



**20
23**



**Child Participation
Programme -
Summary**

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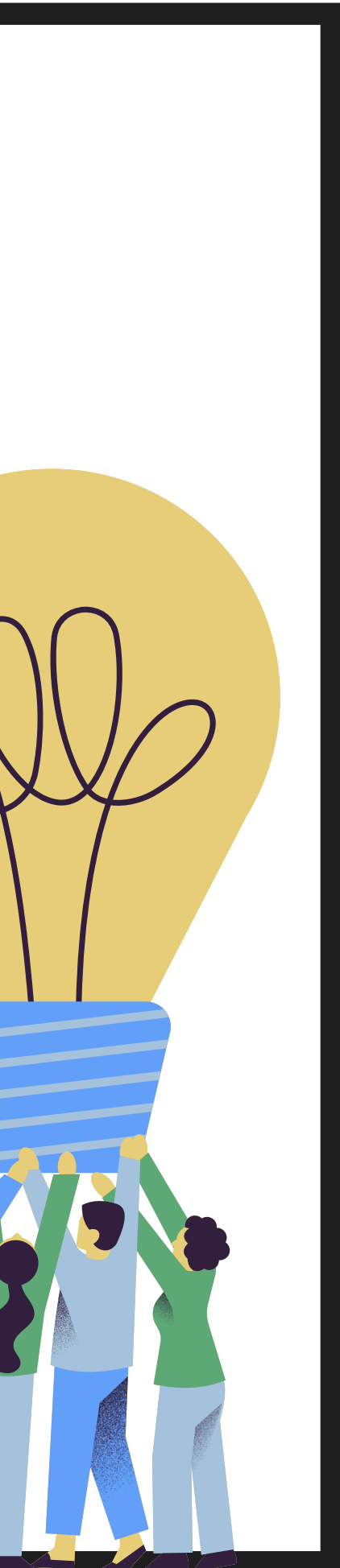
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Introduction

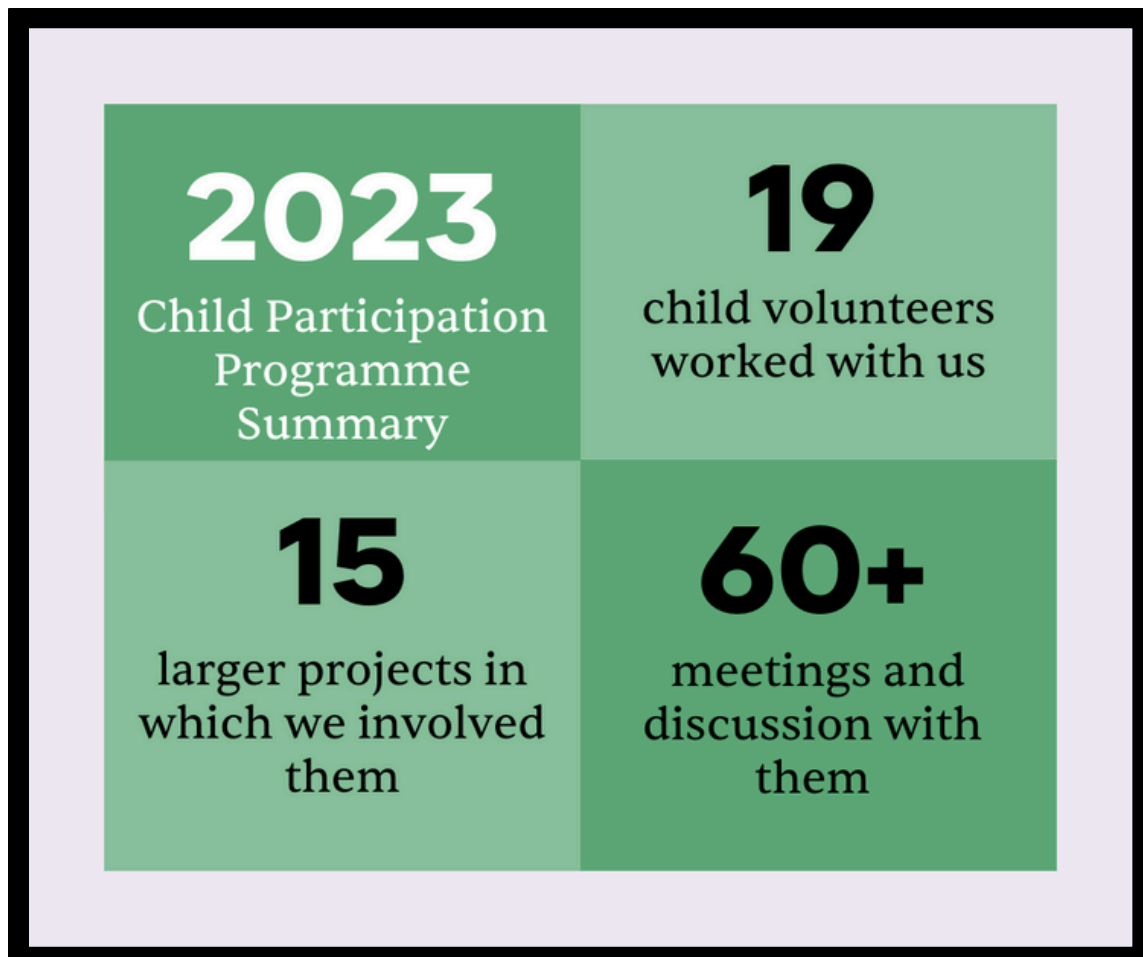
At Hintalovon Foundation we work together with children for child rights. In 2023, we worked with 18 children directly, held more than 60 meetings and discussions with them and involved them in 15 larger projects. We involved the children in different roles, ranging from consultancy to awareness-raising, on the basis of our individually developed methodology. Their participation is regulated in the Child Safeguarding Policy, which we reassess each year. Our aim with the 2023 report on the Child Participation Programme is to provide an overview of our shared work, to highlight the diverse possibilities of child participation and to contribute to the dissemination of good practices and the discussion of methodological dilemmas. We recommend it especially for those, who would like to take the opinion of children into consideration during their work and who find it important to offer them a meaningful role, instead of merely keeping them on display. As it is only worth thinking about children together with children.



How many children did we work with in 2023?

In 2023, we worked with 19 child volunteers in two ways:

- The 16 Kid Colleagues of the Foundation participated in our work in close collaboration, almost as colleagues.
- Three child volunteers joined the Foundation on a project-by-project basis. (As a professional expert of the NEMECSEK Sport Programme, as a member of the editorial staff at the 'Telekom hello parent' platform and one volunteer participated in the 'Child-friendly Media and Commercial' project.)
- In addition, there is a group that observes our work more closely and takes an interest in our child participation programmes and occasional calls.



We held many internal training sessions to assist in the processing and understanding of the issues and to develop knowledge. We took their opinion into consideration in preparing our professional and communication materials, we also supported their own initiatives and individual projects, such as the video on their favourite child rights for International Children’s Rights Day. Moreover, our Kid Colleagues and child volunteers represented the children’s perspective and the importance of child rights in several interviews, articles and at several conferences.

On which issues did we ask the opinion of children working with us?

We asked the children about their opinion and we were curious about their experiences regarding several issues:

choosing a group name		child safeguarding policies
consultations about participation methods		safety of children in sports
online security		demonstrations
school and education		social security
protection against violence		sex education and sexual abuse against children
bullying and abuse		issues researched by international organisations

The largest results of 2023

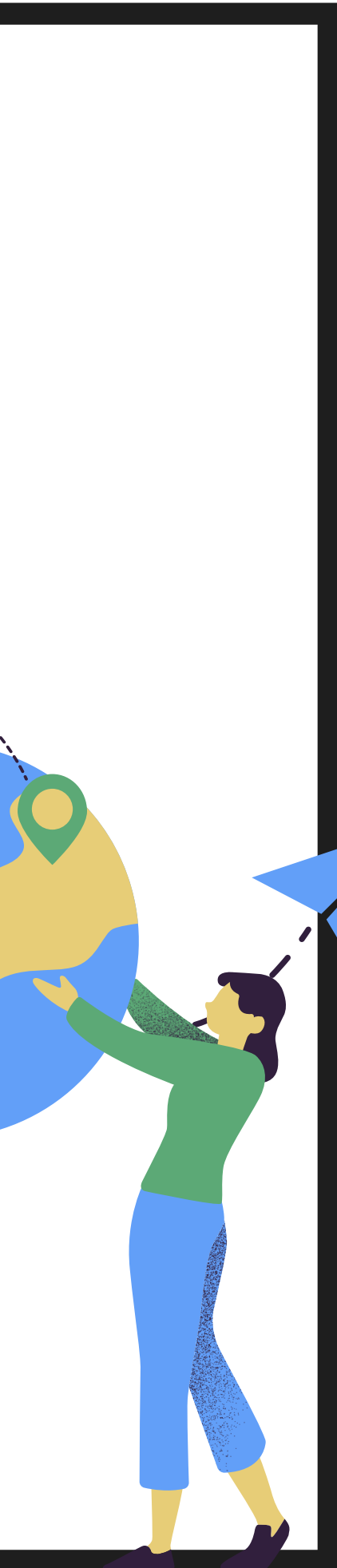
- **Together with the children**, we renamed the team Kid Colleagues, KiCo for short (they were previously called Child Rights Ambassadors).
- We reorganised the structure of our sharedwork.
- Despite the many personal changes, the KiCo team operates with high motivation.
- We met our Kid Colleagues more than 60 times.
- Our Kid Colleagues took part in every activity of the Foundation where we deemed their involvement to be safe and meaningful.
- Our child volunteers represented child rights and reaffirmed the importance of child participation at many national and international forums and conferences.
- The annual report of 2022, which was published in 2023, also contains quotations from our Kid Colleagues, in which they shared their thoughts and experiences regarding the previous year.



What kind of activities did the children participate in?

Through their cooperation with the programmes of the Foundation, they had an essential role in the following projects:

- The children took an active part in the in person training sessions at Hintalovon Academy and in the consultancy work on the case studies of e-learning training sessions.
- The NEMECSEK Programme cooperated with the Kid Colleagues in various ways. Within the framework of a municipal cooperation, they prepared posters for nurseries; they participated in Facebook Lives regarding the topics of bullying and quality time, supported and shared their opinion on the development of the Child Safeguarding Policy, had a role in the preparation of a video course and in a teacher training.
- Every year since 2016, the Foundation has drafted a comprehensive annual report on events, changes in legislation and statistics that have relevance from a child rights perspective. The annual report of 2022, drafted and published in 2023, also included the thoughts and opinions of our Kid Colleagues.
- Our Kid Colleagues shot two videos in the framework of independent projects. They presented how they participate in the work of the Foundation and spoke about their favourite child right.
- With the involvement of our former child and young volunteers, we organised an internal day of career guidance.
- The children took part in the design and preparation of several communication materials (posts, campaigns, articles, videos).



This year the Foundation also received many external requests and invitations. In this context, our Kid Colleagues appeared at many public events and on many platforms, where they could represent their own views.

- They appeared in a Magenta podcast, in which they shared their feelings and experiences on bullying and took the time to think together..
- Our two child volunteers became members of the editorial staff of the Telekom platform Hello Parent.
- A KiCo reported on the child participation activities of the Foundation in an rtl.hu article.
- They presented at the ‘Children in the cyberspace’ conference organised by the National Police Headquarters (ORFK), where they talked about online security and the habits of young people while surfing on the internet.
- One of our Kid Colleagues participated in the conference of the Child Rights NGO Coalition, where he/she spoke to other young volunteers of other organisations about their experiences and child participation.
- Two KiCos shared their experiences on the topics of online security and integrated education at a community meeting in Budaörs.



The Hintalovon Foundation works together with many international organisations and was present at many international events and consultations. Child participation activity is one of the cornerstones of this, therefore our Kid Colleagues appeared at several international forums during the year.

- Within the framework of the ECPAT project, we worked together with our Kid Colleagues on many occasions: we spoke about boundaries, they took part in a Facebook Live on the topic of online security, in a journalist training course and they supported the development of the ECPAT strategy on child participation at a workshop.
- We also participated in UN-initiatives:
 - One of our Kid Colleagues spoke about the issues of social security at an online meeting.
 - Together, we processed the questionnaire of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of child human rights activists.
- One of our Kid Colleagues was a member of the Eurochild Children's Council, as a result he/she travelled to Brussels twice, where each month he/she worked with 10 other children on different tasks of the organisation, including the preparation of a campaign for the European Parliamentary Elections in order to raise awareness of the importance of child rights.
- We shared several international questionnaires within our Holdudvar group.

How did we work together?

With a new structure from autumn

We met with our Kid Colleagues twice a month in the first semester of the year, on a Friday and for a longer time during the day on a weekend. The aims of this new structure, which we introduced in 2022, were:

- to ensure that the children do not have to participate in (project) meetings in addition to their other engagements during the week,
- to enable young people not living in Budapest to participate in the work in person,
- to dedicate the majority of tasks and our shared work to these two days of the month as far as possible.

In parallel to the beginning of the year, a transformation process began within the Child Participation Programme, in response to the experience of the Foundation and its staff with regard to shared work with the children.

The aim was to develop a more direct, 'collaborative' relationship between the KiCos and the Foundation staff, in order that the children do not work separately, but are better integrated into the work processes. In order to facilitate this, we planned to create KiCo teams supporting all the major activities of the Foundation (NEMECSEK Programme, Legal consultancy, Academy, Communication).

All in all, we expected this arrangement to result in more efficient work, genuine child participation of greater quality and increased motivation for both children and adults.

In many ways, the programme faced a new and challenging period at the beginning of the autumn semester. Firstly, during the summer, our two permanent employees who had been working with child participation for a long time left (temporarily), so the shared work with the Kid Colleagues was continued by three new employees (volunteers who joined in the summer of 2022).

The shared work with the children in the new structure began in the autumn semester. The idea was for the entire KiCo team to meet once a month and the small teams, related to the activities of the Foundation, to meet depending on what kind of tasks have to be carried out within the given area, what the needs are for the child participation and what they can participate in well. The Foundation decided to set up four small groups. We planned to create teams supporting the work of NEMECSEK Programme, Hintalovon Academy, Communication and Fundraising, as well as Child Rights Consultancy respectively.

Both children and parents were informed about the new system on several occasions and the first large meeting was dedicated to explaining the new structure, in addition to connecting with each other and planning the semester. We spoke to them about what kind of tasks and projects they can expect in each team, and who they will work with. On this basis and based on their previous experiences at the Foundation and general interests, we asked them to rank which small group or groups they would like to work in. We put the small groups together taking their priorities into account. In the end, each child was put into two groups, so each team was made up of six children.

Joint meetings also have a particularly important role, primarily because of their team-building role, so we met with the entire team every month in the autumn semester. On these occasions, we played, processed the events they experienced (and what happened at events) and worked together on shared projects that affect all children.

The small groups assigned to the activities of the Foundation met with differing regularity. In addition to the KiCos, a mentor and a colleague working in the given field took part in these meetings. The small meetings took place on weekday afternoons, mainly online. There, the children could participate in different roles and activities and they were also given the opportunity to initiate independent projects on topics that were related to the work of the Foundation and that were in line with their individual aims and preferences.



Regularly, in small and large groups, in person and online

We always held the large meetings involving the entire KiCo team in person and made sure that children travelling from afar could also participate. We agreed on the dates of the large meetings with the children at the beginning of the semester and informed the parents about these as well.

For the small meetings that started within the framework of the new structure, we had different solutions for each team. Two groups held regular, pre-scheduled meetings, the third group organised a project meeting, while in the case of the fourth group, there was no project during the semester in which children could be meaningfully involved.

They had different influence on decisions and work processes at different levels and in different roles

The children were able to participate in the individual projects at different levels, where they had differing responsibilities and roles. We consulted them for most of the projects, in some cases we worked together in partnership, in which case they had a deeper influence on the development of the projects. This year there was a (shorter) project where they were in control from the idea of the topic to its execution. In this case, they were the ones that came up with the topic. Of course, this was in consultation with the Foundation staff. In this project (shooting a video about child rights), the children carried out several phases of the work independently, they came up with the topic for shooting the video, wrote the script and created the recording.

In addition to this, we received a large number of invitations to participate in events, especially from autumn, so there was emphasis on preparation for these events as well as on the processing of these events.

How do we assess child participation?

Assessment and monitoring of the substantial, high quality participation

Quantitatively: It is difficult to measure child participation in numbers, since the shared work with the children often has a long-term effect. In 2023, we worked with 19 children directly, involving them in more than 15 different projects at more than 60 meetings.

Qualitatively: During the year, we spoke about the programme several times, about their individual motivation and how we could give more and better feedback that is of a greater quality, and about which types of projects they felt they had the most impact on. At the end of each semester, we asked them about the programme and the shared work in a questionnaire. We also reported back about the answers we received and the lessons learned from them.

Reporting to the NEMECSEK group

Children working with us can report their grievances and concerns to the group responsible for compliance with the Child Safeguarding Policy. In 2023, one report arrived, which the NEMECSEK group investigated in accordance with the Policy.

How the children assessed their participation

The last meeting of each semester is dedicated to closing the semester, looking back and reflecting. This year, together with our Kid Colleagues, we also collected what tasks they took part in and how they felt about them. We talked about why feedback is important and what makes feedback good. At the end of each semester, we ask each child team to fill out a questionnaire, in which they evaluate the programme and their work at the Foundation. They can give feedback on the staff and tasks, and share what they need and what they would like to work on. In addition, at the end of each calendar year, we organise individual discussions where we evaluate the semester with the children in private, we discuss how they are doing, how they felt while working at the Foundation, what they are planning, and what they would like to participate in, in the future.

We find these discussions very important and useful; our aim is to do this at the end of each semester. The questionnaire was filled in by 11 out of 15 children in the spring semester, and by all (11/11) children in the autumn semester. The children evaluated the statements about different aspects of the shared work on a scale of 1 to 5 (1: not at all; 5: completely / very much agree).

- Overall, they evaluated the programme as very good (rated 4.8 on average out of 5). They considered that it contributes to their personal development (4.45/5) and they also felt good in the team. The usefulness of their work at the Foundation was rated 4/5 on average.
- On the basis of the questionnaire and private discussions at the end of the second semester, it became clear that with the introduction of the new system (of small and large group meetings, and as a result of this, there were new group chats and information was coming from several channels), many felt that it was more difficult to follow when and what would happen. In the same way, for some, the basis on which participants would be selected for each project was not clear enough. In both semesters, it was edifying for us that our Kid Colleagues felt that they did not receive enough feedback on their work (3/5).
- The children were satisfied with the shared work with mentors and Foundation staff, they felt that they were treated with respect, that they could express their opinions, even those opinions that went against that of the adults, and that they were sufficiently involved in the decision-making processes. In their opinion, they did not find themselves in an uncomfortable situation in connection with the shared work with adult colleagues.
- With one or two exceptions, they did not feel that participating in the programme required too much of their energy, but some felt that they did not do their best in participating in the work of the team.
- They especially liked the projects where they had greater independence (they made two videos in this way) and the events and public performances where they could directly express their opinions and feel their impact: conferences, round table discussions, community meetings and participation in training sessions.
- Feedback given in private showed that, although they were satisfied with the structure of the longer meetings, they missed the training sessions and longer project from the second semester, where they could get deeply involved in a topic.

Lessons learned

New structure

- During the second semester, we worked with the children in a new structure. While child participation was previously regarded as a separate programme within the Foundation, since autumn the mentors joined the individual programmes in order to directly involve the children in their work with the colleagues working there. Thus, the general calls remained with the colleagues dealing with child participation, while participation in special programmes became a responsibility shared between the colleagues working there.
- The experiences of the semester revealed that the colleagues are often very overburdened and it is difficult for them to adapt to the slower, but sometimes more unpredictable rhythm that is inherent in safe child participation (such as having multiple detailed discussions for projects, risk analysis and the fact that as a volunteer, a child can change their mind at any time regarding their commitment to a particular task).
- By the end of the semester it became clear that the role of the mentors is more like a bridge between the programmes and the children as opposed to mere supporters of cooperation. The meetings that were led by the mentors and in which other adult colleagues participated on a case-by-case basis worked better.
- A huge advantage of this structure, however, is that the individual mentors have a better understanding of how the programmes work and what exactly they want to involve the children in and what children should be involved in, in the first place.



Scheduling

- The entire team met once a month at the weekend, while the individual programmes at the Foundation held smaller group meetings with varying frequency.
- Working in smaller groups helped the children to express their opinions more openly and to feel more listened to, because there was always more space for them to express their individual opinions.
- It also made it possible to hold meetings only when it was really required by the Foundation's project. Thus, the individual projects were not obliged to hold a given number of meetings per semester, but could adjust the number to their own needs, which increased the quality of child involvement.
- On the other hand, it made it difficult for the entire team to connect with each other, to communicate and to evenly delegate tasks to the children (both in time and between themselves).
- On the basis of the experience of the year 2023 and feedback, in the next semester (2024), in addition to the large team meetings, we divided the children into two smaller groups and created a shared table and a calendar in which it is possible to clearly follow which team has a meeting and when, and what kind of calls have been received.

Equal distribution of tasks

- While there were fewer calls in the first semester and we dealt with all projects in the large team meetings, the workload of the children was relatively even. Then, as a result of the new structure, within individual programmes it was less clear what the workload of each child or a given period was like.
- There was a KiCo who participated in our projects on a weekly basis and some only a few times during the semester. Although there were also individual motivations behind this, it is our responsibility to pay more attention to this and to help them in maintaining their boundaries.
- This is also helped by the shared table, in which it is possible to track who participates in which meetings and calls, and on what basis we choose who can participate in a project if several children applied.

Working online or in person?

- The meetings usually take place in person, however, in the case of children living in rural areas, several times they were only able to join the session online.
- In person meetings usually result in greater activity on the part of the children, greater motivation and a more cohesive team. In person, it is easier to create a confidential and safe environment where children are happy to share their opinions and adults are more sensitive when something is not understood.
- However, the online platform provides an opportunity for young people from rural areas to participate in the programmes, to avoid having to travel several hours for shorter meetings, and in addition, it was often easier to find a date that suited everybody.

Motivation

- The motivations to participate in the programmes include belonging to the team, the desire to take action and being able to express opinions in an environment where they're listened to, taken seriously and the impact is visible.

The level of cooperation

- The children gave assistance in activities initiated by the Foundation and participated in external calls together with the colleagues of the Foundation. Projects based on their own ideas and initiatives rarely came to fruition.
- The children typically did not coordinate a project, although they were responsible for parts of it.

Child Group

- During the year 2023, we did not hold any KiCo recruitments. Ultimately, 16 participated in the spring semester and 11 in the autumn semester.
- A new KiCo joined the team, who had previously participated in only one of the sub-programmes of the Foundation (NEMECSEK Sport), but as a result had already worked together with the Kid Colleagues several times. The first couple of times, it could be felt that he/she joined the team later, but this was quickly resolved, and the others were open and welcoming to him/her.



- In addition to those who left the programme because they turned 18, three other children indicated that they would not continue the shared work due to school and other commitments.
- There was great cohesion and mutual interest within the team and there were no conflicts or difficult situations.

Adult Group

- Four mentors worked alongside the children in the first semester and then three mentors in autumn. After the previous project manager was no longer present, the team faced many new challenges. It was important that we had worked together before, so the children were surrounded by a familiar, harmonious team.
- The Foundation staff met the children less frequently due to their workload, but when they attended the meetings, the feedback from both sides was that they learnt a lot from working together.

Projects

- Inquiries from external partners usually gave the opportunity for public appearance or publication. These projects always sparked more enthusiasm in the children, so they were important in maintaining their motivation.

The role of the Child Safeguarding Policy

- The mechanisms of the Child Safeguarding Policy provided important assistance in difficult situations, in keeping the focus on the security of children and in maintaining boundaries.
- Based on our experience, it is worth returning to the main points of the Policy several times a year and discussing who they can contact if they detect a problem.

Communication

- We continued to communicate on the Messenger platform, in accordance with the Child Safeguarding Policy, but we often encountered difficulties in maintaining contact and reaching the children. Some rarely responded to group messages, so we were often only able to reach them by phone or direct messages.

Effect and effectiveness

- It is difficult to quantitatively measure the effect of child participation. Particularly given that what the children say is often integrated into the thinking and methodology of a programme in the long run.
- At every in person training session and public appearance, we received the same feedback: that the participation of KiCos added a lot to the programme, for many it was one of the most useful aspects.
- We still have room for improvement in how we give feedback to children about their impact, and we need to pay more attention to this.
- The impact of the programmes on the children's individual lives is often revealed through private and individual conversations.

Learning from each other

- In 2023, the Child Participation Working Group of the NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child continued to operate, where we met representatives of 5-10 NGOs on a monthly basis in order to share our experience of our programmes regarding child participation.
- The first year was mostly about the individual member organisations introducing themselves and identifying our similarities, common viewpoints and challenges.

The future of the Holdudvar group

In addition to our actively and closely cooperating child volunteers, we have a closed Facebook group where the 84 members of the Holdudvar group are found.

- Compared to the previous year, content was published in the group more often, but due to the workload of the staff, activity decreased in the second half of the year. We consider it important to make an effort to maintain contact with former volunteers and interested children.

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HINTALOVON GYERMEKJOGI ALAPÍTVÁNY

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