programme for children and families is currently being implemented as a pilot programme. Within the framework of the programme, the staff of the health promotion offices will have the opportunity to acquire new, previously untaught knowledge, which will enable them to learn best practices from abroad in order to inform families and the public and directly help the children concerned. In 2023, 13 million HUF was available to support the programme, which is currently being implemented.

### **Pediatric aspects of the Attila Naszlady Health Promotion Programme (Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta)**

The primary objective of the pilot programme is to provide health services in Emerging Settlements through a new type of innovative telemedicine care. The programme started with 12 mobile clinics and 5 Maltese Health Points. In December 2023, telemedicine complex health services provided in 35 settlements with a total population of nearly 300 000 people. In the care of children, the primary aim is to carry out preventive examinations and to provide on-site care for common, acute paediatric illnesses. Emphasis is placed on educating the parents through subject-specific informational materials, educational lectures on children's health, and practical training (e.g. infant and new-born care). In the event of symptoms, a general paediatric examination is carried out using the available means, giving definitive treatment and advice if possible, and medication if appropriate. Telemedicine paediatric care using advanced Point of Care Testing (POCT) tools with the involvement of a specialist offers an innovative solution for the modern management of childhood infectious diseases.

### **Children's eye screening programme**

Launched in 2018, the programme provides children in Hungary's Emerging Settlements with timely access to appropriate paediatric eye care, including prescription of glasses, various vision therapies (e.g. eye patching), periodic check-ups, and, if necessary, further ophthalmological examination or surgery. In 2023, nearly 11,000 children aged 0-14 years have been reached, including about 27,732 children screened since the programme started. The number of glasses completed in 2023 was 1,769, almost doubling the number of glasses delivered since the programme started. At the beginning of 2024, 10 164 people were assessed for ophthalmological screening programme, 86 settlements has been reached.

## **3.5. Healthy nutrition**

This subsection should describe the progress with implementation of recommendations



given in § 9 of the ECG Recommendation, which include among others (A) supporting access to healthy meals also outside of school days, and (B) restricting availability of foods high in fat, salt and sugar in educational establishments.

**Linked to point 7. c) of the Council Recommendation and point 4) (page 72) of the Action Plan, and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

**(b) limiting foods high in fat, salt, and sugar in educational establishments**

The Decree 37/2014 (IV. 30.) of Ministry of Human Capacities on nutritional health requirements for public catering contains the energy and nutrient values to be provided at each meal, the maximum daily salt intake allowed for the proper development of the respective age groups, the daily amounts of milk, dairy products, cereal-based foods, vegetables and fruit to be provided, the list of foods that may or may not be provided in restricted quantities in public catering, and the maximum energy content of added sugars and fats on the average of ten days of catering. The decree gives special attention to children with dietary needs. It stipulates that any person requiring a dietary meal certified by a specialist doctor must be provided with a diet appropriate to their condition.

The provisions of the decree will contribute to increasing the consumption of fruit and vegetables, reducing the intake of salt and saturated fats, achieving an energy intake appropriate for each age group, and promoting a healthy diet for children in the public catering sector. In the long term, this will lead to an increase in life expectancy and the number of years spent in good health, and a reduction in mortality from cardiovascular diseases and cancers.

The healthy nutrition of children is further supported by the fact that Paragraph (4) of Article 129 of Decree 20/2012 (VIII. 31.) of Ministry of Human Capacities on the operation of nurturing - educational establishments, and the naming of public educational establishments, and Paragraph (3) of Article 103 of Government Decree 12/2020 (II. 7.) on the implementation of the vocational training act stipulates that food products subject to the public health product tax may not be sold in educational establishments and at events organised for pupils.

**Linked to point 9. a) of the Council Recommendation and point 1) (page 71) of the Action Plan, and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

Free meals for children during school holidays - which covered only the summer holidays - was already in place in Hungary when the Child Protection Act came into force and has since been extended, irrespective of the recommendation.

**From 1 January 2016, municipalities have the mandatory duty to provide meals for children during school holidays**, under which parents or legal representatives of **disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged children** receiving regular child protection benefit must be provided free hot lunch for at least 43 working days during the summer holidays, on no more than all working days of the summer holidays and, during the autumn, winter, and spring holidays, on each working day of the school holidays for the duration of the school holidays, and the corresponding period of closure of kindergartens and nurseries,

in accordance with the school year. Children who are **not enrolled in an institution**, typically in the nursery age group from 5 months to 2.5 years, can receive the benefit for at least 43 working days during the summer holidays, as is the case for children attending school, and for up to all working days during the summer holidays, and for all working days during the autumn, winter, and spring school holidays as regulated by the Ministerial Decree on the organisation of the school year.

The target group for child catering during school holidays is therefore **disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged children living in their families** who cannot access institutional child catering during the school holidays. **Children in foster care and children's homes are not entitled to this benefit in-kind**, because during the holidays, the foster parent and the children's home provide adequate meals, which are financed by the state.

The take-up of free child catering during the school holidays was as follows.

	2021	2022	2023
number of eligible persons 31 December of the previous year	171 096 persons	178 688 persons	155 159 persons
<b>take-up rate during summer holidays</b>	<b>57,09%</b>	<b>54,02%</b>	<b>61,25%</b>
summer holiday	97 674 persons	96 543 persons	95 040 persons
	2 137 settlements	2 133 settlements	2 047 settlements
spring holiday	79 464 persons	71 746 persons	66 495 persons
	1 939 settlements	1 910 settlements	1 804 settlements
autumn holiday	77 945 persons	76 101 persons	70 691 persons
	2 032 settlements	2 025 settlements	1 900 settlements
winter holiday	82 232 persons	80 681 persons	76 429 persons
	1 984 settlements	1 983 settlements	1 937 settlements

*Source: data collection on the number of entitled persons from Hungarian Central Statistical Office's National Data Collection Programme 1210 'Report on the activities of the guardianship authority', individual data disclosure by the Ministry of Finance on the number of beneficiaries and settlements.*

### 3.6. Adequate housing

This subsection should describe the progress with implementation of recommendations given in § 10 of the ECG Recommendation, which include among others measures to ensure that homeless children and their families receive adequate accommodation.

Information on the implemented and planned measures to improve alternative care by moving from large residential institutions to smaller, family-like settings, and to support transition to independent life by youth who leave alternative care can also be included in this subsection.

**Government Decision Annex 1 – Measure 13:** The raising of children in the family must

be supported. To prevent children from being referred to child protection services, increasing attention must be paid to parents. **To manage and reduce family crises and dysfunctions, support must be provided for programmes aimed at developing parental competence and parental education and for preventive community-based initiatives, taking account of the needs of children with disabilities.** In addition, the placement with adoptive families of children who have been forced to live without their own family and are available for adoption must be promoted. – **deadline: 31 December 2027**

**Linked to Point 10 a.) of the Council Recommendation and Points 1-3) of the Action Plan (page 73) and in response to the observation letter of the European Commission:**

250 million HUF was also available in 2023 to expand the capacity of temporary home for families, which provides funding for the construction of external accommodation. The source of funding has been allocated to the Margit Slachta National Institute for Social Policy to carry out the call for proposals and handle the grant management once the decision has been taken. The beneficiaries of these calls for proposals are expected to develop external accommodation in 10 flats linked to family temporary home to help families in need.

Due to obstacles to the adoption of horizontal eligibility criteria, the start of the programme with EU funding is uncertain.

Regarding the Commission's observation, we point out that the information on the development of external accommodation for families in a temporary home was provided for the development included in action 2) on page 73 of the Action Plan. The development of 109 new external places in 22 dwellings was not carried out in subsidised housing and not in children's temporary homes (59 places in 19 dwellings), but all of this was for the development of external accommodation for families in temporary homes in 2021 and 2022.

**Government Decision Annex 1 – Measure 13: The raising of children in the family must be supported.** To prevent children from being referred to child protection services, increasing attention must be paid to parents. To manage and reduce family crises and dysfunctions, support must be provided for programmes aimed at developing parental competence and parental education and for preventive community-based initiatives, taking account of the needs of children with disabilities. **In addition, the placement with adoptive families of children who have been forced to live without their own family and are available for adoption must be promoted.** – **deadline: 31 December 2027**

**Linked to Point 10. d) of the Council Recommendation and Point 7) of the Action Plan, page 75:**

Concerning adoption too, it can be confirmed that the Action Plan aligns the Recommendation.

Adoption affects children placed in child protection specialised care, all of whom are considered to be multiply disadvantaged.

If it is decided that a child under child protection specialised care cannot be reunited with his/her biological parents, as they cannot take care of him/her, adoption ensures that he/she grows up in a family who loves him/her as their own child, and remain a full member of the family, both emotionally and legally, after reaching adulthood. Above all, adoption must be in the best interests of the child. Therefore, the purpose of adoption is to ensure that a child

whose biological parents are not known, or they cannot or will not raise him/her, by providing him/her suitable, capable parents and an environment in which he/she feels as if he/she was his/her adoptive parents' biological child.

All expert opinions, the activities of the adoption facilitation services and the proceedings of the guardianship authorities related to the child in the adoption procedure are free of charge. The children subject to the adoption will all be treated - from a legal point of view - as biological children, placed under the parental care of their adoptive parents, whose suitability for adoption and ability to guarantee that the implementation of adoption is in the best interests of the child has been established by experts' opinions and guardianship authority decisions.

The Ministry of Culture and Innovation, which is responsible for the adoption system, monitors adoption data and facilitates adoptions by their work as the national adoption facilitator agency and central authority for international adoptions. Adoptive parents benefit from a wide, ever-increasing range of support.

The higher number of adoptions was due to the adoption of children in specialised care which showed an increase of almost 46% in 2022 compared to 2010. The number of adoptions has increased by at least 35% each year compared to 2010, with the exception of 2020, the year hit by the Coronavirus pandemic, when the increase was 24%.

Overall, this means that more multiply disadvantaged children can be guaranteed the chance to grow up in their own family through adoption.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of adoptions	735	808	793	726	784	829	896	1025	1000	1052	917	995	1254
number of children adopted in foster care (growing up in child protection specialised care)	369	394	372	322	467	476	580	654	659	682	618	645	853

Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office

Since the adoption of the Recommendation, the following measures have been taken **to improve foster care provision** in the field of child protection specialised care in order to make the transition to smaller family housing:

- In 2022, we supported the purchase of household appliances, medical aids for children's care and development equipment worth HUF 266 million, and we obliged the operators to employ a childminder, if the foster parent they employ has more than one child with special needs (disabled, chronically ill or under 3 years old);
- foster parents receive, in addition to the remuneration they receive for their employment, a nurture allowance and a separate allowance for the care of children in their household, which was merged into an nurture allowance from 1 January 2023, the amount of which increased by 25%, for which the central budget provided nearly HUF 2.2 billion.

For both foster parents and children in institutional care, we pay particular attention to **creating a predictable and secure future**. For this purpose, under the influence of a survey on the career aspirations of 8th grade children in child protection specialised care - with the involvement several universities and experts on child protection - a methodology on the skills and talents of children in child protection was crafted out, which will be mandatory in all foster care networks and children's homes from April 2023.

The ‘Care for the Future’ programme, implemented within the framework of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme Plus (HRDOP) by dedicating 2,8 billion HUF to said programme, aims to introduce and operate professional activities, methods, activities, services, programmes and training which contribute directly or indirectly to the development of knowledge, skills, coping (resilience), cooperation, foreign language and IT competences, talent support and progress measurement of children and young adults in child protection specialised care and detention, and in particular to develop and implement their career planning practices. We aim to reach at least 1,200 children – around 8% of the total number of children aged 6-17 in child protection specialised care (15,500 in total) – through independent early life supporting services.

Due to obstacles to the adoption of horizontal eligibility criteria, the start of the programme with EU funding is uncertain.

Main data on the placement of those who no longer benefit of child protection specialised care:

		2021	2022
<b>Total</b>		<b>23 325</b>	<b>23 473</b>
Underage	Foster parent	14 866	14 859
	children’s home	5 842	5 987
	in an institution providing care and nurturing	333	329
	total	21 041	21 175
	<b>(in the year in question) child who has come of age, thus no longer a beneficiary of care and does not receive any aftercare provision</b>	<b>1 556</b>	<b>1 661</b>
		<b>7,40%</b>	<b>7,84%</b>
Of age	Foster parent	1 262	1 249
	children’s home	816	831
	external accommodation	206	218
	total	2 284	2 298
	<b>(in the year in question) has left the care service</b>	<b>756</b>	<b>865</b>
		<b>33,10%</b>	<b>37,64%</b>

*Source: National Statistical Data Collection Programme by Hungarian Central Statistical Office 1209. ‘Report on the situation of territorial child protection specialised care services’ 31December of the reference year*

### **Linked to Point 10. b) of the Council Recommendation:**

The point 2.4.4. of the revised version of the National Environment and Climate Plan (NECP) submitted to the Council on the 31 August 2023 defines energy poverty as: vulnerable consumers are those who face difficulties in meeting their households essential energy needs. The definition thus includes the difficulty of financing the energy needs as well as the high per unit energy consumption of the property. For the purpose of defining vulnerable

consumers, detailed definitions with indicators are provided for each supporting policy measure. Energy poverty will therefore be addressed and targeted through the different policy measures.

In the case of public utilities, the data on the customers to be protected are those provided by the water and electricity utilities. It is possible to collect water utility data for a period of 5 years, as the law requires service providers to keep a copy of the documents submitted for 5 years. The relevant implementing regulation defines the scope of users to be protected more broadly than the NECP does, and one's eligibility for discounts must be notified to the service provider, discounts are not given automatically. In fact, if a person is entitled to for example, a regular child protection benefit or is disadvantaged, it does not necessarily mean that they will be a registered protected user at a water utility. The data show that few people take advantage of the possibilities offered by this entitlement.

In accordance with the provisions in force of *Government Decree 494/2017 (XII. 29.) on the natural gas price discount for large families*, a domestic consumer with a universal service contract for natural gas, who –in accordance with Act LXXXIV of 1998 on Family Support – has at least three children and is in receipt of family allowances, or lives in the same household as a person in receipt of family allowances under this scheme, **is entitled to a discount on natural gas prices for large families.**

Government Decree No 290/2022 (VIII.5.) amended the application of Government Decree No 494/2017 (XII. 29.) on the natural gas price discount for large families, thus as of 1 August 2022, when determining the entitlement to the large family discount, the entitled person is entitled to an additional 22 086 MJ of discounted natural gas per place of use and per calendar year in addition to the discounted quantity of natural gas specified in paragraph (1) of Article 5 of Government Decree 259/2022 (21 July) on the determination of certain universal service tariffs for three children, and to an additional 11 043 MJ per child *from the fourth child*.

Act LXXXVI of 2007 on Electricity (VET.) and Government Decree 273/2007 (X. 19.) on the implementation of certain provisions of Act LXXXVI of 2007 on Electricity contain detailed rules on the consumers to be protected. According to Article 3.66 of the Act LXXXVI on Electricity (2007), the consumers to be protected are 'domestic consumers who (on the basis of their social situation or other characteristics as defined by law) may participate in the supply of electricity under special conditions.'

According to Article 64(1) of Act LXXXVI of 2007 on the Electricity, eligible customers may benefit from the benefits granted by the electricity trader and the distribution system licensee as socially deprived or disabled customers, as specified in a separate legal act.

One can apply to be included in the register of consumers to be protected as a socially deprived consumer (e.g. someone who receives regular child protection benefit, child care allowance or foster care) and/or as a consumer with a disability. The licensee keeps a register of consumers to be protected in its area of operation, according to the type of benefit the consumer is entitled to - so socially deprived consumers can apply for instalment payments, deferred payment or prepayment meters. Customers with disability shall be given special treatment in accordance with their needs in particular regarding metering, reading, billing and payment methods - thus, for example, they can request monthly meter readings at the point of use or request a metering point design different from the standard one.

MVM Next Energy Private Limited Company The table below, transmitted by the operator, contains monthly data for the number of customers registered in 2023 (November and December figures are not yet included). Besides the total universal gas and electricity contracts, the table also includes the numbers of the former ELMŰ-ÉMÁSZ (now MVM Next) and E.ON.

2023 - Védendő ügyfelek száma (db)												
GSZ ESZ	Január	Február	Március	Április	Május	Június	Július	Augusztus	Szeptember	Október	November	December
Szociálisan védett fogyasztó	6 812	7 175	7 231	6 788	6 951	6 973	6 871	6 806	5 987	6 144		
Fogyatékkal élő fogyasztó	598	609	606	540	568	571	574	578	578	578		
Szociálisan védett és fogyatékkal élők	10	10	6	6	7	7	6	6	5	7		
<b>összes védendő:</b>	<b>7 420</b>	<b>7 794</b>	<b>7 843</b>	<b>7 334</b>	<b>7 526</b>	<b>7 551</b>	<b>7 451</b>	<b>7 390</b>	<b>6 570</b>	<b>6 729</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

  

ASZ ESZ	Január	Február	Március	Április	Május	Június	Július	Augusztus	Szeptember	Október	November	December
Szociálisan védett fogyasztó	1 753	1 804	1 810	1 456	1 519	1 571	1 560	1 542	1 395	1 413		
Fogyatékkal élő fogyasztó	306	305	302	278	282	279	278	277	278	274		
Szociálisan védett és fogyatékkal élők	5	6	11	5	4	9	7	7	7	7		
<b>összes védendő:</b>	<b>2 064</b>	<b>2 115</b>	<b>2 123</b>	<b>1 739</b>	<b>1 805</b>	<b>1 859</b>	<b>1 845</b>	<b>1 826</b>	<b>1 680</b>	<b>1 694</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

  

EE	Január	Február	Március	Április	Május	Június	Július	Augusztus	Szeptember	Október	November	December
Szociálisan védett fogyasztó	6 050	6 196	6 055	6 137	6 215	6 212	6 147	5 739	5 718	5 705		
Fogyatékkal élő fogyasztó	826	828	787	791	791	796	800	792	792	794		
Szociálisan védett és fogyatékkal élők	53	53	49	48	48	48	49	50	50	50		
<b>összes védendő:</b>	<b>6 929</b>	<b>7 077</b>	<b>6 891</b>	<b>6 976</b>	<b>7 054</b>	<b>7 056</b>	<b>6 996</b>	<b>6 581</b>	<b>6 560</b>	<b>6 549</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

  

EON	Január	Február	Március	Április	Május	Június	Július	Augusztus	Szeptember	Október	November	December
Szociálisan védett fogyasztó	6 606	6 682	6 584	5 878	5 939	5 924	5 844	5 652	4 393	3 990		
Fogyatékkal élő fogyasztó	497	502	512	449	450	449	446	448	452	453		
Szociálisan védett és fogyatékkal élők	14	14	12	8	10	11	11	10	10	9		
<b>összes védendő:</b>	<b>7 117</b>	<b>7 198</b>	<b>7 108</b>	<b>6 335</b>	<b>6 399</b>	<b>6 384</b>	<b>6 301</b>	<b>6 110</b>	<b>4 855</b>	<b>4 452</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Linked to the complex measures for the implementation of the Council Recommendation paragraphs 7-10. and the Action Plan page 75, point 1):**

**Children in the most deprived settlements**

The **Emerging Settlements long-term programme**, started in 2019, is a complex programme of social inclusion, which aims to help the 300 most disadvantaged settlements in Hungary to catch up. Involvement of settlements has been gradual, with 178 settlements having joined the programme by the end of 2023. From 2022-23, the programme is financed by EU funds (RRF, HRDOP).

The interventions of the programme are defined by the implementing organisations on the basis of the local diagnosis, which includes, but is not limited to, the following means:

- a) means to increase children's opportunities (early childhood development, family mentoring, music and sports programmes, drug prevention),
- b) family-focused means: infrastructure (improving housing conditions, running a social housing agency, installing solar power plants - the profits from which are used to heat families in need through subsidised prepayment metering),

**a) Means to increase children's opportunities**

The Emerging Settlements' direct target group is children aged 0-14 living in the most disadvantaged settlements of the programme, their families, and professionals working with the families, while the indirect target group is the entire population of the Emerging

Settlements programme. One of the main focuses of the programme is the programme element focusing on 0-3 year olds (the first 1000 days of their lives), a system of means, the main aim of which is to provide intensive social monitoring of early childhood and give complex support for children's opportunities.

Elements of the means:

- Complex social and in-kind support during pregnancy, birth, and early childhood: reducing the risk factors associated with having children by providing in-kind support. Individual support: baby kit (4200 pieces); maternity kit (1730 pieces); 'Mocorgó' home play set (3 for 3 age groups 3 830 pieces); prenatal vitamin (5020 pieces), vitamin packs for young children (10 330 pieces), home first aid kit (3847 pieces)

Accessible tools for the community to use at the 'Presence Point': sewing machine, steriliser, diapers, pads, lice repellent, first aid kit; and the Presence Point also has a play- and development room for young children.

- Establishing an early childhood support network, employing a local helper/assistant to reach and provide ongoing care for all disadvantaged families in the settlement, all new-borns and children aged 0-3 years, and to provide complex social support based on the present. By the end of 2023, the programme, by means of its staff, had contributed to improving the growth, development, and care of 9,600 children under the age of 3.

#### **b) Family-focused means**

In the project 'Renewable energy production and use in disadvantaged settlements', at least 25 000 kWp of renewable energy generating power plant capacity will be established by the end of 2025, supporting the heating of at least 5 000 disadvantaged families selected through tenders. By the end of 2023, 20 solar power plants were under construction by the end of 2023 and the grid connection and commissioning of the 12 500 kWp of capacity committed is expected in June 2024

This element that supports children indirectly through families and improves housing conditions is also part of the Emerging Settlements programme. Families with young children have often been in crisis situations because heavy rainfall has weakened the already damaged and structurally weak buildings due to defective roofs and tiles, posing a serious risk to the safety of the family.

- Ensuring the technical safety of living conditions, in other words, preventing hazard to life. There has been 720 cases of intervention: defective roof construction, collapsed chimney, missing rain gutter, cracked adobe masonry, cracked or completely missing foundation, defective or missing doors and windows.

- To ensure a healthier living environment, the important tasks were disinfection, litter picking, preventing the re-production of household waste, and keeping the indoor and outdoor environment clean.

- Rodent infestation is also a major problem in the settlements covered by the programme, which is difficult to tackle because in most cases it is also linked to illegal dumping. It is important both to improve the environment for people living in these settlements and to eliminate factors that threaten their health. The number of rodent exterminations carried out



in the settlements reached 8 886, while insect exterminations were carried out 544 times.  
- To prevent a winter crisis, families with young children should have at least one heated room in their homes. In 2023, 1770 stove were purchased in 177 municipalities.

#### 4. INDICATORS, TARGETS AND MONITORING

Indicative length: 2 to 4 pages

Those Member States, which have included in their action plans quantitative or qualitative targets to be achieved in the course of implementation of the ECG Recommendation, should report in this section on the recorded changes. Remaining Member States are invited to set their targets as per the § 11 (c) ii.

References to the EU [benchmarking framework on childcare and support to children](#) and the EU monitoring framework for European Child Guarantee can be made in this section.

In addition, the state of play on the national monitoring framework should be described – whether some further work is still expected and in which areas (gaps identification).

When relevant, the additional targets that could be set as regards roll-out of services covered by the ECG Recommendation can be listed in this section.

**Government Decision Annex 1 – Measure 3: A system of indicators suitable for monitoring must be developed in conjunction with the indicator system of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy 2030, taking into account the indicators included in the Action Plan. – deadline: 31December 2023**

**Linked to point 11(c)( V) of the Council Recommendation and Chapter V on page 78 of the Action Plan, and in response to the letter of observations of the European Commission:**

The Council Recommendation is part of the Action Plan of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Council Recommendation contributes to the implementation of Principle 11 of the Social Pillar on childcare and support for children, a key element of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2021) and complements the Council Recommendation on Investing in children (2013). Its aim is to fight social exclusion by guaranteeing children in need (according to the Recommendation, it means children between the age of 0-17 at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE)) access to basic public services. The specific target groups of the Recommendation within the most deprived persons are:

- children who are homeless or in severe housing deprivation
- children with disabilities
- children with mental health problems
- children with immigrant parents or of ethnic origin, especially Roma children
- children in alternative care, especially in institutional care
- children in precarious family situations.

The first version of the monitoring framework for the Council Recommendation on the

European Child Guarantee was approved by the Social Protection Committee (SPC) in November 2023 and can now be used for the national reports for spring 2024. The EU monitoring framework is far from complete, many areas are only partially covered by EU indicators, in many cases national indicators are not available, and not all relevant EU indicators have the same level of comparability and reliability. In some cases, due to small sample sizes, data are missing for some Member States or confidence intervals are larger than usual. The framework also uses data collected from sources outside the European Statistical System, which meet different standards and are of limited comparability. An important consideration was the inclusion of child-specific indicators as opposed to household indicators, which are calculated for the total population and also separately for the AROPE population. The EU monitoring framework, like the national framework that uses it, is a living and evolving (working) material.

The monitoring framework below, which aims to monitor the implementation of the Hungarian National Action Plan, is primarily based on the EU framework, but also includes national indicators, which are reflected in (but not taken over from) the social inclusion indicator framework and the National Action Plan. A smaller number of indicators are outcome indicators with normative value, while a larger number are context indicators specific to the area. The structure of the set monitoring framework follows the structure of the EU framework: the first part is to monitor the number of children in need identified as the target groups of the Recommendation, while the six other parts monitor their free and effective access to these services.

## **MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION IN SUMMARISED FORM**

### Target groups

1. AROPE children
2. Children with disabilities
3. Children from ethnic, Roma, or immigrant background
4. Children in precarious family situations who:
  - a. live in a single-parent household
  - b. live with a parent with a disability
  - c. live in a household where mental health problems or persistent illness are present
  - d. live in a household where there is substance abuse or domestic violence
  - e. are abandoned children
  - f. are children of teenage mothers or teenage mothers themselves
  - g. have a parent in prison
5. Children who are homeless or living in severely inadequate housing conditions
6. Children with mental health problems
7. Children in alternative (institutional) care

### Theme areas

1. Size of the target group
2. Access to early childhood education and care (ECEC)
3. Access to education
4. Access to healthy food on school days

5. Access to adequate healthcare
6. Access to healthy nutrition
7. Decent housing

In addition to the indicators included in the EU monitoring framework (indicated by a two-digit code), the monitoring framework includes a separate subset of national indicators proposed by the Commission (indicated by a three-digit code), and in **bold** the national indicators from the National Action Plan and other sources and their current values. Besides the indicators, their source, possible context and, in many cases, although unfortunately not yet consistently, the Eurostat code are given in brackets for easy retrieval.

## INDICATORS IN DETAIL

### 1. Size of the target group

- 1.1 Number and proportion of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) (Eurostat ILC\_PEPS01N), rates by poverty dimension
- 1.2 Child poverty gap (Eurostat)
- 1.3 Children living in a single-parent household (Eurostat)
- 1.4 AROPE Children living in a single-parent household (Eurostat calculation)
- 1.5 Number of children from immigrant background (Eurostat, context)
- 1.6 Proportion of AROPE children from immigrant background (Eurostat calculation)
- 1.7 AROPE children living with a disabled parent (Eurostat calculation)
- 1.8 Proportion of children aged 0-15 years with health-related barriers (Eurostat ILC\_HCH13; context)
- 1.9 Proportion of children living in alternative care according to type of care at a given point in time; proportion of children living in residential care as a percentage of children living in alternative care (Datacare)
- 1.10 National indicators
  - 1.11.1. Proportion of Roma children at risk of poverty, living in quasi-unemployed families and Roma children living in severe material and social deprivation (HCSO Household Budget Survey).**
  - 1.11.2. Persistent income poverty rate among 0-17 year olds (HCSO and Eurostat, although not robust/applicable for all Member States)
  - 1.11.3. Level of social benefits for families within social protection compared to the EU average, PPS per capita (HCSO, but only available until 2019)
  - 1.11.4. Index of the real value of childcare subsidies (HCSO calculation)
  - 1.11.5. Number of disadvantaged children (Regular child protection benefit - only for under-25s; HCSO)**
  - 1.11.6. Number of families and children living in temporary care homes (2319 parents and 4116 children in 2021, 96 parents and 147 children in out-of-home care; 89 parents and 559 children in temporary care homes; Hungarian State Treasury; context).**
  - 1.11.7. Percentage of children in foster care, including children under 12 (in 2021, 69.1% of 23 327 children and young adults were in foster care; of these, the percentage for children under 12 was 87.4%; HCSO).**

**1.11.8. Percentage of children with disabilities and long-term illness in foster care (61.2% in 2021; HCSO).**

1.11.9. Proportion of children with disabilities among children with special needs placed in specialised care (HCSO)

**1.11.10. Adoption data (HCSO; context).**

1.11.11. Percentage of children living in social and material deprivation ((HCSO)

1.11.12. Proportion of families with children living in social and material deprivation (which is the Hungarian national poverty target for the Social Pillar Action Plan 2030; Eurostat and HCSO)

## **INDICATORS BY THEME AREAS**

### **2. Access to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)**

2.1. Participation of AROPE children in ECEC (0-2 years-old, from the age of 3 to start of school; by intensity of care; Eurostat)

2.2. Age from which publicly funded ECEC is available (Eurydice)

2.3. The cost of childcare for low-income households as a share of average wages (from OECD taxes and benefits database, context)

2.4. Public expenditure on ECEC as % of GDP and per child (Eurostat EDUC\_UOE\_FINE09, context)

2.5. National indicators:

2.5.1 **Ratio of total number of 0-2 years-olds and 1-2 years-olds to the number of places in nursery care** (HCSO- Hungarian State Treasury context)

2.5.2 Share of children aged 3-5 attending kindergarten (HCSO)

2.5.3 Occupancy rate of kindergarten places (HCSO)

2.5.4 Proportion of disadvantaged or multiply disadvantaged children in nursery care, including the proportion of children in child protection (HCSO, context)

2.5.5 Number of Sure Start Children's Centres (Ministry of Interior)

2.5.6 Number of children aged 0-3 in regular care in Sure Start Children's Centres (HCSO, context)

2.5.7 Proportion of children of pre-school age of special educational needs not attending kindergarten (which is compulsory), examined by expert committees due to the assessment and review (HCSO)

2.5.8 Number and proportion of children receiving special educational counselling, early development and care (1<sup>st</sup> October 2021: 5232; KIRSTAT Public Education Information System, context)

2.5.9 Participation of children living in institutions in ECEC (Hungarian State Treasury, context)

2.5.10 **Number and proportion of children with special educational needs and children eligible for early intervention in nursery care (869 in 2021, 3.2% of all enrolled children; HCSO, context). AROPE children made up 2.6% of all enrolled children in 2021.**

### 3. Access to education

- 2.1. Percentage of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science (PISA), by socio-economic status (+ gap)
- 2.2. AROPE children for whom high costs, as self-reported, are a major barrier to participation in formal education (+ gap, Eurostat).
- 2.3. Percentage of children who cannot afford to participate in extra-cost school programmes and excursions for financial reasons (Eurostat).
- 2.4. Early school leaving rates by age, sex and educational attainment of parents (+ gap, Eurostat, context).
- 2.5. Number of pupils per teacher by socio-economic profile of schools (+ gap, PISA/OECD, context).
- 2.6. General government expenditure on education per pupil by level of education (primary and secondary education; Eurostat, context).
- 2.7. National indicators:
  - 2.7.1. Proportion of disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged children and pupils (up to 18 years of compulsory education) by gender (up to the end of compulsory education or up to the end of upper secondary education; Educational Authority, HCSO, and National Office for Vocational and Adult Education, context).
  - 2.7.2. Number of pupils attending *Tanodas* (Educational Authority, Ministry of Interior; context)
  - 2.7.3. Rate of Roma and Non-Roma children aged 15-24 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (+gap, Labour Force Survey)
  - 2.7.4. **Number of children and pupils with special educational needs in public education and vocational education and training institutions, number and proportion of integrated education institutions (on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021, 83 472 children with special educational needs were registered in public education, the rate of integrated care was 67%; in October 2021, 4312 institutions cared for children with special educational needs (80%), and 96% provided inclusive education; in the school year 2021/2022, 16 393 pupils with special educational needs attended vocational education and training institutions) (Educational Authority and National Office for Vocational and Adult Education, context).**
  - 2.7.5. Proportion of pupils with special educational needs in full-time education in grades 1-8 (from age 6 to 14) (1 October 2021: 58311; Educational Authority, context)
  - 2.7.6. Proportion of Roma students aged 15-24 in secondary and higher education (+ gap; Labour Force Survey)
  - 2.7.7. **Education of immigrant children: in September 2022, the education of 4,000 Ukrainian pupils started in public education. About 40 Ukrainian refugee students are enrolled in vocational education and training) (Educational Authority, Ministry of Interior, context).**

### 4. Access to healthy food on school days

- 4.1. Percentage of households where children cannot afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day (+ gap; Eurostat)
- 4.2. National indicators:

- 4.2.1. **Percentage of persons with a long-term illness or disability receiving meals for children provided by an institution or living in a family with a child with the aforementioned conditions. Including the proportion of those who are entitled to free meals because of their financial situation. (The former accounted for 7.5% of free meals in 2021 (HCSO, context.) In 2021, 63% of children enrolled in nurseries received free meals from an institution.**
- 4.2.2. Number and proportion of schools and children receiving free meals provided by an institution (Educational Authority, National Office for Vocational and Adult Education, HCSO; context)
- 4.2.3. Number of schools and children participating in school milk, school fruit and school vegetable schemes (Ministry of Agriculture)
- 4.2.4. Percentage of children receiving free meals provided by an institution by age group (based on an updated version of the child-specific deprivation indicator) (Eurostat calculation)

## 5. Access to adequate healthcare

- 5.1. AROPE children in ‘very good’ subjective health (Eurostat)
- 5.2. AROPE children with unmet health service needs (Eurostat calculation)
- 5.3. National indicators:
  - 5.3.1. Free/ fully funded access to regular health check-ups for all children and those from low-income families by age group (European Social Policy Analysis Network (ESPAN)).
  - 5.3.2. Access to regular health screening for all children and those from low-income families (ESPAN)
  - 5.3.3. Infant and child mortality (1-14 years), vaccination coverage (Eurostat and Health Behaviour of School Aged Children (HBSC), context)
  - 5.3.4. Perinatal mortality (HCSO)
  - 5.3.5. Number of Health Promotion Offices (HPO)(2024: 106, objective: national coverage)
  - 5.3.6. HPOs with mental health promotion function (2024: 71, objective: national coverage)
  - 5.3.7. Proportion of children born with low birth weight (HCSO, context)
  - 5.3.8. Underage pregnancy rate (HCSO)
  - 5.3.9. Percentage of children aged 11, 13, and 15 who feel depressed every week (HBSC, context)
  - 5.3.10. **According to a 2018 survey, teenagers’ subjective health has deteriorated compared to 2014: ¼ do not consider their health to be good, 3/10 report mood/depressive problems, 1/8 smoke cigarettes at least weekly, 4/10 have consumed alcohol in the past month, and ¼ have tried drugs. Among 16 year olds, the use of illicit drugs increased to 19.9% from 1995-2011, then decreased to 13.9% in 2019, below the EU average (HBSC quadrennial survey).**
  - 5.3.11. Smoking and alcohol consumption among the population aged 15-17 years (proportion of daily smokers and heavy drinkers; indicators

3.3.g and 3.3.f of the social inclusion indicator framework, only available every 5 years)

- 5.3.12. Amount of workload of paediatricians, 1 child per general paediatrician (HCSO, context)
- 5.3.13. Vacancy rate for district nurses (National Health Insurance Fund of Hungary)
- 5.3.14. **In Hungary in 2016, the lifetime prevalence of gambling use among students in grades 7-14 (age 13-20) was 58%, of which 9.6% had a minor problem, 5.9% a medium problem and 2.1% a major problem (Paksi-Magi-Demetrovics 2016; the indicator is to be crossed out in the absence of further research).**
- 5.3.15. **Number of suicides among 0-18 year olds in 2018: 20. From 2010 to 2019, approximately 1500 suicide attempts under 18 years of age were committed each year (National Health Insurance Fund of Hungary and Public Health Analysis Centre Information System).**

## **6. Access to healthy food**

- 6.1. Percentage of households where children cannot afford a meal with meat, chicken, fish (or vegetarian equivalent) every second day (+ gap; Eurostat)
- 6.2. Proportion of 11, 13 and 15 year old children who eat breakfast every day by gender and family background (HBSC, context)
- 6.3. Proportion of overweight or obese children aged 11, 13 and 15 by gender and family background (HBSC, context)
- 6.4. National indicator:
  - 6.4.1. Number of children benefiting from child catering during school holidays (Ministry of Finance, context)

## **7. Adequate housing**

- 7.1. Percentage of AROPE children living in households with excess housing costs (Eurostat)
- 7.2. Percentage of AROPE children living in severe housing deprivation conditions (Eurostat)
- 7.3. AROPE children living in overcrowded households (+ gap, Eurostat)
- 7.4. Percentage of AROPE children deprived of an accommodation with appropriate heating (Eurostat)
- 7.5. National indicators:
  - 7.5.1. Number of children benefiting from child catering during school holidays (Ministry of Finance, context)
  - 7.5.2. Percentage of families with children unable to pay their utility bills (Eurostat, HCSO)
  - 7.5.3. Number of settlements participating in the Emerging Settlements programme (Ministry of Interior, context)

The National Action Plan may include **additional objectives**:

As envisaged in connection with **point 7. f) of the Council Recommendation**, it is estimated that the number of children receiving free meals provided by institutions could be increased by about 80,000 children by introducing the benefit scheme to primary school pupils, already set in motion for nurseries and kindergartens.

**The measure envisaged in connection with point 9. a) of the Council Recommendation**, the extension of the eligibility for free meals during the school holidays for children eligible for regular child protection benefit who are not considered to be disadvantaged or multiply disadvantaged, is estimated to increase the number of children entitled free meals during the school holidays by about 100,000, while the number of persons actually using the service could be increased by about 60,000.

## 5. FINANCING

Indicative length: 1 to 3 pages

This section should report on funds that so far have been spent on implementation of ECG, broken down by service. Information on budgeting – i.e. resources assigned to future implementation of ECG action plan – should also be included in this section. While avoiding to duplicate the proper reporting on the use of EU Funds, this section could also provide information on whether and to what extent they have been used for implementation of the ECG.

No specific resource allocation has been made for the implementation of the National Action Plan, and the implementation of individual measures is financed from the national budget or EU funds. The detailed description of the implementation of the measures presented in the report indicates the source and amount of funding for each measure.

### **Child catering (recommendation points 7. f) and 9. a)):**

Year	Central budget support for meals for children provided by institutions (million HUF )	Central budget support for child catering during school holidays (million HUF)	Per capita subsidy for child catering during the summer holidays	Total central budget support (million HUF)
2021	84 228	2 803,2	285 – 570 HUF	87 031,2
2022	98 567,1	2 833,7	285 – 570 HUF	101 400,8
2023	98 752,4	2 768,7	285 – 570 HUF	101 521,1
2024	no data available	no data available	285 – 570 HUF	105 823,4

*Source: Ministry of Finance*



**For the 25% increase in the foster care allowance for foster parents from 1 January 2023, the central budget provided nearly 2.2 billion HUF (2,179.4 million HUF) in built-in funding.**

In the programming period 2021-2027, the social inclusion developments planned under the HRDOP Plus (Priority 3) will contribute a total of 22.55% of the ESF Plus resources to the European Children's Guarantee. The percentage contribution rates for the measures concerned:

**Reducing poverty among families with children and creating educational opportunities:**

improvements are designed to enhance children's opportunities and prevent the reoccurrence of deprivation and social disadvantage. Interventions also contribute to the prevention of early school leaving without qualifications and to the development of healthy lifestyles for children and their parents. Measures are taken from the earliest age, by involving the parents, to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds and with socio-cultural disadvantages to catch up. Increasing educational attainment, reducing early school leaving without qualifications, supporting the public education system's capacity to compensate for disadvantages, and implementing out-of-school programmes that create opportunities are key to promoting social inclusion. Programmes, reinforcing and building on each other, at all stages of a child's life give children from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to catch up and lead to a better quality of life.

- integrated children's programmes in each district: 90%
- the creation of new Sure Start Children's Centres to support early childhood inclusion: 100%
- continuing kindergarten of opportunities programmes: 100%
- creation of new *Tanodas* to enhance children's opportunities of getting in higher learning: 100%
- reduction of school drop-out rate of Roma girls without qualifications: 100%
- prevention programmes in dormitory settings: 100%
- further development of inclusive community service spaces to provide services based on a common professional approach: 60%

88% of the ESF Plus funds allocated to the Reducing Poverty for Families with Children measure and the Education Opportunities measure contribute to the European Children's Guarantee.

**Improving the situation of people living in segregated situations through complex programmes:** developments aiming at the social integration of people living in colony-like conditions and at the elimination of peripheral situations.

10% of the ESF Plus funding allocated to the measure improving the situation of people living in segregated conditions through complex programmes contribute to the European Children's Guarantee. The measure is linked to the 4.5 so-called thematic enabling condition of the National Strategic Policy Framework for Roma Inclusion, which has not yet been adopted by the European Commission.

In the programming period 2021-2027, the social developments planned under the HRDOP Plus (Priority 4) may contribute a total of 23.79% to the overall ESF Plus resources to the European Children's Guarantee in the future.

Due to obstacles to the adoption of horizontal eligibility criteria, the start of the programme with EU funding is uncertain.

## **6. LESSONS LEARNED AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT**

Indicative length: 2 to 6 pages

Drawing from Sections 2 and 3 (“Target group” and “Roll-out of services”), the final section should summarize information on the remaining gaps, i.e. the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion who still do not have effective and free access to the services covered by the ECG Recommendation.

Possibilities for further development in terms of implementing the ECG recommendation should be investigated, also drawing from Commission’s observations to the action plan.

Given that the implementation of the National Action Plan is currently at an initial stage and the actions to be financed by EU funds have mostly not yet been launched, it is not possible to establish the exact number of children covered by the National Action Plan at this stage of its implementation.

No other deficiencies have been identified so far.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

This final section should summarize the main findings of the report and provide an overall assessment of how the ECG Recommendation has been implemented in the reporting Member State during the reporting period.

Examples of good practice should be briefly listed in this section, with view to possible sharing with other Member States and other stakeholders.

In the period since the submission of the National Action Plan, the implementation of the 13 actions set out in the Government Decision has mostly started. The implementation of measures 1-3 were completed by the deadline set in the Government Decision (31 December 2023), further 10 actions are being implemented according to schedule, while some are yet to be launched due to a lack of EU funding. The state of implementation has been reported in detail under each measure.

The status of actions already implemented or planned under Chapter IV of the National Action Plan has also been reported in detail.

The main conclusions from the report are the following:

## **Healthcare**

In cooperation with the sectors concerned, a number of efforts have been made during the period under review to focus on ‘health as of value’ from an early age and to give greater emphasis to a preventive approach. Health promotion is an important area for all these efforts, and the organisational depository for this is the national health promotion network. To fully meet the national objectives, efforts should be made to expand the existing network into a national health promotion network. In order to implement the tasks set out in the Government Decision, the legal status of the health promotion offices needs to be clarified; this can provide the basis for the organisational, operational and professional methodological changes that are needed. Thus, the network of health promotion offices will open up throughout the country, and the creation of mental health promotion function will be established and available in the whole country, which is currently not operational in all health promotion offices, to support the three main areas of mental health promotion for children: destigmatisation, stress management, and depression-suicide prevention.

In 2020 and 2023, the State Secretariat for Health has reinforced the importance of maintaining and improving children's physical and mental health in several areas. In close cooperation with the State Secretariat for Public Education, they have launched a complex prevention programme in the school setting, called ‘School Programme for the Promotion of Comprehensive Health Promotion, Mental Health Promotion and the Reduction of Addictions’. In cooperation with the public health profession, a health promotion module for the subject on social education was also developed.

During the period under review, the government has been supporting the reduction of substance abuse in segregated areas through a special programme, linked to the Emerging Settlements programme. Under this programme, addiction counsellors directly assist in the prevention and treatment of addiction-related problems, and support the work of local social workers through training programmes and personal presence. Following the training, specific and targeted professional assistance (prevention and intervention) tailored to the addiction problems encountered locally could be provided. The implementation of the specialised care programme for children serves the purpose of delegating addiction specialists to eight child protection institutions to assist colleagues, in person, providing specialised care in the institutions in the prevention and treatment of addiction phenomena, alleviating the treated children's addiction-related problems, and increasing health awareness.

In recent years, there have also been a number of measures to reduce smoking, which also protect young people and non-smokers. The direct and indirect advertising and free distribution of tobacco products is prohibited. Smoking and the use of e-cigarettes is prohibited in enclosed public places and public institutions. Uniform packaging of tobacco products will be introduced from 1 January 2022. Menthol as an additive added for any purpose in cigarettes and cigarette tobacco has been banned from 26 January 2022. In order to improve the population's health, it is important to reduce the consumption of tobacco products and the regular use of other nicotine-containing products for pleasure (e.g. nicotine sachets), the use of which can be life-threatening. Therefore, legislation has been developed

on ingredients, maximum nicotine limits, additives, packaging, information on harmful effects, mandatory use of child-resistant locks, and strict regulation of the ingredients of herbal medicinal products for smoking.

With 12 mobile clinics and so-called 'Health Points' in Emerging Settlements, a pilot programme is implemented with the primary aim of providing a new type of innovative telemedicine healthcare services in the region. In this setting, the essential goal of child care is carrying out preventive examinations and providing on-site care for common acute childhood illnesses. Parents' education on children's health is a priority, through subject-specific information materials, lectures, and practical training (e.g. infant and new-born care). The 'Paediatric Eye Screening Programme' launched in 2018 has provided an opportunity for the past two years to ensure that children living in Hungary's Emerging Settlements also have timely access to appropriate paediatric eye care, including prescription of glasses, various vision therapies (e.g. eye patching), periodic check-ups, and, if necessary, further ophthalmological examination or surgery.

The National Institute of Food and Drug Administration (succeeded by the National Centre for Public Health and Pharmacy (NCPHP)) has produced a recommendation to make school cafeterias healthier, which is available here:

[https://ogyei.gov.hu/dynamic/Segedlet\\_az\\_iskolabufek\\_arukinalatanak\\_kialakitasahoz\\_20221104%20v05.pdf](https://ogyei.gov.hu/dynamic/Segedlet_az_iskolabufek_arukinalatanak_kialakitasahoz_20221104%20v05.pdf).

Following the successful model programme of the National Institute of Food and Nutrition Sciences (succeeded by the National Centre for Public Health and Pharmacy (NCPHP)) to promote drinking water (Hungarian Aqua Promoting Programme in the Young), carried out in 2007, and following its track, since 2010 the HAPPY week has been announced annually on 22 March in each year, in connection with the World Water Day, which the schools and kindergartens participating in the programme realise independently, using programme elements and support materials provided by the NCPHP. Through the programme, more and more young people are learning through games the skills that can help to reduce the propagation of childhood obesity in the long term by changing their drinking habits and replacing sugary drinks with drinking water.

### **Early childhood education and care**

We have introduced a number of positive measures to simplify the adoption process - in line with the Council Recommendation - so that adoptable children can be placed in loving families as soon as possible, and couples who are waiting to adopt or single adopters can become parents.

In our view, the national measures in force on day-care for children under 3 are in line with the Council Recommendation: access to nursery for AROPE children is adequately ensured, including the possibility of voluntary enrolment.

### **Public education**

In the period covered by the report, nearly 70% of children and students with special educational needs are already receiving inclusive public education services. With the expansion of inclusive education, the number of special education institutions has decreased significantly, while the number of co-educational institutions - and thus the total number and

proportion of institutions for children and students with special educational needs are steadily increasing. The number of children who can be looked after by the system has been steadily increasing since the restructuring of the specialised educational services supporting schools and parents' efforts in 2013. It is important to stress that it is not the number of children in need of care that has risen, but the number of children receiving the care they need. The detection of care demands had been done before, it was the actual care that encountered obstacles. The steady improvement in care is the result of professional developments, standardised professional protocols, a unified institutional structure and an increase in the number of staff. From September 2022, there are already 10 universities offering special education teacher training, and Semmelweis University's András Pető Faculty offers neurophysiologist training, and special needs education and neurophysiologist pedagogy now have their own Master's degree programmes.

Supporting school success and access to quality and inclusive education for disadvantaged groups of learners, as outlined in the Action Plan, inclusive education is aimed at the implementation of the priority objectives of the public education strategy 2021-2030 prepared for the European Union, while at the same time aligning with the objectives of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy 2030. The implementation of the measures is continuous, the interventions contribute to the growth of knowledge, skills, and competences of pupils as a result of the knowledge and experience acquired in the public education system (increase in pedagogical added value). Institutional-level improvements are expected to result in better student achievement, taking into account the significant impact of the socio-economic environment of the school on students' performance. The aim is still to ensure that these interventions have a positive impact on the performance of public education institutions, reduce disparities between schools and prevent early school leaving.

Of the measures undertaken by the public education sector, those aimed at improving digital education have made the most progress. The electronic notebooks distributed to disadvantaged pupils will greatly help them to develop their IT skills, and thus catch up. public education strategy 2021-2030 for the European Union, as amended in 2023 measures on reducing underachievement and early school leaving, reducing the risk of segregation have been highlighted in the chapter on opportunities, inclusion and inclusion. In order to reduce segregation risks, the measures included the need for monitoring activities in school districts following the institutional restructuring, and the need for an impact assessment prior to the restructuring of schools, which also addresses segregation risks, and the introduction of legislation. Additional measures to reduce the risk of school segregation have been added to the Public Education Strategy.

Due to obstacles to the adoption of horizontal eligibility criteria, the start-up of the three actions planned to be launched under the HRDOP Plus in 2021-2023 with the necessary EU funding is uncertain. Two of these would target public education establishments and pupils in disadvantaged areas, and one would focus on teacher training, which would also have an impact on this target group.

## **Vocational education**

In Hungary, participation in vocational education and training is multiply subsidised and there are no barriers to access, as the state provides state-subsidised access to two professions and one qualification for everyone. Moreover, a general scholarship has been introduced in

vocational education and training. In addition, the Apáczai Scholarship Programme has been introduced as a means-tested and merit-based scholarship to help disadvantaged but talented students to stay in education. This is extremely important and useful for inclusiveness.

The Hungarian vocational education and training system ranges from inclusion to integrating, excellence, and talent support. The policy objective of Hungarian vocational education is to ensure inclusive education for all. The priority task of vocational education and training is to keep in the education those students and young people who are at risk of dropping out of school without qualifications and to provide them with access to a profession or part of a profession. For this reason, new flexible learning paths have been developed to help them.

### **Higher education**

The higher education strategy has been amended regarding to the support for the participation of disadvantaged students in higher education, with the addition of performance indicators for socially and economically disadvantaged students and their 2021 and 2030 targets. The measures under objective 1.2 "Strengthening the higher education system to ensure opportunities, social advancement and broad access" of the Higher Education Strategy Action Plan 2021-2024 provide time-bound steps for the implementation of the strategic objectives.

### **Energy**

Within the framework of their responsibility for energy policy, the Minister of Energy is essentially engaged in preparatory activities under Government Decree 182/2022 (V. 24.) on the duties and powers of the members of the Government, **after the creation of the legal conditions for being considered as to-be-protected consumers and those applying for the price reduction for large families, the priority remains to maintain the category limits for the discounted gas volume, especially for residential consumers, and to support vulnerable ones.**

### **Establishing a monitoring system**

A monitoring system for the Recommendation was established in Hungary during the reporting period. The indicators included in the indicator framework are those adopted in the EU monitoring framework of the Recommendation on the Rights of the Child, as well as in the national social inclusion indicator framework and the national action plan for the implementation of the Recommendation. At the same time, the identification of deficiencies has started. During implementation, awareness of the Recommendation and thus of the target groups has increased.

### **Good practices**

#### **Child protection specialised care**

A key element of the **foster care employment relationship** introduced in 2014 is that the **remuneration of foster parents is indexed to the minimum wage**. As a result, the minimum wage increase in 2022 will mean an increase of around 19.5% , the minimum wage increase in 2023 will mean an increase of around 16% and the minimum wage increase in

2024 will mean a further increase of around 15% in the remuneration of foster parents. Since 2014, thanks to the indexation of the foster care allowance to the minimum wage, the income of foster parents has increased five to six times, depending on the number of children in their care. In our view, only a few sectors are capable of such a dynamic, yet predictable increase in wages - now it has been going on for ten years - which clearly serves to honour the profession and thus to maintain the quality of foster care and the rights of the children served.

With regard to the care of children in children's homes, as a general rule, the Child Protection Act (1997) aimed at **replacing the overcrowded and outdated children's homes**. According to the regulations, children's home can have up to 48 places while a particular or a special children's home up to 40 places. Thanks to those institution conversions which have been implemented through domestic tenders between 1997 and 2007, and since 2007 EU cohesion funding, there are now only two larger children's homes (with 80 and 56 beds respectively) in the country, but they are housed in the same institution, in smaller, separate buildings on the estate, and can be managed as a group.

In terms of access to education for children in institutional care, a new measure is that from 1 January 2023, the **development of talents and abilities in residential care** will be based on a **methodology** approved by the Minister. The aim of the statutory guidance is to help the children concerned to make career choices and improve their chances in the labour market, effectively supporting the integration of children in special care into the labour market. The measuring tools in the methodology's inventory help to identify the child's abilities that need to be developed, but more importantly the abilities that can help to increase the everyday experience of success, and thus the importance of learning and the benefits of sport and artistic activities. Children's development is enhanced through individualised support. Such care and development, as detailed in the methodology, can also contribute to promoting social integration and inclusiveness. It shows to the child that everyone has their own strengths and potential, regardless of their background or other possible barriers.

To develop skills and talent management, the Ministry of Interior has also launched a **labour market work placement programme** for young people in child protection care, the **Franciska Apponyi Future Workshop Programme**, which aims to provide participants with mentoring and job placement opportunities in companies, ranging from self-awareness training and job attitude building to labour market skills development.