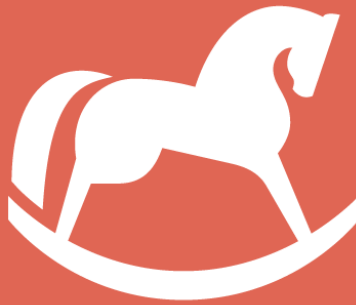




Hintalovon

Gyermekjogi Alapítvány

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS REPORT

2024

Content

Foreword	4
Methodology	6
Disclosure and access to data of public interest	7
A. General implementing measures	11
Legislation and measures	11
Source distribution from	19
Independent control	23
Dissemination of the Convention	32
Civil cooperation	33
B. The concept of the child	35
C. Overarching principles	35
The prohibition of discrimination	35
Best interests of the child	39
Respecting the views of the child	43
D. Civil rights and liberties	47
Citizenship	47
Freedom of association and peaceful assembly	48
Protecting privacy	51
Access to the right information	53
E. Violence against children	57
Abuse, neglect	57
Corporal punishment	62
F. Family environment and alternative care	63
Family environment	63
Children living outside their family	67

G. Children with disabilities	71
H. Basic health and well-being	76
Health and health care	76
The health of minors	79
Quality of life	81
I. Education, leisure, culture	84
Recreation, leisure, leisure, cultural and artistic activities	87
J. Special security measures	90
Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children	90
Justice for children	94
Child victims and witnesses of crime	95
K. Follow-up to the Commission's previous concluding observations	98
Optional Protocol on Sexual Abuse against Children	99
Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict	99
L. Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure	102
Optional Protocol on the communication procedure	102
Cooperation with regional organisations	103
Sustainability	103
List	105

Foreword

2024 was an unusual year for children's rights. Professionals and lay people, politicians and public figures expressed their views on child protection, child abuse and child sexual abuse. More generally, about our responsibility as adults to ensure that the children around us and with us are well. This was mainly due to **the „mercy case”**, which could be summarised as: In 2023, President of the Republic Katalin Novák granted a pardon¹ to the former deputy director of the Kosuth Zsuzsa Children's Home in Bicske, Endre Kónya, who was sentenced by the court to three years and four months imprisonment for covering up the sexual abuse of several children by the former director of the children's home over a period of many years, forcing one victim to withdraw her confession. The fact of the presidential pardon was made public in February 2024 and caused a serious public and social uproar, resulting in the resignation of Katalin Novák and the resignation of the then Minister of Justice, Judit Varga, who countersigned the pardon decision.

So began 2024, with a public scandal not seen for years, with resignations, demonstrations and protests, and then legislative changes that are outlined in the report from several angles - covering the short-term and likely long-term consequences.

In 2024, the clemency case focused attention on the child protection system. But children's rights are not just about protecting children. And child protection is much, much more than an institutional system. While the focus of the clemency case was on children in state care and the professionals responsible for them, the ecosystem of children's rights and the well-being and protection of children, both children and adults, is much more complex and larger than that.

Even now, a year later, we still don't know exactly what the pardon meant to Hungary. What impact it has had on children's rights is what we will try to report on in this report, at least on the visible

¹ Pursuant to the decision of the President of the Republic, which became public in the order of the Curia Bfv. 1191/2022/13, the remaining part of the sentence of imprisonment (reintegration detention) was suspended for a probationary period of 5 years, the remaining part of the sentence of disqualification from performing any occupation and the remaining part of the additional sentence of disqualification from public office was remitted and the sentence was discharged from the disadvantages of criminal record.

side, supported by data and statistics, studies and professional arguments.

In the foreword to last year's report, we wrote that anyone expecting to read about happy things in the Children's Rights Report 2023 will be disappointed. For 2024, we can promise the same: the

report is not a happy read, but it is still incredibly important. Not only does it help us remember the events of a busy and turbulent year, but it also provides context for understanding the events, the decisions taken and the possible consequences.

Methodology

The report summarises the most important events in 2024 from a children's rights perspective, using a similar methodology as in previous years. In preparing it, data and information are collected in three main areas:

- Legislation and amendments adopted or entering into force in 2024;
- Professional materials, statistical and information sources published in 2024;
- Reports, news, media reports published in 2024.

Every year, we do a lot of research before compiling the report, in fact, during the current year we continuously collect information, data, research results and base the report and decisions on what we see as the most important events, changes and challenges in each area of children's rights.

This is the ninth year of the Children's Rights Report, which allows us to continuously monitor the collection of child protection statistics, not only in terms of content, but also in terms of operation. Among other things, the fact that in April-May, when the manuscript is closed, often only the previous data for the year

preceding the year covered by the report are available. Difficulties around data requests and problems in accessing certain information are also addressed in a separate chapter in the 2024 report.²

The Children's Rights 2024 report was compiled by the professional team of the Hintalovon Children's Rights Foundation, but we also directly involved experts from other organisations in writing some parts of the report³. The first draft of the report was reviewed by proofreaders with extensive professional experience and knowledge of the individual articles.

The Hintalovon Foundation's Minor Colleagues were also involved in the preparation of the report in 2025. Fourteen children aged between 13 and 17 were interviewed in two meetings about the previous year. We looked at the previous report, which had already included their ideas directly, and then talked through their role and the purpose of their involvement. Through collective, playful discussions, the children identified the themes and events they considered significant for their age group from 2024. **The children's views are an important part of the Children's Rights Report.**⁴ This is how it appears in the text:

² See chapter on Disclosure and access to data of public interest.

³ Date of closure of the manuscript: 5 May 2025.

⁴ Their thoughts are included as quotes, labelled „Insights from a Minor Colleague”.

„We often notice that the relationship with parents influences the child’s behaviour in other communities. It can be a good relationship or it can be a bad relationship, so that a child has a bad relationship with his parents and then he becomes an abuser or an abused child.”

(Insight from a Minor Colleague)

As in previous years, the report follows the structure of reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the clusters of children’s rights, but this year (in light of the European Climate Convention) we have added a new topic, **sustainability**.

The reports, published annually since 2016, are available at www.hintalovon.hu.

Comments on the 2024 material are invited to the following e-mail address: info@hintalovon.hu. Thank you!

Disclosure and access to data of public interest

Every year, it is a major task to collect the necessary data to produce the report. Problems with access to data have been reported in previous reports.

This year, we sent more than thirty requests for data to various public and non-governmental organisations. Most of the requests were for statistical data, but there were also a number of requests for other types of information (e.g. on institutional practices).

The system of data hosting organisations sometimes proves opaque. Although the National Statistical Data Collection Programme (hereinafter: OSAP), governed by the Official Statistics Act⁵, helps to provide information, there are several important registers that are independent of it and not part of OSAP.⁶

Last year, we reported that most of the data we receive comes from the Central Statistical Office (hereinafter: KSH), whe-

⁵ 2016. évi CLV. törvény a hivatalos statisztikáról.

re extensive data collection on child protection is carried out. However, it is true for most of the data coming from KSH that the data for the year covered by the report (in this case 2024) only become available months after the manuscript is closed, so we can usually only work from statistics from a year earlier. Although the data for the relevant reference year are available from the registers of the various ministries and agencies, there are several quality problems with them. In many cases, the requested information is not available in the requested form and/or breakdown, and the data holders refuse to provide the data on the basis of Article 30 of the Information Act⁷, whereas in many cases the Child Protection Act clearly provides for the processing of data. Whether the request for data is nevertheless fulfilled in such cases (with the available data) depends only on the individual attitude of the data providers (one could say the individual decision of the manager or administrator).

In addition to all these common problems, there are also examples where we receive data that is slightly different from what we requested (e.g. different breakdowns are available), but close in content. This latter practice helps professional work, provides an opportunity for evaluative analysis and makes the operation of the organisation more transparent. We therefore consider it important to highlight this forward-looking practice alongside the challenges.

The unavailable data can be divided into two groups (Table 1). Some data are not kept by any organisation. Typically, this group includes data on child participation. There is no data available on the hearing of children in different proceedings (civil proceedings, criminal proceedings, guardianship proceedings), nor on the level and extent of involvement of children in specialised care in matters concerning them. We maintain our earlier position that, in line with paragraph 53 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's (UNCRC) Global Commentary No. 16 (2003), **these data collection gaps should be filled, because without them, the child-centred functioning of institutions cannot be meaningfully assessed** (and development needs and directions cannot be well defined).

As a further example, data on the number of child psychiatrists **are not available**, nor are data on the mother-child unit in prisons. There are also no summary data on public expenditure on children, for which we were able to estimate for 2024 mainly on the basis of the Budget Law. We also sent requests to several bodies for data on babies left in hospital, but our requests were refused on the basis of Article 30 of the Info Law.

The other group includes **data requests that remain unanswered**. We wrote last year that we have not received a response for years on the ratification in Hungary of the Optional Protocol on the Optional

⁶ In recent years, there have also been several cases where some data collections have been transferred to other organisations during the year.

⁷ Act CXII of 2011 on the Right to Informational Self-Determination and Freedom of Information.

Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure⁸. This year, we have also sent a public interest information request to the relevant ministry, but have not re-

ceived any response this year. We have also not received a reply to our request for data on the results of the Good Governance Survey.

Table 1. Unanswered data requests for the 2024 report on the rights of the child

	Data for which no data are collected	Unanswered data requests
Children's rights		
Ratification by Hungary of the Optional Protocol on communication procedures		x
Source distribution from		
Total public expenditure on children (<i>children's budget</i>)	x	
Child protection		
Hearing of children in guardianship proceedings	x	
Children's self-governments in specialised care	x	
Data on the survey of impeccable living		x
Number of 0-3 year olds in hospital without a place of care ⁹	x	
Information on the Child Protection Electronic Register (CPER)		x
Justice		
Hearing of children in civil proceedings	x	
Hearing children in criminal proceedings	x	
Health care		
Number of child psychiatrists	x	

⁸ Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure.

⁹ In the press and in the vernacular: „babies left in hospital”

Correctional services		
Data on mother-child unit (places, sentence in enforcement institution)	x	
Postponement of enforcement of a sentence because of pregnancy or care of a child under 1 year old	x	

Another difficulty is that the **situation of children in the child protection system is only partially known**. While the child protection data collected under the OSAP provide information on the functioning of the child protection system, the data collected from institutions do not provide sufficient information on the ‚pathways’ of children within the system. To our knowledge, the **computer system called Protecting Our Children (GYVR)** is in use in child welfare and child protection institutions, where data are registered according to the beneficiaries. We have also been asking for years whether the system is suitable for statistical queries, but we have not yet received a reply to this request.¹⁰

Systematic and professional data collection is needed in all aspects of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter: Convention), also in order to identify children in vulnerable and fragile situations and to ensure that appropriate assistance and support programmes can be properly implemented. This implies a broadening of the scope of child protection statistics and a child-centred approach. It is also neces-

sary to ensure that the data and statistical indicators are shared between the sectors and areas concerned and used in the development, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects to implement the Convention. This is a particularly important task in Hungary, where - as presented in the Report on the Rights of the Child 2022 with graphs and tables - the sectoral governance system is highly fragmented, so the risk of problems arising around information flow is high

¹⁰ This level of lack of transparency raises questions about the reliability of the whole system (e.g. the statistical module appeared in the documents preparing the CMFB).

A. General implementing measures

Legislation and measures

In 2024, legislation was heavily influenced by the response to the clemency case, with legislative processes taking place in several areas of child protection. In 2024, **more than thirty pieces of legislation relevant to children's rights** were adopted, while regulation continued to be characterised by the adoption of legislation by decree ¹¹, or by the adoption of laws containing amendments on different subjects and in different areas of law at the same time (so-called „salad laws“). In 2024, too, legislation affecting children's rights was not preceded by a sufficiently long and detailed public and professional debate, or by impact as-

sessments (or the public and the profession were not aware that an impact assessment had been carried out). One reason (and symptom) for this is that bills are increasingly being introduced to Parliament on the basis of individual motions.

In 2024, Parliament also adopted **a law** salad ¹² that simultaneously amended 70 different and thematically unrelated laws in a wide range of areas. This legislative practice continues to raise serious concerns about the quality of the legislation, the coherence of the legal system, and makes it difficult to prepare for the application of the law and to ensure transparency.

¹¹ According to the 2022 amendment to the Fundamental Law, the Government may declare a state of emergency in the event of an armed conflict, war or humanitarian disaster in a neighbouring country. This state of emergency was extended in 2024 by amending Act XLII of 2022 twice on the prevention and management of the consequences of armed conflict or humanitarian disasters in neighbouring countries, so several important issues are still being discussed in Parliament without social consultation, or by means of ordinance legislation.

¹² Act XXIX of 2024 amending certain laws affecting the operation of the State

One of the biggest legislative waves in the clemency case has hit **the child protection system**. Extensive amendments to the rules of the child protection system included, among others, the provisions of the Child Protection Act (hereinafter: Gyvt.), the Civil Code (hereinafter: Ptk.), the Criminal Code (hereinafter: Btk.) and the Act on National Public Education (hereinafter: Nkt.)¹³, but also legislation related to the organisation of camps and the online safety of children.

The new system of checks on the suitability of child protection professionals is the first of the regulatory approach to be introduced. Under the new provisions, **managers of** child protection institutions¹⁴ and **professionals**¹⁵ are now required to undergo a psychological aptitude test and a „good conduct” test¹⁶. **The regulations**, which will enter into force

partly in July 2024 and partly in September 2024,¹⁷ introduced significant changes to the examination of the aptitude of persons employed in child protection institutions^{18,19}. There are a number of **criticisms of** the government’s decision, which reflects a law enforcement attitude: in addition to questioning the ethical and professional judgement of professionals, there are also fundamental rights concerns, as some of the questions asked during the examination can be humiliating, embarrassing and intrude unduly into the privacy of professionals.²⁰ In addition, the primary data also showed a high risk of a long-standing and worsening shortage of professionals in specialist care.²¹

The conditions of employment for children’s camps and other extracurricular activities²² have also **been tightened**,

¹³ Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration, Act V of 2013 on the Civil Code, Act C of 2012 on the Criminal Code, Act CXV of 2011 on National Public Education.

¹⁴ Government Decree No 40/2024 (29.II.) amending the Government Decree on the examination of psychological aptitude of heads of child protection institutions

¹⁵ Government Decree No 191/2024 (VII. 8.) on the examination of psychological aptitude of persons employed in child protection institutions

¹⁶ Act XXX of 2024 amending certain Acts in the interest of the protection of children provided for the Police to perform this task by amending **Section 7(1)(a) of Act XXXIV of 1994** on the Police.

¹⁷ Act XXX of 2024 amending certain laws for the protection of children

¹⁸ Gyvt. § 10/C - § 10/I

¹⁹ Controversial experiences have also been published on the implementation of the ‘beyond reproach’ test. There were children’s homes where **16.3% of the staff had their employment terminated by mutual agreement initiated by the workers** for reasons related to the inspection. The National Protection Service has also issued **a communication on** the inspection of good living conditions.

²⁰ Following these constitutional concerns, in November 2024, the judge of the Labour Chamber of the Metropolitan Court of Budapest **asked** the Constitutional Court to review and annul the regulation, while suspending the proceedings.

²¹ For more on this, see the chapter on children living outside their family.

²² Section 4/B (1) of Act XI of 1991 on Health Authority and Administrative Activity

requiring an official certificate of good conduct in line with the law.²³ The new legislation also imposes an obligation on coaches and professionals involved in the coaching of sportsmen and sportswomen of an early age and requires them to attend at least annual training courses on the treatment of children and communication with children and parents.²⁴ Partly as a result of the growing discourse on children's camps, a higher education institution (ELTE TOK) has started training in camp pedagogy.

The above-mentioned amending **act** introduced significant changes in the context of the obligation to notify members of the signalling system under the Gyvt. According to the provisions that will enter into force in September 2024, if a member of the signalling system fails to fulfil his/her obligation to report in the case of the so-called high risk grounds²⁵,

specified in **a separate decree**²⁶, referred to in the Gyvt., criminal proceedings may be initiated against him/her, and the violation of the obligation to report in connection with child protection is punishable by imprisonment of up to two years.^{27 28} In addition, from July 2024, a rule will apply requiring the admission of **a child who has run away**²⁹ **from an institution** to be reported within 24 hours, failing which the person who has admitted the child may be prosecuted for a misdemeanour.³⁰ The same amending law also provides for an additional obligation for professionals³¹ to notify and take action in the event of abusive behaviour by the foster parent towards the child in care, reinforcing the previous provisions.

Amending law published in December 2024³² 2025. which entered into force on 1 January 2025, the provisions on the status

²³ The Hungarian Pedagogical Society stressed **in its statement that** these regulations do not improve the preparedness and legal awareness of the human resources of camping, and do not set pedagogical requirements, but only the presentation of a moral certificate - which proves nothing about the suitability of camping.

²⁴ Paragraphs (5)-(11) of Article 11/A of Act I of 2004 on Sport

²⁵ Gyvt. § 17 (4a)-(4d) paragraph

²⁶ Article 11/A of NM Decree No 15/1998 (IV. 30.) on the professional duties and conditions of operation of child welfare and child protection institutions and persons providing personal care.

²⁷ Penal Code § 209/A (3b)-(3c)

²⁸ The possible consequences of this provision and the increased number of reports received are discussed in more detail in the chapter on abuse and neglect.

²⁹ The removal of a child placed in a children's home or in foster care without an official decision or without the consent of the child's guardian is considered as absconding. Gyvt. § 17 (4a) to (4d)

³⁰ Section 249/A of Act II of 2012 on Offences, Offence Procedure and the Offence Registration System. According to the justification for the amendment, this new provision was needed to deal with persons who, in certain cases, request sexual services from runaway children in exchange for their support, or try to persuade them to use or distribute drugs. The question is what effect this provision will have in cases where this is not the case.

of the care placement of runaway foster children provided that if a foster child is permanently absent from his or her care placement without permission, the head of the care placement must, in the event of an absence of more than six months, initiate a **review of the foster placement** with the competent guardianship authority, or, in the event of an absence of more than three months, **temporarily place another child in the care placement for the duration of the absence**.³³ The provision does not contain a provision (previously contained in Article 86(6) of Decree No 15/1998 (IV.30.) NM) on the prevention of absconding and the identification of the reasons and motivations behind absconding. The same legislative amendment shortens the adoptability of a child in the absence of contact from eight to six months.³⁴

In the context of the above changes, it is also worth mentioning **the modification of the background documents** related to the child protection signalling system. On 7 March 2024, the Ministry of the In-

terior published the revised editions of the **Methodological Guide** on the Rules for the Operation and Functioning of the Detection and Indication System operated by the Family and Child Welfare Service and the **Protocol** on the Processes of the Detection and Indication System operated by the Family and Child Welfare Service (hereinafter: Protocol), which entered into force on 15 March 2024. On 20 September, the 3rd revised version of **the Methodological for** Guidelines the investigation and treatment of cases of child abuse in specialised care was published. 2024 also saw the publication of a new guideline issued by the College of Health Professionals on the duties of health care providers in cases of suspected child abuse and neglect.³⁵

In 2024, the legislator sought to address the **problems raised** by the clemency case by amending the provisions of the Criminal Code, in addition to tightening the rules of the child protection system. **A law was** adopted through the **13th Amendment to the Fundamental Law**,

³¹ Gyvt. 66/D. § (8) amendment. The previous rules imposed such notification and action obligations on the operator; under the new rule, the foster care network shall contact the guardianship authority in order to designate a new place of care for the child or young adult, and the foster care network shall simultaneously notify the child protection guardian thereof, the regional child protection specialist service and the children's legal representative, and the child protection guardian, the regional child protection specialist service or the children's legal representative shall notify the body authorising the foster parent network employing the foster parent.

³² Act LXXVI of 2024 amending certain laws on higher education, family and culture

³³ Gyvt. 80/A § (4) paragraph bc), Gyvt. 80/B § (5) (f).

³⁴ Ptk. 4:124. § (1) a).

³⁵ Clinical Health Professional Guideline. Identifier: 002262. Date of publication: 19 July 2024.

³⁶ The Btk. Article 104 of the Penal Code is amended by adding the following paragraph (3): '(3) The President of the Republic may not exercise his right of individual pardon against a prisoner who (a) an offence against sexual freedom and sexual morality committed by a person over the age of eighteen against a person under the age of eighteen, or (b) any other intentional offence committed by a person over the age of eighteen in connection with the offence specified in (a) or with criminal proceedings for the offence specified in (a).

which defined the scope of intentional crimes against children for which the **President of the Republic cannot exercise his individual right to pardon.**³⁶

The **Salata Act, which** has been cited several times, has tightened the statute of limitations for sexual offences against children, so that they are **not time-barred** and offenders cannot be released on parole or exempted from the adverse consequences of a criminal record.

In 2024, another case (the case of Tamás Till, who disappeared in 2000 at the age of 11) shocked society, and the legislator's **immediate response** was to amend the Criminal Code. The body of the victim was found in 2024 and a suspect, also a minor at the time of the crime, was arrested. Given the public outcry in the case, where it was unclear whether the perpetrator's criminal liability was time-barred, a law was adopted on 17 December 2024 amending the Criminal Code so that certain crimes committed by minors are no longer time-barred.³⁷

In 2024, the range of **measures that can be taken during the protection proce-**

dure was extended by the possibility for the guardianship authority to warn the parent that if the protection procedure is unsuccessful, the authority may file a report for the crime of endangering a minor.³⁸

In 2024,³⁹ the scope of possible cases of taking a child into protection was extended by the possibility for the guardianship authority **to take a child into protection** by means of an immediately enforceable decision, taking into account the proposal of the Child Welfare Centre, if the court is approached in the proceedings for enforcement of a contact order on the grounds that the parent who has custody of the child is **at fault for not having had contact.**⁴⁰ Also part of this package of laws was the amendment to the Civil Code, which⁴¹ provides that **during the temporary placement of a child, not only the parent's right to care and upbringing is suspended**, but if the guardianship authority has established that the parent cannot be expected to cooperate on the grounds of the temporary placement, then in the cases specified by law the right to legal representation may also be suspended, and

³⁷ Btk. Paragraph 109 (4)

³⁸ The aim of the decree, which is based on the Government Decree 149/1997 (IX. 10.) on guardianship authorities and child protection and guardianship procedure (hereinafter: Gyer.), by adding to the sub-chapter "Unsuccessful protection placement" that if the protection placement has been in place for one year and the measures provided for have not succeeded in eliminating the child's vulnerability, the guardianship authority may request an intermediary to ensure the effectiveness of the protection placement or order new measures for the parent and child. If the protection order is still in place after two years, it will take measures to determine whether there are any other public services that could be used to help the child to overcome his or her vulnerability. Source: § 68 (3) 1; and Government Decree 94/2024 (8 July) amending certain government decrees on child protection and social affairs; and Gyer. 91/E. §

³⁹ Article 17 (1) of Act XXX of 2024 amending certain Acts for the Protection of Children

⁴⁰ Gyvt. 68.§ (2) paragraph d)

⁴¹ Ptk. 4:186.§ (4)

this right may even be exercised by the place of care.

In 2024, the situation of babies left/retained in hospital, awaiting placement and disposition also became a prominent part of the public discourse, which may have contributed to the amendment of the Civil Code⁴² regarding adoption as part of the Child Protection **Bill**. As of 1 July 2024, **newborn babies left in hospital can be adopted without parental consent** if the mother, father or other relative does not apply for the child within six weeks and does not make a separate declaration in writing or on the record to the guardianship authority that he or she wishes to remove the child from the health care institution. The mother's attention will be drawn to this in the final report of the hospital and the six weeks will start from the date of the final report.⁴³ It is also important to note that the legislator has also made adoption retroactive, i.e. children who were abandoned in a health institution immediately after birth before 1 July 2024, and children who were in a health institution, children's home or foster home on 1 July 2024, can be adopted without their parents' consent, at the discretion of the guardianship authority, with the six-week period starting on 1 July 2024.

In connection with this, the provision of **the Civil Code has been amended** in on

parental contact⁴⁴ cases where the child has not been adopted.

The **Civil Coalition for Children's Rights** criticized the shortcomings of the preparation of the child protection package, the **law enforcement and sanctions-oriented approach instead of the preventive approach**, and the lack of time to prepare for the amendments, stressing that *„the adopted measures still do not provide solutions to the current problems of child protection, Moreover, the envisaged national security checks and the sanction-oriented approach reinforce the mass exodus of child protection professionals and the shortage of qualified professionals in the child protection sector, and do not address the underlying causes of the dysfunctional functioning of the child protection detection and signaling system.”*

However, in addition to the criticisms, it is important to summarise the new provisions on child protection by pointing out that **several legislative changes in 2024 are clearly positive and forward-looking**. For example, the obligation for employers to visit the previous place of work of child protection workers; the obligation for child protection guardians, regional child protection services and child legal representatives to notify the body authorising the foster

⁴² Ptk. 4:127.§ (1) paragraph e) subsection eb)

⁴³ On the basis of Government Decree No. 192/2024 (VII. 8.) amending Government Decree No. 149/1997 (IX. 10.) on guardianship authorities and child protection and guardianship procedures, the Children's Act was amended. § 44/C. of the Children's Act.

⁴⁴ Ptk. 4:178.§ (4) paragraph c)

care network of the child's foster parents in the event of child abuse; the increase in the allowance for children in foster care or the increase of 20 percent in the amount of the foster care allowance.

In the field of education, a major public debate has been triggered by the amendment to the **law on the restriction of the use of mobile phones in schools**, published in June 2024⁴⁵. Following the June amendment, in August the Government issued a **decree** laying down detailed rules on the use of prohibited (e.g. objects dangerous to public safety) and restricted (e.g. telecommunications) devices in schools.⁴⁶ The provision, which entered into force on 1 September 2024, classifies smart devices capable of telecommunications, image or sound recording and Internet connection as restricted in educational institutions. Their use during school hours is possible only if authorised by the director for health or educational purposes in the educational system. Under the Regulation, the detailed arrangements for the receipt and storage of such devices must be laid down in the school's rules of procedure, with the proviso that they must be returned to the person who gave them

to the school in the condition in which they were received. Teachers are responsible for the control of prohibited and restricted items. **In its explanatory memorandum**⁴⁷, the author of the legislation stresses that the prevalence of abuse in online and offline spaces and children's right to a safe environment and healthy development justify the regulation. It also underlines that mobile phone use in schools can be a major distraction from learning and can give rise to digital bullying. The provision has generated considerable public debate, see the section on privacy for more details.⁴⁸

The Child Protection Bill also included rules to increase children's safety online. As a result of an amendment to the law in June 2024⁴⁹, the Gyvt. explicitly provides that *„the child has the right to receive education and training to ensure informed and responsible use of the Internet and media, including effective action against forms of online bullying.”*⁵⁰ The same amendment also added to the obligations for children in the Gyvt. to *„respect the human dignity of other children when exercising their right to freedom of expression, including when using internet or media services.”*

⁴⁵ Act XXIX of 2024 amending certain Acts concerning the functioning of the State under Chapter 28 of Act CXCV of 2011 on National Public Education, paragraphs (4) and (5) of Article 24 shall be added.

⁴⁶ Government Decree 245/2024 (VIII. 8.) on the scope of prohibited and restricted objects in educational institutions and the detailed rules of the procedure for the use of such objects.

⁴⁷ The Explanatory Memorandum can be found in the Hungarian Official Gazette, No 52, p. 546, TÁRA 2024.

⁴⁸ In order to examine the constitutionality of the decree, the parties concerned initiated proceedings before the Constitutional Court, but the petition was rejected by the Constitutional Court in its decision of April 2025.

⁴⁹ Act XXX of 2024 amending certain Acts in the interest of the protection of children.

⁵⁰ Gyvt. Paragraph 6 (7)

In addition, the **Nkt.** also establishes as an institutional obligation that children, pupils and their relatives have access to the information and assistance service of the NMHH (National Media and Infocommunications Authority).⁵¹ The package also included provisions on the protection of children in media services, requiring the Media Council to publish **specific recommendations on the representation of children.**⁵²

An amendment to the law⁵³, to be published at the end of the year, aims to regulate safer use of the internet by underage internet users, but also added provisions to the Advertising Act⁵⁴ to protect children.

At the end of the year, a **law was passed**⁵⁵, which also introduced a significant change, **extending the scope of the school police** to children's homes and camps and activities. The legislation also provided that the Police Service, a body established for this purpose, may assist in maintaining order in children's homes⁵⁶. The amendment also affected

the extension of the powers of the National Protection Service (**NPS**) to 'use' child pornography footage in the course of carrying out a criminal investigation. The amendment raised questions and doubts as to its scope, to which the NCA responded **in a communication.**

The 2023 **report on children's rights** already included⁵⁷ the practice of **the qualification of foster parents** (more precisely, the postponement of the qualification), which was extended in 2024⁵⁸, so that it is still sufficient to complete a sixty-hour course on foster parenting, while the additional 240-hour KOP (Central Training Programme) training within two years of the placement of a child has been postponed for another year.

On the increase in teachers' salaries, the amount of the education allowance and other changes related to tax benefits, as well as the allocation of funds for the development of the child protection institutional system, see the chapter on Resource allocation.

⁵¹ Section 25 (5e) of the Act

⁵² Act CLXXXV of 2010 on Media Services and Mass Communications, § 11/A, § 183 (1) r)

⁵³ Act XLIX of 2024 on restricting the availability of pornographic content on the Internet for the protection of children and amending certain laws relating to electronic commerce services and advertising

⁵⁴ Article 8 of Act XLVIII of 2008 on the Basic Conditions and Certain Restrictions of Economic Advertising Activities

⁵⁵ Article 8 of Act XLVIII of 2008 on the Basic Conditions and Certain Restrictions of Economic Advertising Activities

⁵⁶ Gyvt. 59/A. §

⁵⁷ "This technique (biennial deadline changes in various laws) means that since 2016 it has been pending whether the previously defined qualification requirements for foster parents will actually become mandatory."

Source distribution from

In the course of the preparation of the 2024 central budget⁵⁹, the Ministry of National Economy compiled the so-called **family policy annex to the** budget, which summarises the expenditure and benefits affecting families. According to the draft, family policy-related expenditure in 2024 is expected to amount to HUF 3 307 164.2 million, including HUF 685 800 million in tax benefits.

The largest items of planned expenditure on family policy directly affecting children were childcare and adoption allowances and personal income tax credits. The planned expenditure on family allowances for 2024 is HUF 307.3 billion. This amount is slightly below the **2023 target of** HUF 309.5 billion, of which 99.4% of the plans had been met by the end of the year. The number of families receiving family allowances **has been declining moderately**. Since 2010 According to the latest **data for 2023**, 1 038 900 families received family allowances, covering a total of around 1.7 million children, with a monthly average of HUF 23 759 per

family (see the Family environment section for more details).

As the Ministry's summary of expenditure on family policy is somewhat narrower than the expenditure on children, as it only includes expenditure on the family in the sense of the Fundamental Law⁶⁰, the Foundation is attempting for the third time to produce a so-called **children's budget**⁶¹. This budget brings together all the items related to the upbringing of children and to the implementation and enforcement of children's rights. Our calculations have again been based on the Budget Act.

In the calculation of the children's budget, the budget lines for the following sectors have been aggregated according to the **Save the Children guidelines** (see Figure 1). The category „**Family allowances**” includes mainly cash benefits and tax relief for families. **The ,Health’** sector includes benefits, services and programmes to meet the health needs of children. **In the ,Education’** sector, we have inclu-

⁵⁸ Paragraph (1) of Article 165 of the Act on the Establishment of the 2025 Central Budget of Hungary 2024, as amended by Act LXXIV of 2024 on the Establishment of the 2025 Central Budget of Hungary 2025

⁵⁹ Act LV of 2023 on the 2024 Central Budget of Hungary

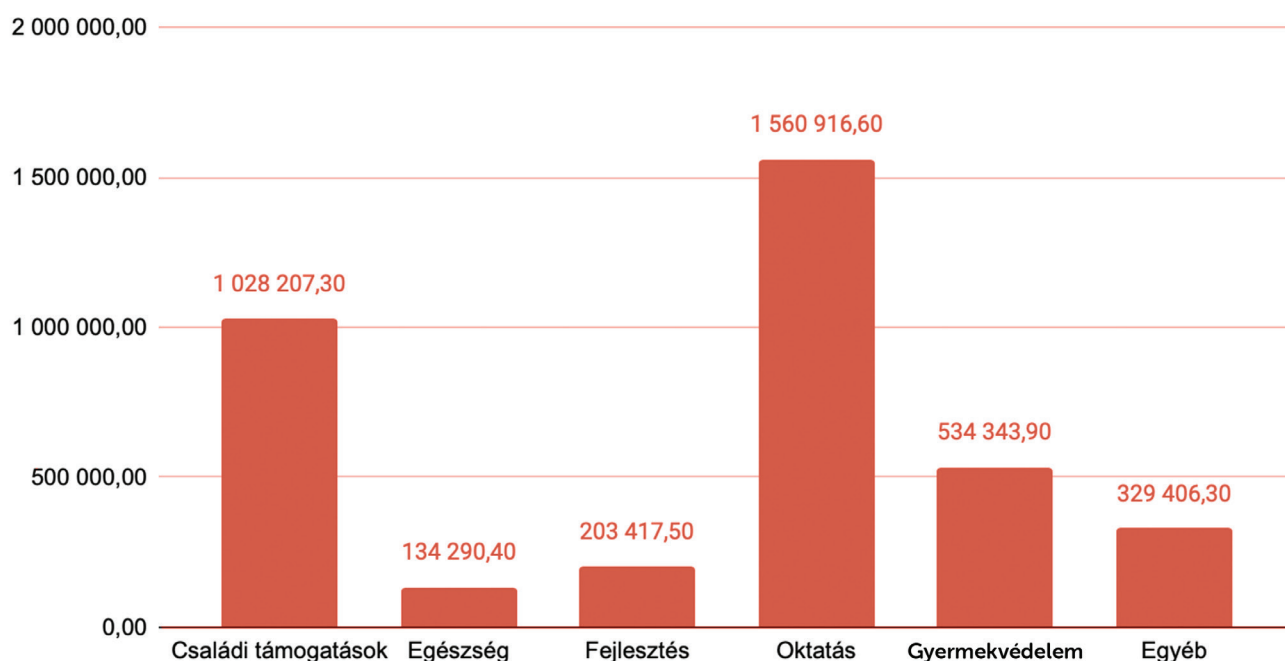
⁶⁰ According to Article L (1) of the Fundamental Law of Hungary: [...] The family relationship is based on marriage and the parent-child relationship.

⁶¹ Child-focused public expenditure measurement (C-PEM) is an initiative that involves the identification and systematic monitoring of public expenditure on children by government actors. C-PEM has two basic characteristics: (i) it uses a methodology that explicitly measures spending on children and (ii) it is implemented with state ownership. The budget calculation in this report does not constitute an official children's budget, both by definition (ii) and by the absence of sufficient detail on expenditure in the Hungarian Budget Act, and different calculation methods and results are possible.

ded expenditure related to the maintenance of primary and secondary educational institutions and additional services related to education, such as camping facilities. **Under the ,Development’** sector, we have included early childhood education and care programmes and general child development initiatives that do not fall strictly into any of the sectoral categories but contribute to the holistic development of children. Expenditure related to

the operation of social and child protection institutions was included in the **,Child protection’** sector. Finally, in the category **,Other’**, we have included items related to children that do not fit into any of the previous sectors but are relevant to children’s well-being (e.g. support to social, civil and other organisations in the field of family and youth, community and talent support programmes and activities).

Figure 1. Sectoral breakdown of expenditure on children in the 2024 draft budget (in HUF million)



Source of data: **Act LV of 2023 on the 2024 Central Budget of Hungary**

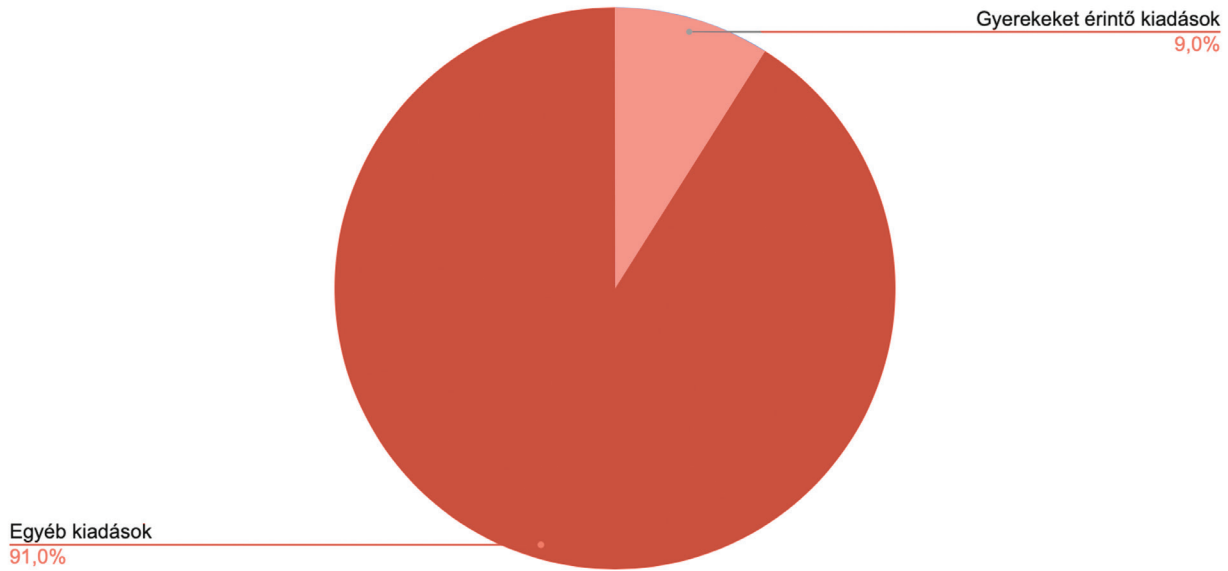
Based on our child budget calculations, **children account for 9 percent of Hungary’s total budget for 2024, totalling HUF 3,656.3 billion** (see Figure 2). Although spending on children has increased in nominal terms, the overall level of government spending has increased in

parallel, so the share of resources allocated to children within the budget remains essentially unchanged in 2024. It is important to underline that, in the absence of formal child budget calculations and due to different cost grouping options, a wide range of results, even significantly

different in terms of their ratios, can be obtained. For example, according to some government **information**, social and

child protection spending has increased 4.5 times from HUF 325 billion in 2010 to HUF 1,500 billion in 2024.

Figure 2. Expenditure on children in the draft budget 2024 in relation to the total budget



Source of data: **Act LV of 2023 on the 2024 Central Budget of Hungary**

Public spending was significantly affected by several legislative changes in 2024. At the beginning of the year, two pieces of legislation⁶² detailed the increase in teachers' salaries, which led to the creation of the **Teachers' Salary Increase Fund**. At the same time, in a separate decree⁶³ related to the 13th amendment to the

Fundamental Law, the government **also increased the benefits for foster parents**, which, however, is calculated to have failed to maintain its previous purchasing value⁶⁴. Later, the amendment of Act CXVII of 1995 on Personal Income Tax introduced a two-stage measure to double the amount of the child tax credit: from

⁶² Government Decree 3/2024 (I.18.) on certain government regulations necessary for the increase in teachers' salaries, and Government Decision 1004/2024 (I.18.) on the establishment of the Teachers' Salary Increase Fund

⁶³ Government Decree No 128/2024 (I.18.) amending certain Government Decrees on pharmaceuticals, social affairs and health care

July 2025 and January 2026⁶⁵. The increase in the minimum wage in child protection also meant a wage increase for public employees according to the **wage scale**, and the wages of teachers in child protection also increased due to the increase in teachers' wages.

In 2024, **the income threshold for entitlement to the regular child protection benefit for children of needy families living below the income threshold (hereinafter: RGYK) was increased**⁶⁶. In the base case, the current income threshold of 165% of the social projection base has

been increased to 225% of the social projection base, while for children raised by a single parent, disabled or chronically ill children, the income threshold has been increased from 180% to 245%. According to the justification of the law, the aim of the increase is to ensure that families in need are not excluded from the social assistance system due to a slight increase in income. **Data from the National Statistical Office (KSH)** show that the number of families eligible for RGYK has fallen significantly. While in 2013 there were nearly 272 000 eligible families, in 2023 there will be 87 400.

„Well, actually, I've just noticed that it's affecting us as a family, that the prices in the shops are so high that at the end of the month we don't know what to do.”

(Observation from a Minor Colleague)

In addition to wage adjustments and changes to tax benefits, the state has made **further commitments** at government level⁶⁷. These included impro-

vements to the child protection system (e.g. increasing the number of places), but also the provision of adequate infrastructure for public education insti-

⁶⁴ Since 2014, the foster care allowance has been indexed to the minimum wage, so with the increase in 2022, the increase in 2022 will be 19.5%, with the increase in 2023 15% and with the increase in 2024 a further 15%. From 1 January 2023, the childcare allowance and the special childcare allowance have been merged under the heading of childcare allowance. This amount can be used exclusively for the child's meals, clothing, textbooks and development activities. The last adjustment to the foster child allowance before the 2023 increase was made in 2008. According to the statistics, the cumulative inflation between the two periods was more than 70 percent. The 2023 increase was 25 per cent and the 2024 increase is also around 20 per cent, so the purchasing value of the benefit is estimated to be at least 50 per cent below the 2008 level.

⁶⁵ For more information on family support schemes, see the Family environment chapter.

⁶⁶ Pursuant to Article 11 of Act XXX of 2024 amending certain Acts in the interest of the protection of children, the Gyvt. (2) of Section 19 of the Act on the Protection of Children.

⁶⁷ 1308/2024.(X. 9.) Government Decision on the adoption of policy-sector investment concepts for public construction investments until 31 December 2035.

tutions and the necessary construction investments and resources. The relevant government decisions set a deadline of 2035 for the implementation of the improvements.

The State Audit Office of Hungary (hereinafter: SAO) found in its investigation comprehensive that the average gross monthly earnings of employees in child protection care were HUF 450.3 thousand in 2023, which was significantly lower than the average earnings of HUF 571.2 thousand for the national economy as a whole, which was only 78.8 percent

of the average. There are also differences in the development of average gross earnings in the individual institutions.

Pursuant to Government Decision 1177/2024 (20.VI.) on the provision of resources related to the performance of child protection tasks, the Government will allocate approximately **HUF 2 billion** for the psychological aptitude test and the impeccable conduct of life check for those employed as managers and professionals in child protection institutions.

Independent control

In 2024, the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights (hereinafter: **OCRF**) continued to be a key actor in the Independent Audit, carrying out several investigations and issuing a report⁶⁸. In the field of **education**, it investigated the shortcomings in the educational conditions of a pupil with special educational needs and the procedures of the institutions⁶⁹, in which it revealed, inter alia, that due to the lack of qualified teachers and a special needs teacher, „the

school was not able to fully provide all the conditions of education, in particular the staffing conditions, thus causing an abuse of the right to education both for the child with special educational needs and for all the pupils concerned”.

The AJBH conducted an investigation into the public education and child protection measures related to the school transfer and truancy of 2024 pupils⁷⁰, and the operation of the „oviskolás”

⁶⁷ 1308/2024.(X. 9.) Government Decision on the adoption of policy-sector investment concepts for public construction investments until 31 December 2035.

⁶⁸ The Equal Treatment Authority, which also plays a key role in children's rights cases and deals with discrimination cases, **was merged** into the AJBH from 1 January 2021 and its tasks are carried out by the Directorate General for Equal Treatment (DG Equal **Treatment**) of the AJBH. For more information on the EBFF in 2024, see the chapter on non-discrimination.

⁶⁹ Report in case number AJB-72/2024.

⁷⁰ Report in case number AJB-3496/2024.

group in the Sajószöged primary school since the 2018/2019 school year⁷¹. In the latter case, in relation to the repetition of the first grade by all pupils, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights stated that *„the admission of children to school is the first step in the realisation of the right to education, and in order for this to take place, it is not enough to reach the minimum age of compulsory schooling, but it is also necessary that the child is ready for school.”*

In 2024, there were several cases in which the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights investigated the **protracted procedure of certain guardianship offices** and its causes, context and background, following a petition by the complainant. The cases also revealed systemic problems of a broader nature in the areas of contact, foster care and adoption.

In this context, it reported⁷³ on the guardianship procedure for the adoption of a foster child, highlighting **that the lengthy procedure caused an abuse of the child’s right to protection and care** and was not compatible with the principle of best interests of the child.

It also reported⁷³ on the protracted proceedings of a district guardianship offi-

ce in a change of contact case, finding that the „delayed action of the guardianship office infringed the requirement of legal certainty and caused an abuse of the complainant’s right to a fair hearing”.

Similar findings were made by the AJBH about the delay in a district guardianship office’s proceedings in a family adoption case⁷⁴.

As in previous years, the Ombudsman continued to investigate child protection institutions in 2024⁷⁵, with fewer such visits than in previous years, and in all cases with prior notice. However, the reports still contain a number of important findings, two of which highlight persistent, structural problems. *„Several previous Ombudsman’s reports have noted the **persistent turnover of staff** in the children’s homes under investigation, the **lack of preparedness and qualifications of those applying for posts**, and the increasing difficulties in filling advertised posts in the institutions. The findings of previous reports were confirmed by the present visit.”*⁷⁶ *„Previous on-site visits to children’s homes and residential care homes **have also identified shortcomings in the physical conditions of several child-***

⁷¹ Report in case number AJB-3496/2024.

⁷² Report in case number AJB-1054/2024.

⁷³ Report in case number AJB-1425/2024.

⁷⁴ Report in case number AJB-877/2024.

⁷⁵ Report in cases AJB-1294/2024, AJB-3826/2024, AJB-3789/2024.

⁷⁶ Extract from the report in case AJB-3789/2024.

ren's homes. Once again, it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that the State has a fundamental constitutional and international legal obligation to ensure that the situation of children who are singled out or otherwise removed from their families, in the care provided by its institutions, is better and more livable than that which their own families could provide for them.”⁷⁷

On the occasion of the World Day for the Rights of the Child, the Ombudsman inaugurated a **mobile education** point this year and said: „Children are human beings with rights, dignity, will and individuality, who deserve the respect, attention and appreciation that adults deserve. However, mere recognition is not enough: states must take constant action to ensure that these conditions are maintained”. The Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights prepared its report for 2023 in February 2024 and Kozma Ákos was heard by Parliament in December 2024.⁷⁸

Based on its annual **report, the National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information** (hereinafter: **NAIH**) has acted in several cases concerning children. In two resolutions, the Authority also touched upon the Gyvt. In two decisions, the Authority re-

ferred to data protection issues related to the notification of signals within the Child Protection Detection and Signaling System pursuant to Article 17. In the case⁷⁹, which is the basis for two otherwise related resolutions, the applicant made a report to the authority concerning the father of his child, requesting the confidential treatment of his data, in relation to the endangerment of his own child, despite the fact that the order of the guardianship authority initiating the procedure contained his name and the fact that the protection procedure was initiated on the basis of the report from the applicant. In the view of the NAIH,⁸⁰, unlike the guardianship authority which was the subject of the proceedings, is not in compliance with the Gyvt. Section 17 (2a) clearly provides that **the closed processing of data covers both the persons who have to give an indication and the persons entitled to give an indication**, i.e. „whoever has given an indication or taken the initiative, his data shall be processed *ex lege* in a closed manner”. The resolution supporting the applicant's position also contains important statements to the effect that *the mandatory closed processing of data under the law ensures that the person who initiated the procedure is protected even during the inspection of the file, and that the per-*

⁷⁷ Extract from the report in case number AJB-3826/2024.

⁷⁸ The mandate of the current Commissioner expires in 2025.

⁷⁹ NAIH-13438/2024

⁸⁰ In this context, the Authority also referred to the legislative justification for the provision, which in turn referred to the relevant provisions of the Council of Europe's Lanzarote Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

son subject to the procedure does not become aware of the person on whose initiative the procedure was initiated.

(...) As part of the protection of children, the legislation thus ensures that those who are obliged to do so do so without fear of reprisals, and that those who are entitled to do so are not deterred from initiating proceedings by fear of negative consequences.”

The NAIH also investigated another aspect of the same case, as the child welfare centre filed a complaint in relation to the report, and the prosecutor’s office in its decision rejecting the complaint did not keep the applicant’s data confidential, despite the fact that the child welfare centre had drawn the applicant’s attention to the request to do so when the complaint was filed. In its resolution⁸¹, the NAIH, in addition to finding an infringement, also stated that **„the child protection referral system extends not only to the protection of children but also to the protection of persons who make a referral on their behalf.** (...) For this reason, the members of the child protection referral system, including in this case the Data Controller, must pay particular attention to the processing, transmission and adequate level of protection of data and

to the compliance with data security requirements”.

In another position paper⁸², the NAIH drew attention to the contradiction between the provisions of the Gyvt. and the Protocol on whether or not criminal proceedings against a parent within the child protection referral system can be shared as criminal personal data between referral system members. In this respect, the Gyvt⁸³. provides for the processing of data on offences committed by a parent against a child and other specified persons, but the Protokoll defines, without restriction, „offence action, criminal proceedings against a minor child and a family member living with him/her” as a serious problem indicating the child’s vulnerability. Under the Protocol, the problems must be documented, and therefore the members of the signalling system have a duty to report, take action and manage data in this respect. As referred to in the report, the **NAIH has also issued a recommendation** to the Minister of the Interior to address the legal regulatory deficiencies in the handling of data in the Child Protection Detection and Indication System processes operated by the Family and Child Welfare Service.

⁸¹ SZTF-84/2024

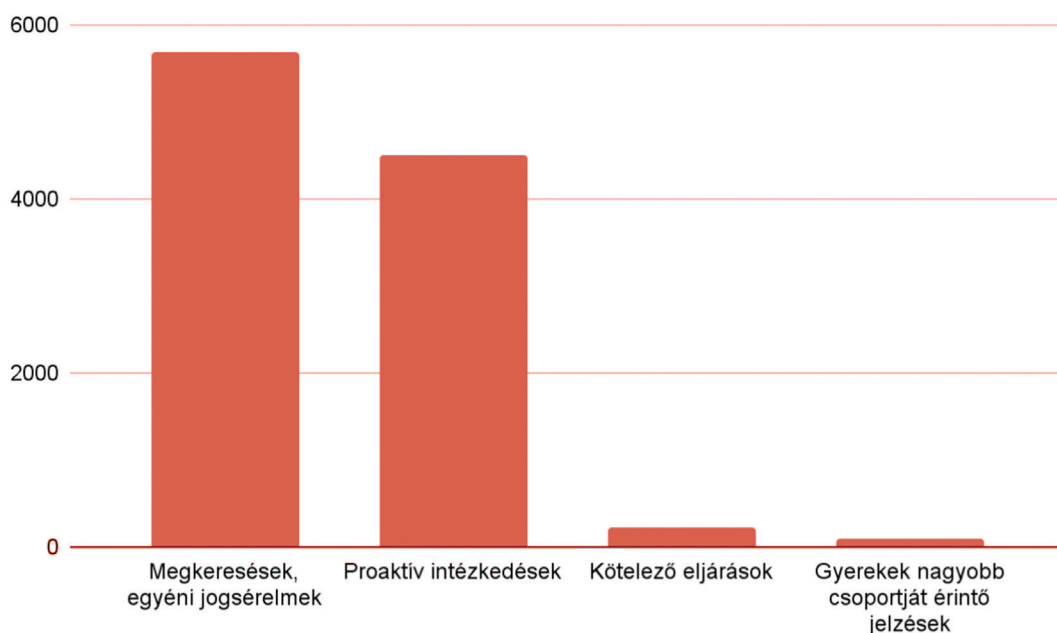
⁸² NAIH-691-2024

⁸³ Pursuant to Paragraph 135 (4) (b) of the Children Welfare Act, the child welfare centre, the guardianship authority, the preventive probation service, the preventive probation officer may, in addition to the data specified in Paragraph (2), process data on offences committed by a parent or other legal representative against a child, another parent raising the child, the person caring for the child and the person living in the same household as the child when providing the benefits or applying the measures specified in Paragraphs (2) to (4) of Article 15.

In the case of children living outside their families and in state care, the protection of **children's rights** is provided by **children's rights representatives** working within the **Integrated Legal Protection Service** (hereinafter: **IJPS**). In July 2023, the 23 posts, which were previously small compared to the tens of thousands of children in care, were reduced to 16. In response to our public interest request, the Ministry of the Interior replied that all children's rights representative posts were filled

for the period 2020-2024. As described in **the ,s report for IJO2024**, the activities of children's rights representatives include responding to enquiries/individual rights violations, taking proactive measures, participating in mandatory procedures and making referrals concerning a larger group of children. The caseload of 16 children's rights representatives reported by the ICJJ for the year 2024 is as follows (see Figure 3) - showing the staggering workload on professionals.⁸⁴

Figure 3. Distribution of children's rights representatives' activities, 2024.



Source of data: IJSZ

⁸⁴ IJSZ Report page 28

This year's 5,690 enquiries, broken down by enquirer, is a change from previous years. 33% of the enquiries came from children's home workers and foster parents, ahead of enquiries from parents (20%). Enquiries initiated by children and young people concerned accounted for 11% of all enquiries⁸⁵. **In 2024, 63% of the referrals related to violation of individual rights were initiated for violation of the right to human dignity.** Based on the data sheets sent to child rights representatives to be filled in in cases of abuse, **526 cases of physical abuse by adults and 859 cases of repeated or serious peer abuse were investigated in 2024.**

The National Authority for Media and Infocommunications (hereinafter: **NMHH**) is responsible for the regulation and supervision of communications and media supervision in Hungary. In the context of the Convention, it is important to mention the NMHH's **research** and campaigns related to online safety. In 2024, the research will include, for example, a survey on the social media habits of 13-16 year olds. **As quoted by** the NMHH, *"the results show that although the majority of children are aware of the dangers, preventive measures such as greater protection of personal data or restrictions on publicly available information are often not taken"*.

In addition to this research, the NMHH also produces publications that are easy for parents and children to understand, for example **on the dangers of** social media.

In 2024, the NMHH's Internet Hotline legal helpline launched a **national media campaign**, *Dare to Ask for Help*, aimed at getting parents and children to recognise online abuse as soon as possible, dare to ask for help if they are in trouble and know where to turn for help. For more information on Internet Hotline 2024, see the section on Privacy.

In 2024, the Media Council also ruled on a number of **cases** which also examined the legal compliance of the media content concerned for children. Several television and radio broadcasters have been **prosecuted** for breaching the age rating.

In its decisions concerning children⁸⁶, the **Constitutional Court** (hereafter: the **Constitutional Court**) has examined a number of constitutional complaints concerning the enforcement of contact in 2024, as in previous years (Table 2).

⁸⁵ IJSZ Report page 35

⁸⁶ The collection was based on the detailed search available on the website of the Constitutional Court; we looked at the decisions in which the term „child” is used in the reasoning. A total of 46 such **decisions** were found, eight of which were examined on the merits by the Constitutional Court.

Table 2. 2024 AB decisions on children's rights

Decision number	Subject of the case	Form of decision	Rights of the child concerned
AB Decision 21/2024 (XI.28.)	refusal of care	Decision	right to healthcare
Decision 22/2024 (XII. 23.) AB	entitlement to childcare allowance	Decision	equality before the law, right to adequate care
AB Decision 3161/2024 (10 May)	recognition of foreign adoptions; same-sex adoptions	Decision	right to adoption, right to a family
AB Decision 3192/2024 (31.V.)	free transfer of municipal property	Decision	right to education
AB Decision 3244/2024 (VII.5.)	carrying out contacts, handing over identity cards	Decision	right to identity, right of access
AB Decision 3322/2024 (29.VII.)	termination of the keeping of an adult child	Decision	the right to maintenance (previously); the right to maintain contact, protection and care, adequate physical development
AB Decision 3384/2024 (XI.8.)	official priced products, conflict with international treaties	Decision	the right to an adequate standard of living and physical development
4/2024 (I. 25.) AB decision	validation of referendum question, public education; time frame for classroom sessions	Decision	right to education

Source of data: **Constitutional Court**

In one of the constitutional complaints before the AB, the petitioner father alleged a violation of his right to privacy and contact after the courts **failed to order the replacement of the contact**, despite the mother's failure to provide the children's identity cards for the duration of the contact. The AB dismissed the complaint, finding **in its decision**⁸⁷ that

the courts had **given adequate reasons for their decision** and that the petitioner **had not shown** that her fundamental rights had been violated. It held that **the lack of identity cards did not in itself preclude contact** and that the failure to provide a replacement was therefore **not unconstitutional**.

⁸⁷ AB Decision 3244/2024 (VII.5.)

The AB has also examined a case⁸⁸ in the context of children's rights, concerning **the refusal of benefits to a minor child**.⁸⁹ It found that the restriction of parental rights in the main case⁹⁰ was proportionate, since the protection of the child's life and physical integrity is paramount.

In another case, the petitioner - a Hungarian-American dual citizen - filed a constitutional complaint with the AB after the Hungarian authorities and courts **refused to register the birth of a child she had previously adopted in California** with her same-sex spouse. The AB rejected the constitutional complaint.⁹¹

In our report, 2023 we wrote about the AB's **decision on the** child care home fee (hereafter: CCF)⁹². In an individual norm review procedure initiated by the judiciary, the AB declared **a version of the Act on Social Administration and Social Benefits (hereinafter: the Social Act)**⁹³ to be contrary to the Fundamen-

tal Law and **annulled it on the grounds that it could lead to unconstitutionally unjustified discrimination**. The judge who brought the case before the AB held that the conditions of the Social Security Code, according to which benefits may only be paid to a relative other than the parents if the parent's entitlement has already been established, are contrary to the prohibition of discrimination. In some cases, 'the parent could not objectively have been in a position to claim the benefit earlier'.

The AB then considered the judicial initiative to be well-founded and annulled the provision in question. The reasoning of the 2023 Report is cited here because, although the AB had previously annulled the relevant translation of the Social Act, which was deemed to be contrary to the Fundamental Law, **the legislator reintroduced it without explanation in the text** of Act LX of 2023⁹⁴ (Amending Act). This was highlighted by a specific

⁸⁸ AB Decision 21/2024 (XI.28.)

⁸⁹ For more on this, see the Best Interest chapter.

⁹⁰ In the main case, the parents refused further treatment for their child undergoing chemotherapy, citing side effects, so the child was placed in temporary foster care, parental custody was suspended and a guardian was appointed. Although the second instance authority annulled the first instance decision, it found that the child was at risk, which was upheld by the Curia, and the parents lodged a constitutional complaint.

⁹¹ For more on this, see the Citizenship chapter.

⁹² 5/2023 (VI. 6.) AB decision

⁹³ The AB declared the following wording of Article 39(1) of Act III of 1993 on Social Administration and Social Benefits to be unconstitutional: 'the parent's entitlement to benefits in respect of the child has already been established, but'. Following the annulment, Section 39(1) of the Social Act now reads as follows: 'Entitlement to child care allowance may also be established for a relative of a child living in the same household as the child other than the parent, provided the conditions set out in Section 38 are met, if the parent has died, the parental custody rights have been transferred to the parent under Section 8:1(1)(2) of the Civil Code, or the child has been deprived of the parental custody rights under Section 8:1(1)(2) of the Civil Code. Paragraph 4:186(1)(a), (c), (e) or (h) or Paragraph 4:186(2), or has been terminated by the court, or has become incapacitated in the permanent and long-term care of the child due to his or her own state of health.'

case in 2024: the application for guardianship of a severely disabled nephew who was caring for his nephew in his own household was rejected on the grounds that the child's parent had not previously been entitled to the benefit, even though the parents had died in 1990. The judge of the Miskolc General Court initiated an individual review procedure in the pending case, and the AB **again annulled the contested legal provision in its decision**. In its reasoning, it confirmed that **carers in the same situation (for example, parents and non-parental relatives) form a ho-**

mogeneous group, so that it would be contrary to the prohibition of unjustified discrimination to extend the benefit only to those for whom the parent was previously entitled to it. In its previous decision, the Board used the same reasoning and annulled the contested provision with retroactive effect from 22 July 2023. The restrictive regulation is still in force, however, because Government Decree No 63/2006 (27.III.) on the implementation of the Social Security Act is an obstacle to the application of the statutory regulation.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Act No LX of 2023 on the organisation of gambling and electronic administration and on the amendment of certain Acts in order to strengthen the coherence of the legal system (Amending Act)

⁹⁵ From the outset, the Government Decree limited the right of succession by requiring the application to be made within three months of the occurrence of the event giving rise to it. The current wording of the Government Decree reads as follows: 'Section 25 (4) A relative other than the parent may submit an application for the assessment of the child care allowance in the event of circumstances within the meaning of Section 39 (1) of the Civil Code, including the parent's right of parental custody under the Civil Code, which are not covered by the provisions of Section 39 (1) of the Civil Code. § 4:186(1)(a), (c), (e) or (h) or § 4:186(2) or termination of parental parental responsibility by a court - may submit the application within three months of the occurrence of the circumstances referred to in paragraph 1 of Article 4:186(1)(a), (c), (e) or (h).' The restrictive regulation is therefore in force.

Dissemination of the Convention

According to Article 42 of the Convention, “States Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention known to a wide circle of adults and children by effective and appropriate means.”

Article 42 requires that education and information on children’s rights should also be provided directly to children and adults around children (e.g. parents, teachers, child protection professionals).⁹⁶

As in previous years, children in the child protection system were specifically targeted by public bodies such as the **ICJ** in 2024, with campaigns on children’s rights. In March, it launched a drawing competition for children in special care entitled „Are you online?

Are you present? **GYERE-K-INTO ONLINE SPACE**”. Also organised by the IJSZ, the „**Going Legal**” card pack on children’s rights was produced to help children in the child protection system to know their rights, to comment on violations and to ask for help.

There were no other state-produced campaigns or awareness-raising projects on children’s rights, human rights or the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2024.

„I think that there is no discussion about it (children’s rights) at all, neither at the social level nor at the school level, and it would be a gap for children who are affected by these rights to have at least a minimum knowledge of them, or at least to know that they exist, and then they can look into it for themselves. I wasn’t told these are your rights, I was told you have rights and I looked it up and I’m a smarter person since then.”

(Insight from a Minor Colleague)

⁹⁶ For children, the legislation in force in 2024 provides for the teaching of the Convention in the 6th grade **ethics subject**, and human rights as a subject in the 12th grade **civics** curriculum.

Teachers can learn about children's rights mainly through university teacher training or through compulsory in-service training. In university teacher training, the Convention is taught in an optional course on **children's rights**. However, there was no accredited training on children's rights available in the mandatory teacher training options in 2024. **The Education Office** did list two courses on human rights education, organised by NGOs⁹⁷.

Training courses for **professionals working in the social care system, accredited by the Margit Slachta National Institute for Social Policy (hereinafter: NSI)**, focusing specifically on children's rights, were available in 2024, organised by non-state institutions⁹⁸. The NSI also **organised** accredited training on disability, equal opportunities and digital child protection.

Civil cooperation

In 2024, the **Thematic Working Group on the Rights of the Child** did not meet once, nor did the **Civil Working Group on the Rights of the Family**, which was set up in 2020 with the aim of strengthening the protection of families, women and children. According to the Ministry of Justice, the „Civil Working Group on Family Rights” is currently inactive. The preparatory and consultative activities on family law legislation within the scope of its tasks and competences are carried out in the „Working Group on Family Law Legislation” and in the

thematic working groups of the Government Working Group on Human Rights. However, for the year 2024, there is no information on the activities of the Working Group on Family Law and no memo on families and children in any of the **thematic Working Groups on Human Rights** for the year in question.⁹⁹

In 2024, the Civil Coalition for Children's Rights, Hungary's largest professional network of children's rights NGOs, issued and submitted statements to the relevant state and governmental bodies

⁹⁷ Although the two courses referred to were still listed in the Education Office's register at the time of writing, they were no longer available at the time of finalising this report, despite the validity of their accreditation (see e.g. **Budapest Esély Nonprofit Kft.**)

⁹⁸ Training sessions with a specific focus on children's rights **were organised** by the Hintalovon Children's Rights Foundation and the Family, Children, Youth Public Benefit Association.

⁹⁹ Of course, sessions on disability, asylum, victim assistance and women's mental health have partly addressed children and the family, but with a narrow focus adapted to their own themes.

in several cases.¹⁰⁰ The Coalition formulated its proposals for the reform of the child protection system in 40 points, and a professional roundtable was convened on 27 March 2024 to discuss these proposals, with several governmental bodies represented.¹⁰¹ As in previous years, in 2024 typically no substantive response¹⁰² was given to the Civil Coalition's positions and submissions, which were not taken into account in the amendments to the child protection legislation.

In 2024, the government has announced a budget of **HUF 13 billion for the National Cooperation .Fund**. The Fund is a grant scheme for NGOs, which aims to redress the inequalities in the 1% of the VAT donation. The list of submitted and awarded applications **is available** online, but it is difficult to identify which organisations' activities are aimed at supporting children.

¹⁰⁰ Among others, **on the best interest of the child in** the context of presidential clemency; **on non-violent children's sports**; on the protection of children in relation to **war posters and messages**; **on the real protection of children**, calling attention to support rather than a punitive approach to child protection; on the circumstances and consequences of the withdrawal of the operating licences of several public education institutions **run by the Hungarian Evangelical Brotherhood (MET)**; and on the effects of **the review of the child protection system**.

¹⁰¹ In December, the Civil Coalition for Children's Rights and some of its member organisations were invited to a **meeting of Committee on Public Welfare** the National Assembly's, where the planned agenda included a review of the state of the child protection system. However, due to the absence of members, the committee meeting was adjourned by the chairman without a quorum, so no formal consultation with the NGOs present took place.

¹⁰² Although a response was received from Dr. Zoltán Maruzsa, the Minister of State for Education, in connection with the resolution calling for the consequences of the revocation of the operating licence of the public education institution run by the Evangelical Brotherhood (MET), he did not respond to the position expressed by the Coalition. Source: Civil Coalition for Children's Rights

B. The concept of the child

C. Overarching principles

The prohibition of discrimination

“States Parties to the Convention shall respect and ensure to children (...) the rights set forth in the Convention without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status, or any other status, of the child or of his or her parents or legal representative.” - Introduction of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 2024, discrimination against children will continue to focus **on** structural discrimination against **Roma** children, the situation of children **with special educational needs and disabilities**, and children **growing up** outside their families **in state care**, while many other issues discussed in other chapters of the report will also be raised as discrimination issues. The groups of children most at risk of discrimination have not changed for many years, including the situation of children (mostly Roma) who are

excluded from their families for financial reasons.

In the broader Hungarian public and political discourse, negative expressions of sexual minorities are primarily aimed at adults and not the children concerned (they remain an invisible social group), but they can also affect them and influence their well-being.

The Rosa Parks Foundation’s **research** 2024 revealed that Roma children are

over-represented among pupils diagnosed with mild intellectual disability, partly due to the subjectivity of diagnostic processes and the lack of procedural safeguards. The expert interviews highlighted that diagnostic tools are not able to fully eliminate the **biases and subjective assessment of professionals**. Moreover, parents are often not adequately involved in the process, which further increases the risk of misdiagnosis. The research emphasises the need for more transparent and objective diagnostic procedures and **more active parental involvement** to prevent undue segregation of Roma children.

A **study** published in 2024 looked at the participation of Roma children in guardianship proceedings, with a particular focus on the conflicts between Roma traditions and the legal system, and the structural discrimination that reflects them. The research report points to the importance of protecting the rights of Roma children and clarifying the boundaries between children's rights, state involvement and parental responsibility in order to promote social inclusion.

Discrimination against Roma children is prominent not only in certain procedures but also in the education system. A **study** published in 2024 analyses the educational situation of the Roma minority in Hungary, highlighting the problems of segregation and low school performance. The majority of the teacher candidates in the research on which this paper is based believed that **the failure of Roma pupils at school was mainly due to an inadequate home environment and parental ignorance**. Although they rejected segregation in schools, they were uncertain about the extent to which cultural differences influence attitudes to learning. This highlights the need for greater emphasis in teacher training to address cultural misconceptions and prejudices and **to increase knowledge about the education of Roma pupils**. The research also shows that cultural differences and social prejudices contribute to the drop-out rate of Roma pupils.

„In 2024, I experienced a lot of discrimination in school based on religion, origin and disease. I had sick classmates in primary school and now in high school, and I find that in both cases they were bullied, and I just don't know what to do in such a situation because I am afraid that if I speak out, I might be bullied.”

(Observation of a Minor Colleague)

Another **study**, published in 2024, examined the socialisation and social integration chances of Roma young people in child protection in Hungary. It found that Roma children are over-represented in the child protection system, partly as a result of poverty and social prejudice. **The socialisation environment in children's homes often does not adequately support young people's preparation for independent living, which can contribute to the re-production of their social exclusion.** Young people in institutional care often leave the system with a lack of education and an uncertain future, making their integration into the labour market and society more difficult. The study stresses the need to reform the child protection system, with a particular focus on improving equal opportunities for Roma youth.

A **comparative analysis**, also published in 2024, looked at educational inequalities for pupils with special educational needs (SNI) in Hungary from 2015 to 2024. The analysis reveals **that although progress has been made in the quality of education over the past two decades, the system remains selective** and SNI pupils are not guaranteed equal access to high-quality education. The study stresses the need for a change in pedagogical approach to allow for **individual learning environments and pathways** for all learners. Inclusive approaches and legislative and institutional changes are also needed to promote inclusive education. The **Deputy Commissioner for the Pro-**

tection of National Minority Rights stated in a **resolution that** in the kindergarten she investigated, children from poorer backgrounds were directly segregated and separated from their more affluent peers, which indirectly disadvantaged Roma children to a greater extent. In the school also investigated, the selection and segregation mechanisms that make it difficult for Roma pupils to have equal access to education were also evident. While in the kindergarten the circumstances were artificially and deliberately created - integration of paid services into the institutional structure - in the school a spontaneous process was set in motion, largely the result of illegal kindergarten practices, with the takeover of 'English' kindergarten groups and the placing of Roma children in the same class, a process that was tolerated with a kind of passivity. According to the Deputy Commissioner, this was a verifiable way of creating and maintaining segregation between disadvantaged and Roma and non-Roma children.¹⁰³

In another **resolution**, following a specific case, the Deputy Commissioner drew attention to the shortcoming of the current lack of a legal framework for the content of pre-school (and school) education and training programmes for national minorities. This, in his view, could lead to a situation where some programmes, often well-intentioned, are mixed up with elements that will essentially address the issue of compensating for poverty-related disadvantages in the

¹⁰³ Resolution of Principles 1/2024 on the risks of segregation in pre-school and school classes.

case of the Roma nationality. The resolution indicated that in the process, the programme may introduce stereotypical twists and approaches which, on the whole, may have an effect contrary to the objectives of nationality education. It may therefore be necessary to provide a legal framework for public education institutions, not only as regards the actual purpose of nationality programmes, but also as regards their possible content.¹⁰⁴

The Equal Treatment Authority, which also plays a key role in children's rights cases and deals with discrimination cases, **was merged** into the AJBH from 1 January 2021, and its tasks are performed by the Directorate General for Equal Treatment of the AJBH (hereinafter: **EBFF**). In 2024, the authority was responsible for 22 cases, including some children's cases. For example, in a decision of 2024¹⁰⁵, it found that a nursery school had breached the requirement of equal treatment for a child with special educational needs and autism spectrum disorder because the nursery school had not provided the child with the necessary specialist qualifications (a nursery school teacher instead of a special needs teacher) to develop his speech and movement, or by being allowed to stay in the institution for a shorter period of time than the other children on a daily

basis, and on one occasion was not allowed to attend nursery school because he was taken on a longer walk with his classmates on that day.

The EBFF also found in the case of another child with autism spectrum disorder¹⁰⁶ that he had been discriminated against **because the school had failed to provide him with the specialist care he needed to meet the requirements of the expert opinion**. The interesting aspect of the case is that the authority did not reprimand the school, which had reported the problem to the school district, but **found the school district centre responsible**, which claimed that there was a shortage of specialists and that it could not fill the vacant post because it was not advertising it and there were no qualified candidates. In view of the above, the school district considered that the specific skills could be acquired through consultation with the EGYMI and the acquisition of autism-specific professional aids, but this argument was not accepted by the authority.

In another case,¹⁰⁷ a settlement was reached between the school and the family of a 5th grade wheelchair-bound child. The parents had complained that the primary school provided education for pupils from grade 6 in a building that was **not accessible**, and that the build-

¹⁰⁴ Policy Statement No. 3/2024 on the ad hoc and general segregation effects of kindergarten admission practices and the content of nationality kindergarten education programmes.

¹⁰⁵ EBF-AJBH-160/2024.

¹⁰⁶ EBF-AJBH-242/2024.

¹⁰⁷ EBF-AJBH-25/2024.

ding used up to grade 5 did not have accessible toilets. In the agreement, the school has undertaken to provide teaching in an accessible educational site and to provide a suitable accessible toilet by 1 September 2024.

A **study** in 2024 looked at a typical form of discrimination against **mothers**, not children, but parents. The UNICEF study found that 91% of mothers return to the labour market, 51% after more than two years out of the labour market and

47% do not continue in their original jobs, while facing serious prejudice and disadvantage. The responsibilities of having children (caring for them at home due to illness, going home early, parent-teacher conferences, attending school and nursery celebrations, etc.) are mainly borne by women, and the labour market „prices” them, so that mothers are penalised in terms of pay and promotion. This phenomenon **hits single-parent families hard, especially single mothers.**¹⁰⁸

Best interests of the child

„According to Article 3 of the Convention, “Public and private social protection institutions, courts, administrative authorities and legislative bodies shall, in all decisions concerning children, give primary consideration to the best interests of the child.”

In 2024, references to the best interests of the child have been introduced in many areas of law enforcement. As in previous years, the right and principle enshrined in the relevant articles of the Convention¹⁰⁹ has been repeatedly referred to in the investigations of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, in the Constitutional Court and in court decisions. The principle of the best interests of the child

continues to be consistently reflected in the practice of the Constitutional Court and the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, as well as in court decisions.

References to the best interests of the child are a regular feature in the reports of the Fundamental Rights Commissioner - this year mainly in relation to specialised child protection services, services

¹⁰⁸ 3/2024. számú elvi állásfoglalás óvodai felvételi gyakorlat eseti és általános szegregációs hatásairól, valamint a nemzetiségi óvodai nevelési programok tartalmáról.

¹⁰⁵ EBF-AJBH-160/2024.

¹⁰⁶ EBF-AJBH-242/2024

provided by public education institutions and guardianship proceedings.¹¹⁰

For example, in one of its 2024 reports, it stated that **the number of children placed in residential care homes in excess of the number specified in the legislation and the operating licence violates the right to protection and care of the children concerned and is not compatible with the principle of best interests of the child**¹¹¹. In another case¹¹² the Ombudsman **stressed that decisions concerning children should always be taken without undue delay and in their best interests**.

In 2024, the reference to the best interests of the child in court decisions continued to be made mainly in cases **at the borderline between children's rights and parental rights**. In a precedent-setting decision¹¹³, the Curia confirmed that the Civil Code. The principles of the Family Code include „*the best interests of the minor child*“¹¹⁴, which is the general guiding principle in all legal relationships involving the minor child”. **In decision-another**¹¹⁵, the Curia stated that the best interests of the child are a key criterion

in the assessment of changes in the exercise of parental authority and the regulation of contact.

In the context of the best interests of the child, a **case from** the Constitutional Court's practice on the **right to refuse care to a minor child**¹¹⁶ is worth highlighting. In the main case, the petitioners' minor child was undergoing chemotherapy treatment, but the parents had refused further interventions due to the side effects of the treatment. As a result, the hospital issued a child protection notification and the child welfare authorities temporarily placed the child in foster care, appointed a child protection guardian and suspended parental custody rights. The appellate authority annulled the first instance decision, but maintained that the child was vulnerable and that the refusal to treat him was an obstacle to his physical development. Finally, the Curia (as a court of third instance) upheld the court's decision, dismissing the parents' action. The parents subsequently lodged a constitutional complaint with the Constitutional Court, arguing that the contested decisions violated the child's right to human dignity (in their

¹¹⁰ For more information, see the chapter on Independent monitoring.

¹¹¹ The investigation underlying report No AJB-3826/2024. This finding is in line with the information we have received from experts during the preparation of the Report, which shows that, in general, the number of children in permanent placements - not exceptional or temporary - is 15-50% higher than in the existing establishments. Until the manuscript was closed, we were unable to confirm this figure from official sources.

¹¹² Case No AJB-1054/2024.

¹¹³ The Curia's precedent-setting **decision** Pfv.20460/2024/10 on the division of community property (division of matrimonial community property).

¹¹⁴ The phrase “*best interest of the child*” in the Convention on the Rights of the Child is translated in Hungarian as “*the best interests of the child*”.

¹¹⁵ The Curia's precedent-setting **decision** Pfv.20877/2024/7 on divorce.

¹¹⁶ AB Decision 21/2024 (XI.28.)

view, the judicial interpretation of the law had removed the legal possibility of refusing treatment); the parents' right to decide on health care; and the parents' parental leave. In fact, the Constitutional Court in this case had to examine **who decides on the refusal of health care for a minor child¹¹⁷: the parent and/or the State; or what is the role of the parent and the State in the decision.**

Referring back to previous decisions¹¹⁸, the AB confirmed in its decision its previous practice that **the provisions of the Fundamental Law on the rights of the child and the rights of the parent form a close unit**, with the best interests of the child at its centre. **The parents' right to education is primary, but not unlimited**: only decisions which are in the best interests of the child are constitutionally protected, while the role of the State is secondary, complementary and, where necessary, substitutive. The State's role is to ensure the functioning of an adequate institutional system, to provide professional support to parents and to intervene in individual cases where parents do not exercise their right to education or do so

inadequately.

The Constitutional Court rejected the constitutional complaint on the grounds that the interpretation of the law by the courts did not violate the child's right to self-determination and protection. It acknowledged that the parents' right to bring up their children had been restricted to a certain extent (taking into protection), but that this interference met the requirements of necessity and proportionality laid down in the Fundamental Law. It stressed that **the right to decide remained with the parents, but that it was in the interest of society as a whole that parents should not be left to bear the burden of the decision alone and, where appropriate, should receive support from the State** to ensure that the best interests of the child were served.¹¹⁹

In addition to the findings of the courts, the Constitutional Court and the Ombudsman, it is also inevitable to examine **any changes to legislation on child protection** in the light of the best interests of children.¹²⁰ The amendments have introduced new eligibility requirements and

¹¹⁷ This is part of the right to self-determination derived from human dignity.

¹¹⁸ AB Decision 9/2021 (17.III.) and AB Decision 17/2021 (13.V.)

¹¹⁹ It should be noted that the decision does not provide any meaningful information on the circumstances and opinion of the child; there is only one reference to the fact that, according to the Health Act, the minor's opinion must be taken into account to the extent professionally possible, even if someone else decides for him or her. Beyond this, however, no further substantive statement is made about the child's opinion. It is also not known in what way the possibility of expressing an opinion has been given in the main proceedings. Although the age of the child is not known, the question arises as to how the best interests of the child can be served in proceedings in which the child is entirely excluded. The civil society organisation representing parents (TASZ) criticised the decision of the Constitutional Court as follows: *"The Constitutional Court's decision did not examine the reasons behind the parents' decision to refuse care with regard to the child's right to self-determination and protection, and thus the legality of the decision and the unilateral approach of the court, which relied solely on the opinion of the child's treating physician, in terms of the best interests of the child. In so doing, it omitted from the assessment a number of factors which might have called into question the existence of the child's vulnerability and thus the lawfulness of the activation of the guardianship powers."*

¹²⁰ The legislative changes adopted in 2024 to strengthen the protection of children are listed in the Legislation and measures section of the report. These include, among others, the 13th Amendment to the Fundamental Law, the Gyvt. and its implementing decree, and the amendment of the Criminal Code (Btk.).

strengthened the supervision of those working in the child protection system. **According to professional opinion**¹²¹, the regulatory environment has shifted significantly towards a sanction-oriented approach, **focusing on strengthening criminal liability and sanctions, with a focus on the best interests of the child, and to the detriment of an integrated, supportive professional approach** and adequate financial, mental health and infrastructure support for child protection workers.

Overall, the principle of the best interests of the child, the reference to the protection and best interests of children **has become even more prominent** in both legislation and public discourse in 2024. At the same time, however, there is still a lack of consistent and sufficiently developed practice at the level of judicial and constitutional court decisions on the best interests of the child, which could provide interpretative guidance for the application of the principle¹²². **On the other hand, it is a matter of concern that in many cases, the protection of the best interests of the child is invoked primarily as a justification for regulations that are based on law enforcement, national security and sanctioning logic.** This approach, according to professional **views**,

does not sufficiently reflect the need for a complex, interdisciplinary approach to child protection and does not adequately address the systemic challenges that hinder the effective implementation of children's rights.

In Vagdalt v Hungary, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) analysed the best interests of the child in a children's rights case and highlighted a number of serious problems and concerns with the practice¹²³. The case was based on the fact that the complainant was not recognised as the father of his daughter and instead the child's mother's spouse was registered as the child's father, but DNA testing showed that the complainant was the biological father of the child. The Hungarian authorities considered that the paternity proceedings to resolve the child's family situation would have been in the best interests of the child, but due to errors and omissions in the procedures, they were unsuccessful. All proceedings to establish (contest) paternity were time-barred and the complainant was deprived of any possibility to establish a legal relationship with his daughter. The ECtHR acknowledged that the legislation contained safeguards which, in principle, allowed all interests to be examined in

¹²¹ See also Prof. Dr. István László Gál: The past and possible future of the legal institution of presidential pardon. <https://ujbtk.hu/prof-dr-gal-istvan-laszlo-a-koztarsasagi-elnoki-kegyelem-jogintezmenyenek-multja-es-lehetseges-jovoje/> (last download: 23.03.2025.)

¹²² See, for example, Attila Láposy's **study** "Regarding Risks and Side Effects", In: Legal Cases, 2024/3, pp.112-121. The author refers to Zsuzsa Szakály's *decision of the Constitutional Court in the case of the unlawful removal of a child*, In: Legal Cases, 2021/1, p.38; and Ágnes Lux's study "The rights of children", In: András Jakab - Balázs Fekete (eds.): *Internet Encyclopaedia of Legal Studies*, 2018. <https://ijoten.hu/szocikk/a-gyermekek-jogai> (last download 01.04.2025).

¹²³ Vagdalt's case against Hungary, Case No 9.525/19, the judgment became final on 7 June 2024.

proceedings concerning the family status of a child. However, in the case of the applicant, the determining authorities and courts paid little attention to the practical application of these safeguards and failed to ensure that the applicant's rights and interests were duly taken into account. The ECtHR has „noted with concern” the number of annulments in the paternity case, decisions which are incompatible with the facts. It was concerned about the conduct of the administrator in disregarding previous instructions, in particular as the-

re was no accessible procedure for the applicant to directly request a legal determination of his paternity. The decision pointed out that, in the meantime, the length of the procedure inevitably reduced and ultimately eliminated any prospect of a successful outcome. The ECtHR thus concluded that the Hungarian State had failed to ensure respect for the applicant's family life, even taking into account the margin of appreciation granted to it, in violation of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Respecting the views of the child

“States Parties to the Convention shall ensure to the child the right to freedom of expression in all matters of concern to him or her. The views of the child shall be given due weight, having regard to his or her age and degree of maturity”
- Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The **National Student Parliament** met in Székesfehérvár between 22 and 24 March 2024. The 112-member body was informed about the implementation of the **previous year's** recommendations. The drafting committee formulated 63 topical recommendations for the

improvement of education and student life and, after a final vote, **they were handed over to** the State Secretary for Education¹²⁴ - 23 of which have been fulfilled in full or in part by the time the manuscript was closed a year later.

¹²⁴ The recommendations are available on an **official website** for students. According to an update on 21 March 2025, the site's editorial team understands that 23 of these recommendations have been partially or fully met, 26 have not been met and 14 are in progress. For example: the right of the DGB to have a say in the appointment of the head of the institution; a single Student Parliament with the possibility of participation of students in vocational education and training; and the maintenance budget support for the DGB.



Source: **Children's Rescue**

Until the next meeting of the **National Student Parliament**, the National Student Council (hereinafter: ODT) is responsible for **monitoring the implementation of the recommendations**. The National Council of Students meets in Budapest, with one **external meeting** per year in Székesfehérvár. Its members represent the points voted in the Student Parliament and negotiate with the State Secretariat for Public Education of the Ministry of the Interior.

In November 2024, **meetings of the county student parliaments** were also held in all 19 counties and in the capital. The Education Office was responsible for organising the meetings. The minutes of the county student parliaments are publicly available **online**. All meetings were structured around similar agendas. The members of the National Student Council reported on their annual activities and the elections of delegates

to the National Student Parliament and the National Student Council were held. The meetings also usually allowed room for institutional delegates to convey the views of students and the proposals of local student councils. These ideas mainly concerned education and the improvement of school life. **Infrastructural improvements in the institutions** and improvements to the **canteen** were recurrent themes. Where the needs raised by the institutional delegates went beyond the remit of the school district, proposals were made which the county delegates will present to the National Student Parliament in 2025.

A **study** published in 2024 examined the views of secondary school students on their participation in school student councils (hereafter: DGBs), with a particular focus on the role of DGBs in democratic education and civic socialisation. The authors point out that, although

the legal framework of student councils provides opportunities for students to participate in school decision-making, in practice these opportunities often remain unexploited. The study stresses that the DGB is not only a representative body but also an important educational space that can contribute to the development of young people's democratic values and active citizenship. However, globalisation, media influences and the diminishing role of traditional communities pose new challenges for young people, which affect their participation in the DGB and the effectiveness of democratic education.

Another **study** in 2024, although not only with the participation of under-18s, examined discourses on the political participation of Hungarian youth in different social contexts based on qualitative research. In the material, which is also relevant from a children's rights perspective, the authors identify four types of participatory attitudes: those of system-critical activists, issue-oriented pragmatists, those who turn away from formal politics and indifferent abstainers. The research shows that young people's attitudes to politics are diverse, often critical, and not exclusively based on party politics, but dominated by value-based, issue-oriented forms of participation. Political apathy is often underpinned by a sense of mistrust, frustration and ineffectiveness.

On the occasion of World Children's Rights Day, Parliament and the International Children's Emergency Service **organised a Children and Youth** Parliament. **The event**, which took place

in the Parliament, was attended by 300 children who were able to question government officials on the issues raised. Among other things, they asked questions about phone restrictions in schools and environmental protection. UNICEF delegates **were** also in parliament on the latter topic.

The Municipal Student Council, established in 2023, **held its first presidential election in** June 2024 and started its operations. The aim of the student representative body is to make a difference for the students of Budapest and to increase the effectiveness of student governments. During the election of the President, the founding documents of the Budapest Student Council and other officers were voted in. Their activities were documented **in a public Facebook group**. In 2024, a questionnaire was sent out to students on the restriction of telecommunication devices in schools and on students' mental health. On the former, they circulated an open letter to the State Secretary for Public Education.

Ahead of the 2024 municipal elections, the joint election programme of the ADOM Student Movement, the United Student Front and Fridays For Future Hungary, the **Our Budapest** programme, was presented. **The aim of the programme is to** „make life easier for students and young people in Budapest” through measures at municipal level. The student organisations have held talks with **Gergely Karácsony** and **Dávid Vitézy**, candidates for mayor. Following his election, Gergely Karácsony presented the programme to the Municipal Assembly of Budapest, referring to

the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and stating that „*The Municipality of Budapest is committed to democracy, dialogue and participation, and therefore we will ensure the participation of young people in decision-making processes to the greatest extent possible, in line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.*” A criticism of the proposal in the Assembly was that it was not representative of the youth of Budapest. The three student organisations that launched the programme **announced** in a statement that they had had the opportunity for constructive, direct consultation with the Mayor and others. Following the decision of the General Assembly, **the programme could be launched** finally from November 2024, with the agreement to launch a parallel public consultation to involve more students concerned.

In 2024, Eurochild, CSAGYI, Partners Hungary and Wesley János College of Pastoral Studies continued their joint municipal child participation programme in Józsefváros. Within the framework of the **JÓKER** programme, several local programmes **were held** and a child participation handbook is being produced.

On 1 June 2024, the **Civil Convergence Forum** - Civil Convergence Public Benefit Foundation organised a Peace March in Budapest, which was given a political context by the war in Ukraine and the related peace issue. The event **was reported to have been** attended by children and families. Children also appeared in **a play** performed by actors from the National Theatre before Viktor Orbán's speech. Seven child actors stood on the

stage on Margaret Island, contributing to the performance with repeated cries of „I don't want war!”. On 4 June, the Civil Coalition for Children's Rights issued a **statement on** the impact of war rhetoric and political campaigns on children, and on children's participation in political events: „*War rhetoric and fear-mongering, not only in campaign posters in public spaces, television commercials, internet sites, programmes and films specifically for children, but also at campaign events featuring children, violate the rights of the child as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children should not be actors, props or tools in party politics.*”

D. Civil rights and liberties

Citizenship

Hungary provides all children born on its territory with a birth certificate, which is exemplary and ensures recognition as a stateless person for those who are not recognised as citizens by any state applying its own law. However, there are still systemic gaps in access to the procedure, in the rights conferred by stateless status and in the prevention of statelessness at birth¹²⁵. The Citizenship Act restrictively allows only children born stateless (i.e. who do not inherit the citizenship of either parent) to acquire Hungarian citizenship if they are resident in Hungary^{126,127}. However, stateless persons are not allowed to establish a residence, so a child born in Hungary to stateless parents becomes stateless at birth, in

violation of the International Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. After 5 years, a person who establishes his/her residence in Hungary when he/she is a minor can apply for naturalisation on a preferential basis.¹²⁸ However, a specific feature of the naturalisation procedure is that the President of the Republic has discretionary powers and the reasons for the decision taken cannot be disclosed to the applicant, nor can a negative decision be challenged in court.

According to the interpretation of the Constitutional Court **in its decision of 2024¹²⁹, preferential naturalisation of an adopted child is only possible if the foreign decision on the basis of which**

¹²⁵ A detailed country report on statelessness and citizenship is available on the Statelessness Index - Hungary update: <https://index.statelessness.eu/country/hungary>

¹²⁶ The concept of domicile is defined in Act LXVI of 1992 on the Registration of Personal Data and Addresses of Citizens. Only Hungarian citizens, foreigners recognised as refugees or as protected persons, foreigners holding a national settlement permit issued in the interest of the national economy and foreigners with a long-term residence permit are entitled to establish such a residence. Those who are in the country on other legal grounds - for example, they have a residence permit - are not allowed to establish a residence, their address is called accommodation by law. However, many entitlements are only available to those who have a residence.

¹²⁷ Áptv. Section 5/A (1) (d).

¹²⁸ AB Decision 3161/2024 (10 May)

¹²⁹ AB Decision 3161/2024 (10 May)

the adoption is based is in line with Hungarian public policy, as in its absence the foreign decision cannot be recognised and the child cannot be registered. The Hungarian-American parent concerned in the case had applied for the registration of his child as a single parent in Hungary, but had previously adopted the child together with his same-sex spouse on the basis of a decision

of a Californian court, which was found to be contrary to Hungarian public policy by the Government Office, then by the Metropolitan Court and finally by the Constitutional Court. The child was therefore not entitled to acquire Hungarian citizenship through preferential naturalisation.

Freedom of association and peaceful assembly

In the year 2024, the public policy discourse was still shaped by several organisations and movements that were created by young people in a bottom-up way. The number of movements on the state of the education system has radically decreased, but a new element has emerged in the form of stronger alliances and cooperation between student movements.

Youth movements, including the **United Student Front**, the **Adom Student Movement** and **Fridays for Future Hungary**, have continued to **play an active role in organising the 2024 protests**. On 13 January, **dozens of** young people gathered **at the demonstration** „Wage increase, not a loss of face!”, where several young people spoke on behalf of the United Student Front.

Source: United Student Front - **Facebook**



The impact of the early February 2024 clemency case on children was also reflected in the fact that the above-mentioned organisations organised three protests in different configurations. Members of student organisations also spoke at the events. **On 9 February**, the „TAKE ACTION! Protect the children!”, and **on 21 February** a silent torchlight **march** for abused children entitled „Hands off the children, that’s not enough!” was held. **On 27 April**, a child protection **demonstration** was organised under the title „It’s the end, run away!”

On 1 March, the United Student Front, the Adom Student Movement and Fridays for Future Hungary held a short **flash mob** and press conference in the garden of the Hungarian National Museum. Under the slogan „Our city should be about us!”, students were encouraged to fill in a questionnaire asking for their opinions on issues related to Budapest. On the same occasion, they also announced their 15 March demonstration „One country, one future”, which was later modified and moved **to the** rally on Free Press Road. Here, members of all three student movements had the opportunity to **speak** on stage.

„Among my friends, among the young people, very few go to protests. I think some of them don’t go because they have no idea how it is possible. Others, I think, because they are afraid of getting into trouble or maybe they just feel that there is no point in going. I was at two protests last year, the one about the paedophile scandal and the one about the headmaster, the telephone thing. I saw very few young people at the paedophile one in particular. At least I seem to remember that if we did see any, very few. Well, obviously more on the headmaster’s, because there it’s about the schools, but I don’t think there were enough of our age group there either.”

(Observation of a colleague who is a minor)

As of 1 September 2024 (following a regulation that came into force in August), the rules on the use of smart devices in schools have changed, which has gene-

rated a major public debate.¹³⁰ The management of a high school in Budapest **has openly stated** that they will not take away mobile phones and other digital de-

¹³⁰ For more on this, see Legislation and measures and Privacy.

vices from students before classes, despite the fact that the regulation obliged schools to do so. The headmaster was subsequently dismissed from his post with immediate effect by the Ministry of the Interior. Following the notification, several protests were organised by the students of the high school. **On the evening of** 28 August, hundreds of people, including many students, gathered in front of the high school building. On

2 September, protests were held outside the school in the morning and in **front of the Ministry of the Interior in the evening**. Speakers explained why they found the dismissal of the headmaster unacceptable and also discussed the legality of the restrictions on the use of the telephone. Several former and current students of the high school spoke at the protests, and a significant number of students were among the participants.



Source: **24.hu**

On 18 October, student movements have **called for a demonstration** for better education under the title „Why should we be afraid?”. However, a day before the event, they shared on Facebook that the demonstration was cancelled. „Unfortunately, we felt that we were not able to reach enough people, and we certainly

did not want the event to have a message or an echo that might be contrary to its purpose. This incident also confirms that in 2024, the activity of student movements and people’s enthusiasm for demonstrations decreased, resulting in fewer demonstrations and fewer participants.

Protecting privacy

According to the response to public interest data requests by the **Internet Hotline** of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH), in 2024, they **received 1,425 reports of**

harmful content (Table 3), which is lower than in 2023 (1983 reports, of which 850 were related to child pornography and 375 to online harassment).

Table 3: Number of reports received by the NMHH Internet Hotline by type of infringing harmful content

Nature of infringing, harmful content	Number of notifications in 2024
Child pornography	379
Unconsented content	372
Phishing content	271
Content related to online harassment	170
Other content harmful to minors	116
Racist, xenophobic content	64
Content inciting or promoting violent illegal acts	49
Violent, inciting or promoting illegal acts	4
Total	1425

Source of data: NMHH

A national **study** published in 2024 looked at the relationship between technology use and student performance. The research reveals that mobile phone usage habits are associated with students’ cognitive abilities, which are relevant for learning. The results showed that **spending less than an hour or two on the internet has an overall positive effect**, for example on the development of

inductive thinking, but that spending more than this has **a significant negative** impact on thinking skills in terms of learning.

Children’s right to privacy includes rights to privacy, such as the right to have contact, to respect for private and family life, home and reputation.¹³¹ These rights also extend to the protection of

¹³¹ Fundamental Law Article VI

personal data and to the disclosure and dissemination of data of public interest. From these fundamental rights derive **the right to images**, which takes on a new meaning, particularly in the digital space. Today, smart devices play an important role in the exercise of many children's rights, including the **right to privacy, the right to adequate information and the right to digital self-determination**. They enable children to stay in touch with their families, access information and develop an awareness of their online presence and digital identity. This is why the regulation restricting the use of smart devices by students has provoked such a backlash.¹³² Students have written open letters **protesting** against the regulation, arguing that their right to privacy includes the **safe storage and safekeeping of their phones and the interference with their ability to communicate with their parents and peers**. The PDSO demanded **in an open letter that** the regulation be withdrawn, arguing that it violates, among other things, children's **right to property, educational autonomy** and that its implementation is unclear.¹³³

In 2024, several national **studies**¹³⁴ have also addressed the issue of children's right to privacy in the context of sharenting, i.e. the online portrayal of children by parents. A central question in the (legal) analysis of **image sharing** is how to assess the behaviour of parents when sharing images of their children on digital platforms. One author writes **in his thesis** that one aspect of the problem is the untraceable series of content uploaded to the Internet, which can be open to abuse, and the question: who represents the child's interests in a situation where it is the legal representative - the parent - who is potentially violating them? **By sharing images and information about the child, the parent, in exercising his or her fundamental right to information, is interfering with the private autonomy and privacy of the child**. Under the balancing of interests test, if there is a real risk that the uploaded images will be misappropriated, the child's rights - in particular his or her right to the protection of personal data and privacy - take **precedence**.

„Many parents are not aware of what privacy is and easily invade the privacy of their children. Parents post about them without their children's permission, and this also affects their privacy, especially later on when the children see it. I have friends who even reach under their mattress for their phone to look at it after the child has fallen asleep. So I think it's an absolute violation of the right to privacy.”

(Insight from a Minor Colleague)

¹³² For more information, see Legislation and measures.

¹³³ For more on this, see Legislation and measures.

¹³⁴ See also Orsolya Szeibert: Children and parents in the digital world, with special reference to the phenomenon and perception of sharenting. In Family Law. 2024/4, 33-36 (available at: <https://szakcikkadat-bazis.hu/doc/1846002>) last downloaded 25.03.2025.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly at the forefront of the challenges in the digital environment. **A study** by 2024 suggests that as AI becomes more embedded in everyday life - from personalised tools for education to algorithms that control social media - it becomes essential to examine **how AI technology affects children's rights**. In this respect, particular attention needs to be paid to privacy, data control, child autonomy and ensuring access to appropriate content.

The NAIH has acted in several cases involving the processing of minors this year. In one case,¹³⁵ based on its annual **report**, it found that the data recorded by the mother who sought help on the helpline because of an abusive relationship was lawfully withheld from the father who shared parental authority with the

mother, because the (protected) data processed in the context of its role in preventing violence between relatives could be considered to be in the **public interest, in terms** of life, limb, dignity and the protection of personal data.¹³⁶

In the view of the NAIH, in this case **the fundamental rights of the person seeking help as the alleged victim are stronger than the other party's right to informational self-determination, as there is a stronger societal interest in allowing anyone to call the helpline in confidence**. With regard to the data of the child, the Authority has found that the father, as the legal representative, has the right to make a request for access, but that **there may be a limit to the disclosure of the data if disclosure would be detrimental to the interests of the child**.

Access to the right information

“States Parties to the Convention (...) shall ensure that the child has access to information and materials from a variety of domestic and international sources, in particular those which are designed to promote his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health.” - Extract from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

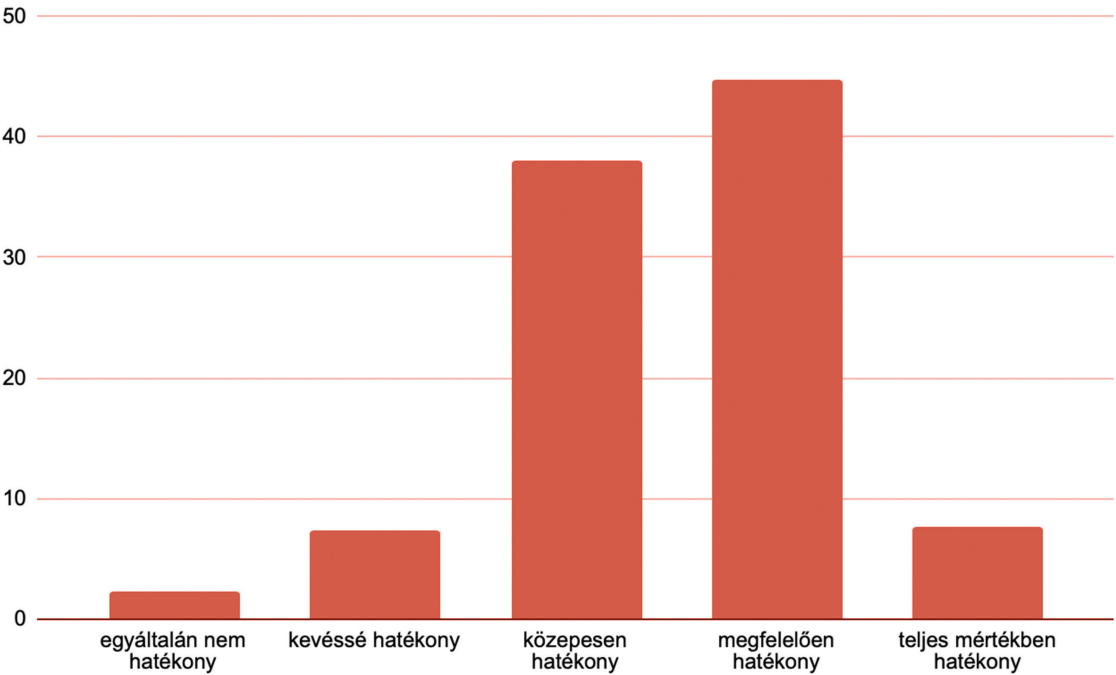
¹³⁵ NAIH-4839/2024.

¹³⁶ Under the GDPR's concept of personal data, the same data may relate to more than one person, and thus constitute shared personal data, access to which requires an individual assessment of the rights and legitimate interests of each data subject, and, where these conflict, a balancing of which data subject's rights are more protected than others.

In 2024, the NMHH published a survey with 667 students on young people’s views on AI - particularly in relation to education and digital media content. The survey found that **10.5% of** respondents aged 14-21 **used** a subscription-based AI service, but that the prevalence of subscription-based use increases with age, especially for ChatGPT. The vast majority of students **rated the use of AI in learning as moderately or fairly effective**, but they attributed this to rapid problem solving rather than to their own development (see Figure 4) In the

focus group interviews, students expressed mixed, mostly **critical views of** AI: many lacked the ‘soul’ and emotion of machine creations, and were concerned about credibility, quality of teaching and future jobs. However, they also recognised the benefits of AI, citing time savings or the possibility of creating visuals. From a child participation point of view, the direct involvement of children and the display of their opinions and quotes is a particularly valuable element of the research.

Figure 4. Perceptions of the effectiveness of AI for learning among young people aged 14-21¹³⁷.



Source of data: NMHH

¹³⁷ The table is based on the graph in the NMHH study referred to.

The 2024 legislative changes will affect children's right to adequate access to information and information, in particular with regard to informed and responsible use of the internet and media.¹³⁸ In parallel to the legislative amendments, the NMHH, together with the Apor Vilmos Catholic College, has launched **a Net Coach programme in 2024**, which aims to **train digital media-savvy professionals**. Initially, the programme was open to teachers, students of education, or those working in the fields of media communication, vocational training, higher education or psychology. In addition, this year new members have joined the **Child Internet Roundtable**, which supports the NMHH's work with recommendations on how to promote child-friendly internet use.

The NAIH has also investigated cases related to children's rights **in relation to public interest data requests** this year. In one case¹³⁹, a school district refused a request for data of public interest from a whistleblower, claiming that it did not have the legal basis to release the requested data. However, the NAIH pointed out that **the names, education and qualifications of teachers are public data of public interest, which edu-**

cational institutions must publish on the KIR platform and on their websites, and requested the school district to release the requested data, which it finally did.

In another case¹⁴⁰, the applicant submitted a public interest request for data on the answers to the background questionnaires sent out in the framework of the National Competence Survey, including school infrastructure, teachers, number of pupils. The data controller released the data for 2018-2022, but refused to release information for the 2023 measurement, citing ongoing processing. It refused to answer certain questions on the grounds that they constituted pre-decisional data. The NAIH pointed out, however, that **there is an overriding public interest in the disclosure of such data because of children's right to education and** that it is not acceptable to justify withholding data on the grounds of unspecified future decisions. ***„It is in the public interest that real problems relating to education are identified and that decisions are taken to address them in a way that is reasonable and in line with societal expectations (...) The Authority's position is that in the present case the release of data in the public***

¹³⁸ For more on this, see Legislation and measures.

¹³⁹ NAIH-2058/2024

¹⁴⁰ NAIH-4306/2024

*interest serves the fundamental rights of society and of children, and not their concealment”.*¹⁴¹ After repeated requests by the NAIH, the controller finally complied with the data request.

Regarding the teaching practice of teachers in public education institutions, a bill was adopted in autumn 2024¹⁴² which further restricts **the range of textbooks that can be used in teaching and only allows publications listed in the textbook register**. Responsibility for enforcing this rule lies with the head of the institution¹⁴³, who is responsible for monitoring the books and teaching aids used by teachers. **According to experts**, this amendment is probably a response to a „loophole” whereby some institutions continue to use books and other

teaching aids published by established private publishers which do not necessarily reflect the approach of the NAT. The tightening, which will come into force on 1 January 2025, **has been sharply criticised by** a number of NGOs and the Teachers’ Union. During the public consultation on the draft law, 32 comments were received from NGOs and professional organisations, 27 of which were rejected by the ministry. Teachers of history and Hungarian stressed **in their** protest that it is essential for them to be able to teach on the basis of their professional knowledge and universal values. We believe that it is also in the interest of students to use the most relevant, useful and up-to-date professional materials in their teaching.

„In recent times, the brutal amount of fake news has made it very difficult for children to choose which news sources to get their information from, and because of this difficulty, many choose not to read the news, not to inform themselves, which results in many children not having a realistic view of the world. In school, public discourse is often stifled, saying we shouldn’t be political when we are simply trying to talk about things that affect everyday life.”

(Insight from a Minor Colleague)

The lack of news sites in Hungarian that offer both reliable, up-to-date content and content that is understandable and appealing to children remains a serious gap. In addition, especially with the rise of artificial intelligence, it is more im-

portant than ever to regularly measure children’s digital media and internet use habits, as this data can be used as a basis for effective measures that respond to children’s real needs.

¹⁴¹ The National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information’s Annual **Report** 2024, page 154

¹⁴² Act LII of 2023 on the New Careers of Teachers, Article 67(1)(19).

¹⁴³ Article 75(2)(a) of Act LII of 2023 on the New Careers of Teachers: ‘...for the pedagogical work and the use of textbooks from the textbook catalogue and the textbooks that correspond to the valid values of the Fundamental Law and the National Curriculum...’.

E. Violence against children

“States Parties to the Convention shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of violence, assault, physical and mental abuse, abandonment or neglect, ill-treatment or exploitation, including sexual violence (...)” - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19

Abuse, neglect

In 2024, in connection with the ‘pardon case,’ the issue of violence against children received significant attention. This period highlighted both preventive measures and approaches to addressing such problems, notably the changes that came into effect on 1 September 2024, affecting members of the child protection observation and reporting system. (index: 144)

The most recent available data on the number of signals sent by the detection and signalling system is for 2023¹⁴⁴. **In 2023, a total of 159 505** signals were received by family and child welfare ser-

vices or centres, of which almost half (44%) 70 512 signals - as in previous years - were received from public education and vocational training institutions. **Of the signals** received, **110 056** concerned children aged 0-17 years. One third of the signals were repeated signals or signals concerning several children or a cause of danger at the same time. The number of signals received increased dramatically in 2023 (50% increase compared to the previous year), which is not yet¹⁴⁵ a consequence of the tightening of the detection and signalling system, but the number of signals sent may increase further in the following years due

¹⁴⁴ Data source: data collection No 1696 OSAP of the KSH (Data on family and child welfare services)

¹⁴⁵ In 2023, 159 505, in 2022 106 130 and in 2021 103 377 signals were received by family and child welfare services and centres. Based on KSH 1696 OSAP data.

to the tightening of the regulation. How the system will cope with the increased workload and what changes in the number and situation of children at risk will become clear in 2025.

A 2024 **study by** the National Institute of Criminology, examining the relationship between the concealment of child abuse cases and the child protection (justice) system, found that the more concealed the abused children, the greater the problems in the child protecti-

on system. This also implies that if the functioning of the child protection system improves, the level of hidden abuse will decrease.

According to KSH data for 2023, **5830 children** were registered for **physical abuse**, **7618 for emotional abuse**, **1039 for sexual abuse** and **47 286 for neglect**¹⁴⁶ (see Table 4) The number of children registered increased for all types of abuse except sexual abuse.

4. táblázat: A család- és gyermekjóléti szolgálatoknál és központoknál ellátott bántalmazott és elhanyagolt gyerekek száma, 2022-2023.

Data on abused and	2022	2023
Physical abuse	5 083	5 830
Psychological abuse	6 901	7 618
Sexual assault	1013	1 039
Neglect	41 489	47 286
Total:	54 486	61 773

Data source: 1696 OSAP data collection

The data also show that in 2023, all forms of child maltreatment were still **far more** prevalent **within families than outside families** (see Table 5).

Table 5. Number of abused and neglected children in care at family and child welfare services and centres by place of occurrence, 2023.

	Number of domestic cases	Number of cases outside the family
Physical abuse	5 175	655
Psychological abuse	6 981	637
Sexual assault	811	228
Neglect	47 286	not relevant ¹⁴⁷

Data source: 1696 OSAP data collection

According to the response of the National Child Protection Specialist Service (hereinafter: **OGYSZ**) to the public interest data request, the OGYSZ received **103 reports in 2024** through the Hearing and Therapy Centres - all of them involving minor children. Of these, the number of physical abuse cases (83) is particularly high compared to the number of sexual abuse cases (18) and emotional abuse cases (2). Adult abuse was almost twice as common and **peer abuse six times more common** in the place of care compared to abuse in other places. **In 2023**, there were **36 reports** of child abuse, more than tripling the number of reports in this group in one year. The Directorate General for Social Protection of Children (DG SPCIC) also sent the number of reports it received for the institutions it runs¹⁴⁸. In 2024, the DG received 1619 reports for children's homes, 56 from specialised central children's homes, 99 from foster homes and 26 from reformatories. The majority

of all reports (around 70%) concerned peer abuse, with a smaller proportion of reports of abuse by adults. The majority of the reports concerned physical abuse (1,322), 428 reports of emotional abuse, 337 of sexual abuse and 44 of neglect, suggesting that there were reports of more than one type of abuse. These reports resulted in 972 cases of separation of victims and abusers, 49 cases of immediate change of placement, 98 cases of initiation of change of placement, 1474 cases of psychological support for the child, 37 cases of initiation of expert examination of the child and 12 cases of dismissal of a staff member. On the positive side (as mentioned in the chapter on Legislation and measures), the protocol **on** the investigation and treatment of child abuse cases for child protection institutions and foster care networks was updated in 2024 - however, the problem is that the possibilities for prevention and treatment within the organisation remain limited.¹⁴⁹

„Many times we have experienced peer abuse in communities, but many people do not recognise that they are abused or abusers. And in these situations, we often don't know what the right thing to do is, and there is a fear that if we speak out, we will be abused later. Abuse also includes self-harm, where the person is hurting themselves, and even here they may not actually recognise that it is abuse.”

(Insight of a Minor Colleague)

¹⁴⁶ Data source: data collection No 1696 of the KSH OSAP (Data on family and child welfare services)

¹⁴⁷ Children in specialised care are not included in primary care data, so this category is not relevant here. Children are recorded if they are known to the family and child welfare service or centre during the reference year (through social assistance provided by the service or through a signalling system).

¹⁴⁸ As of 1 July 2021, there is no foster care network in the Directorate General.

¹⁴⁹ The specialised care processes experienced in 2024, such as staff turnover, the continuous reorganisation and temporary suspension of sites and teams, have created a difficult situation for all actors. The overcrowding of the teams and the lack of professionals are bound to generate internal dynamics which increase the risk of peer abuse and reduce the possibility of an adequate institutional response to cases of abuse (basically due to the workload of professionals and the lack of a long-term relationship of trust with children).

According to crime statistics, in 2024, children **were victims of a total of 6387 crimes**. Of these, **1,316** children under the age of 18 were recorded as victims of **child endangerment** offences in 2024.¹⁵⁰ (see Table 6) The overall number of children victims of child endangerment

offences has increased in recent years, but decreased slightly in 2024. The number of **assault** offences against 0-17 year olds in 2024 was 1,196 according to the Uniform Crime Statistics for Investigation and Prosecution (UCIUC).

Table 6. Number of children victims of child endangerment offences 2021-2024.

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of offences of endangering a minor	1110	1271	1360	1316

Source of data: ENYÜBS

According to the latest 2023 data, as of 31 December, 117 493¹⁵¹ children were registered **as vulnerable and 28 678¹⁵² children were in protection**. Both figures are higher than last year’s registration figures.¹⁵³

In relation to the operation of the Child Helpline operated by the **NSI**, the NSI reported that during 2024, the number received 1370 calls, of which 1209 were genuine calls. 1200 calls were from adults, only 9 from children. In terms of the nature of the calls, 931 calls were for information, 18 calls were for professional, methodological assistance and 261 calls were for threats.

In terms of online abuse, for many years now, the NMHH Legal Helpdesk has re-

ceived the highest number of reports of online child sexual abuse. The **Internet Hotline** warns parents that children as young as 7-8 years old **are increasingly being abused in connection with sending photos online**, and while girls are still the victims in higher numbers, the number of boy victims is also increasing.

The Blue Line Foundation for Child Crisis 2024 **report** highlights that **children’s mental health is on a downward trend**. Peer abuse at school and online bullying are also serious problems. For years, the Foundation has been measuring a worsening trend in children’s mental health, due to abuse, dysfunctional family backgrounds and mental illness. The number of calls for help about

¹⁵¹ Data source: data collection No 1696 OSAP of the KSH (Data on family and child welfare services)
¹⁵² Source of data: data collection No 1210 OSAP of the KSH (Report on the activities of the Guardianship Office)
¹⁵³ In 2023, 110 530 children were registered as vulnerable.

sexual abuse has been consistently high for years, with **an average of one every day**. While in 2020 there were 301 reports of self-harm, in 2024 the number was 1627. A similarly worrying trend can be observed in the number of requests for help with suicidal ideation: on average, **5 suicidal ideation cases are reported to the helpline every day** (see also chapter H. Basic health and well-being).

The Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, in her investigation¹⁵⁴ into **peer abuse of** a child at school, found that when a child is regularly „picked on” by the community because of a protected characteristic (e.g. disability) instead of being genuinely included, the school’s task in integrated education is not only to provide the necessary staff and facilities, but to continuously create a school community where the child with the protected characteristic can be included. According to Article 46(2) of the Nkt., the personality, human dignity and rights of the child and the pupil must be respected and the child must be protected against physical and psychological violence. Children and pupils shall not be subjected to physical and psychological punishment, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment.

In 2024, three cases of teachers crossing the line into bullying against children in nursery and school received major **media coverage**.

The **Children’s Table** working group was formed to bring about positive change in the field of child protection within the Hungarian Catholic Church, to promote dialogue between ecclesiastical and secular actors in society, to prepare a national report on abuse within the Church, and to strengthen the protection of children in society as a whole.

In 2024, the European Union has also called for better **protection of** children from violence in all Member States, with a focus on **effective implementation of legislation**, training of professionals and better use of available resources, among other things.

At local level, among the efforts to **prevent abuse**, Budapest stands out, where the Municipal Assembly adopted a **strategy on** the prevention of domestic violence and the protection of victims last year, which also places a strong emphasis on informing the public.

¹⁵⁴ Report of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights in case A/B-72/2024

Corporal punishment

The February 2024 pardon scandal and the public discourse that followed gave the impression that Hungarian society completely rejects child abuse. Researchers at the **IDEA Institute** analysed publicly available online comments in order to take a closer look at this claim. From the results, it is clear that Hungarian society is united in its rejection of child abuse only when it causes serious and permanent harm to the child. **Mild physical or emotional abuse is acceptable to the majority.**

The issue of corporal punishment of children in sport has been raised again this year in **the professional arena** and in the wider public. **A coach of** a sports club was found to have beaten and humiliated children in his care. Some of the children suffered injuries that healed within eight days and required hospital treatment. The case of a **karate instructor** who verbally and physically

abused a child also caused great social outrage. The case received a lot of publicity, mainly because security cameras recorded the events and the video was widely circulated.

„Within families it's still very much normalised, especially the slap, and I think that it's not talked about and we don't talk about it enough, that it's illegal anyway, and that's such a critical insight, but instead of the good news type of ads that are on TV now, we should be campaigning about that, maybe that would have one better effect.”

(Insight of a Minor Colleague)

F. Családi környezet és alternatív gondoskodás

“States Parties to the Convention shall ensure that a child is not separated from his or her parents against their will, unless the competent authorities, subject to judicial review and in accordance with the relevant laws and procedures, decide that such separation is necessary in the best interests of the child.” - Extract from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Family environment

As in previous years, supporting families and encouraging childbearing is a priority for the government in 2024.

In addition to the previous **forms of support**, such as the tax allowance up to the age of 25, the baby loan or the village CSOK, **new elements have been added to the family support system**. From 1 January 2024, the **CSOK Plus** loan of EUR 15, 30 and 50 million will be available, which can be applied for in the event of having children. The **family tax allowance** is a tax base benefit linked to the family allowance, which mainly affects the amount of personal income tax. One of the main criticisms of the Hungarian family support system is that the be-

nefits available are mainly for the upper echelons of society (e.g. tax credits, income-related benefits). By contrast, the amount of the **family allowance**, which is available for all children as a tax credit, has remained unchanged since 2008.

Contrary to the practice of government agencies (in line with a Constitutional Court ruling eight years earlier), the Curia has ruled that **CSED** is also available to mothers who stop their self-employment during maternity leave. According to the **reasoning of** the Court of Cassation, *„there is no reasonable justification for the social security consequences of the cessation of self-employment to be different from the outcome of the cessa-*

tion of self-employment, which is more favourable to the person concerned, than the cessation of self-employment and thus the cessation of insurance”.

Despite government efforts, the number of births continued to fall last year. According to **KSH data**, 77 500 **children will be born** in 2024, 7725 fewer than last year. This is an all-time low - the previous low was last year, when 85 200 children were born. In 2024, the population ratio is 8.1 births per 1,000 inhabitants, the worst ever - the previous low was 8.8 in 2011. The estimated total fertility rate per woman is 1.38, down from 1.51 a year earlier.

Last year, 46,550 couples **married**, down 7.2 per cent or 3,589 from a year earlier. As we wrote in last year’s report, *„2023 saw a spectacular drop in the number of marriages compared to previous years”* - 50,150 couples married in that year. The negative trend continued last year, with 46 550 marriages.

According to a **research report by** the Population Research Institute, the majority of children aged one and a half were living in a couple-based family at the time of data collection¹⁵⁵. Of the parents, 64 percent were married and 31 percent were cohabiting, while the proportion of single mothers was 4 percent. **Nearly 6 per cent of children aged one and a half did not live with their biological father, including 40 per cent of cases where**

the child’s father never lived with the family. Only 11% of mothers with a one-and-a-half-year-old child were actively working. The research report finds that **the average net monthly income of families with young children is HUF 382 870**, including family allowance, tax credits and childcare allowance.

According to the KSH data on day care for young children, the number of places in day nurseries, mini day nurseries, workplace day nurseries and family day nurseries is increasing. 55 370 places were in operation on 31 May 2022, 60 262 on 31 May 2023 and 64 670 on 31 May 2024. The demand for crèches is also indicated by the fact that, although the number of children attending crèches has increased (59 167 in 2022 and 67 012 in 2024), the number of children not admitted due to lack of places increased between 2022 and 2023 and stagnated in 2024 (3 996 in 2022 and 4 742 in 2024)¹⁵⁶.

When reviewing the family environment, it is important to mention **the dysfunctionality** and problems of the **safety net that protects families**. **A study on** the latency of child abuse cases, already referred to in the chapter on abuse and neglect, uses case studies to highlight a number of failures in the primary child protection system, such as the lack of services for families, the length of time taken to take a case into protection, poorly supported decision-making and the lack of information for referral system

¹⁵⁵ Data collection for the survey was carried out earlier, between October 2019 and November 2020

¹⁵⁶ Data source: KSH 1203 OASP data collection (Day care for children)

members. In addition to the research, several ombudsman reports¹⁵⁷ have highlighted the problem of protracted procedures or lack of capacity in primary care.

According to KSH data, in 2024, 1,485 applications for **adoption** suitability were submitted, mainly by married couples (1,280 applications). On 31 December 2024, there were 1,805 couples suitable for adoption and 97 singles (90 women and 7 men). The latter number has decreased significantly over the last two years as a result of restrictive legislation. The number of adoptable children was 2,095, of whom 504 were under the age of 3. In 2024, 1,484 children were registered as adoptable¹⁵⁸. A year earlier, the number of children waiting to be adopted was higher and the number of adoptable children was lower.¹⁵⁹

In 2024, **the service**¹⁶⁰ **closed 1059 adoptions**, of which 613 were intra-county, 234 were inter-county (but not intra-county) and 212 were international adoptions. The vast majority (more than half) of children **adopted abroad** are placed in Italy. **The number of adoptions increased slightly compared to the previous year.**¹⁶¹

NGOs have previously **drawn** the attention of decision-makers to the unsustainable situation of children under 3 years of age who are forced to stay in the health system, urging them to review the shortcomings of the child welfare and child protection system, in particular the difficulties of placing babies, their adoption and the situation of foster parents. Although the state care system and the foster care network have not been strengthened, **the adoption rule in such cases has been eased**. Under the **new rules**, which came into force on 1 July 2024, if a mother leaves her child in hospital after birth and she, the father or other relatives do not come forward within six weeks or declare their intention to foster the child, the child will become adoptable. **Babies left in hospital will therefore be declared adoptable from 2024 under the same rules as newborn babies placed in baby incubators.**

According to the **position of** the Civil Coalition for Children's Rights, among other criticisms, the identical treatment of the two cases is not technically justified, since in the case of babies left in hospital, the mother is known and would be in the best interest of the children, if the *child welfare service/hospital social*

¹⁵⁷ Report in cases AJB-877/2024; AJB-1425/2024; AJB-1054/2024; AJB-1294/2024.

¹⁵⁸ Source of data: data collection No 1209 OSAP (Report on the situation of regional child protection services)

¹⁵⁹ On 31 December 2023, 2,564 couples and 169 singles were registered as eligible for adoption by the HCSO. The number of adoptable children was 1998, of whom 553 were under 3 years old, 795 were aged 3-9 years old and 650 were aged 10 years or older. Source: **Children's Rights Report 2023**.

¹⁶⁰ This figure does not include adoptions mediated by NGOs, which have **varied between** 90 and 100 in recent years.

¹⁶¹ In 2023, a total of 984 adoptions of children were finalised through the mediation of the specialist services: 579 within the county, 237 by other county adopters and 168 international adoptions. Source: **Children's Rights Report 2023**.

worker supports the mother in resolving her situation or in making a decision about the child’s future, or visits a relative who is capable of caring for and raising the child and considers the possibility of the child being brought up in his or her own family’. According to , government informationby 24 October 2024, the adoption procedure for 7 children who remained in a health institution after birth had been completed (31 children were declared adoptable). According to the HCSO, 44 children who were left in a health institution immediately after birth were registered as adoptable children in 2024. ¹⁶²

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has repeatedly indicated to Hungary that the establishment of „**newborn rescue**” incubators violates the Convention¹⁶³, calling for the provision of easily accessible counselling and social support for mothers instead of this type of service in order to prevent it. However, Hungary will continue to maintain this service. According to the National Centre for Public Health and Medicine, 35-38 incubators have been in operation in recent years, accommodating 3-8 babies (see Table 7).

Table 7. Newborn Rescue Incubators and number of children placed in them (2019-2023)

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of institutions operating “newborn rescue” incubators (at the end of the year)	35	36	35	36	38
The number of newborn babies placed in “newborn rescue” incubators, according to reports received by the national medical officer	5	8	3	5	7

Source of data: National Centre for Public Health and Pharmacy

¹⁶² Source of data: data collection No 1209 OSAP (Report on the situation of regional child protection services)

¹⁶³ CRC/C/HUN/CO/3-5; CRC/C/HUN/CO/6

Family environment

According to KSH data, on 31 December 2024, **the number of children in specialised child protection care was 21,212**, of whom 14,169 were living in foster care. **The proportions for children with special needs and children with dual needs are the opposite:** only 60 out of 344 children with special needs and only 3 out of 284 children with dual needs were in foster care.

2261 young adults received aftercare. **In contrast to previous years, in 2024, more young adults ceased to be aftercare providers (973) than were newly registered (881).** The legal basis for newly established aftercare status was typically (753 cases) student status.¹⁶⁴

During 2024, 4091 persons were removed from child protection specialised care, while the number of persons entering was 3968. **The largest proportion of new entrants were very young children aged 0-12 months (980).** The legal obligation to place all children under 12 years of age in foster care by 31 December 2016, which has been mentioned several times in our annual reports on children's

rights, was not met by the end of 2024: **in 2024, Hungary¹⁶⁵ had 2,108 children under 12 years of age living in children's or residential care homes, 253 more than in the previous year.** Of the 2,589 children with special needs due solely to their age, i.e. children aged 0-3 years, 481 were living in children's homes¹⁶⁶ and 187 were babies aged 0-12 months.

While in 2023, the number of babies waiting in hospital was estimated at between 50 and 100, according to a survey by the Civil Coalition for Children's Rights, the Home Office **said** that by September 2024, this number would have risen to 280-300. It is assumed that the number had increased further by the end of the year, although no details are available from the responsible ministry, the responsible maintainer or the relevant guardianship authority¹⁶⁷. The situation of babies in hospital is further aggravated by the fact that the status of many of them is unclear: although they are separated from their parents and although the legislation sets precise deadlines, they are not immediately decided by the authorities. Their status therefore

¹⁶⁴ Source of data: **data** collection No 1209 OSAP (Report on the situation of specialised child protection services in the regions)

¹⁶⁵ Within the country, the data show a different picture from one county to another, partly in line with economic and social indicators and partly due to the functioning of the county's child protection institutions. The best situation is in Győr-Moson-Sopron, while the worst is in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén.

¹⁶⁶ Source of data: data collection No 1209 OSAP (Report on the situation of specialised child protection services in the regions)

¹⁶⁷ See Chapter on Disclosure and access to data of public interest.

remains unclear, even for a long time¹⁶⁸. The ministry **added** that in many cases babies are stuck in hospital for up to 12 months. **The problem is clearly due to a lack of capacity in the child protection system and the inadequate functioning of the primary child welfare system.**

Under the relevant legislation, if adoption is not possible, or if the child is not placed with siblings or has a long-term illness, the child must be placed in the care of a foster parent (who may be a surrogate or foster parent).

„In children’s homes, they are very often placed in disadvantaged settings, or in hospitals, for example, which provides a disadvantaged environment and background for the people living there.”

(Observation by a Minor Colleague)

As indicated in the Legislation and Measures chapter, in 2024, the defining features of the new child protection legislation were „sanction-oriented, law enforcement-type solutions”. One of these is the emergence of **legal threats to** members of the signalling system and to those who take in a child who has run away from care. On the one hand, it is questionable whether the effectiveness of the child protection detection and signalling system can be effectively increased without strengthening it in terms of capacity and

expertise, without the mere prospect of a negative legal consequence. On the other hand, **it is undoubtedly very difficult for the specialised care system to deal with unauthorised departures** (according to the KSH, in 2023 the number of children who ran away from children’s homes and foster care was 3131 and 156 respectively¹⁶⁹), but prevention and providing an environment that keeps children in care would be an effective way of dealing with the problem.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Although the rules on adoption have been changed, as mentioned in the previous chapter, this does not resolve the overall situation of babies in hospital, as the number of children declared adoptable in the statistics is much lower than the number reported by the Ministry of the Interior. Cf. 280 - 300 babies in hospital in September; 44 children declared adoptable during the year.

¹⁶⁹ Source of data: 1208 OSAP data collection (Report on the situation of children’s homes, foster care networks and out-of-home placements)

¹⁷⁰ As **research** and analysis from previous years **shows**: „In addition to the work of the police, an effective response to these complex causes requires, in particular, cooperation between the birth family, the guardian and professionals, the child protection signalling system and between sectors, as well as awareness and prevention programmes, diversion services, youth clubs, after-school programmes, life-skills counselling, supportive interviews, therapy, restorative justice techniques, a variety of leisure activities in the home and, above all, the opportunity to develop a lasting relationship of trust with an adult who is always available and present for each child and young person.”

Among law enforcement-type measures, the „**good conduct**” test for child protection workers,¹⁷¹ introduced to prevent child abuse (based on public **communication** to detect paedophile behaviour), should also be highlighted in this context, but as an unintended side-effect, primary data suggest that **it has exacerbated the long-standing shortage of professionals in specialist care**. According to KSH data, on 31 December 2023, 945 of the 12 034 posts authorised by the maintainer were vacant. This ratio was worst in the capital (303 of 2005 posts were vacant) and Fejér county (43 of 344 posts were vacant). Of the number of posts authorised for professional occupations, 494 were in **retirement** employment nationwide,¹⁷². According to the Ministry of the Interior, the number of foster carers decreased by 113 due to the refusal to carry out a good conduct check. According to professional material published in the summer of 2024, 6 percent of the 4,241 child protection staff working in the institutions of the Ministry of the Interior left due to an undignified measure of child protection screening that violated the fundamental rights of children, making the care of hundreds of children in care pre-

carious (no data on departures in the second half of the year).

In 2024, the Civil Coalition for Children’s Rights prepared a comprehensive **package of proposals** entitled „**What does the Hungarian child protection system want?**”,¹⁷³, one of the points of which deals with the provision and financing of adequate conditions of the child protection system. In 2024, several ombudsman reports¹⁷⁴ and the SAO report also pointed out the shortcomings of material conditions in child protection institutions, the „worn-out” and „worn-out” state of the institutions.

Another point of the proposal is to increase the **financial dignity** of those working in the child protection system. According to the SAO’s 2024 **report**, „*low earnings may have contributed to the very high average rate of 31.9 per cent (822) of staff leaving the system in 2023, compared to the average statistical staffing level in the 18 child protection institutions surveyed in the report*”. Of course, other factors besides earnings, such as **workload**, also play a role in the shortage of professionals, turnover and career abandonment.

¹⁷¹ For more information on the legislation, see Legislation and measures.

¹⁷² Source of data: 1208 OSAP data collection (Report on the situation of children’s homes, foster care networks and out-of-home placements)

¹⁷³ The short version of the proposal is available **here**

¹⁷⁴ AJB-3826/2024; AJB-3789/2024

According to the OGYSZ, the average number of overtime hours worked by staff in residential care homes was 25 (some counties reported high figures, for example, in Bács-Kiskun County the average number of overtime hours worked by professionals was 62).

Due to a shortage of human (and material) resources, 53 groups of children in residential childcare institutions under the responsibility of the Directorate-General **were closed permanently or temporarily in 2024** out of 793 groups of children in residential childcare institutions at the end of 2023, according to the reply of the SCCF to the public interest request. In its report cited earlier, the SAO points out that „as a consequence of the **failure to meet the minimum conditions**, in 2023, the proportion of sites with a temporary operational status was close to or even exceeded 50 % of the number of sites in three of the 18 specialised childcare institutions analysed. In the longer term, the continuation of negative trends could lead to the closure of sites and groups, a reduction in the number of places, and even **the fulfilment of the public service mission could be jeopardised.**” In spring 2024, a comprehensive **inspection of the institution** was carried out by the authorities, with the aim of „a comprehensive, institution-wide inspection. The investigation focused, among other things, on cases of child abuse, the reports made in this connection, the individual and group assistance provi-

ded to abused children, the internal investigation of cases of abuse, the measures taken and a review of complaint handling practices”. The findings of the audit are not publicly available, but **sources** say that the fact that many institutions have received funding for renovation can be attributed to this investigation.

G. Children with disabilities

“Taking into account the special needs of the disabled child, assistance shall, as far as possible, be free of charge and shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has access to education, training, health care, remedial education, preparation for work and leisure activities in such a way as to ensure the fullest possible development of his or her personality, both culturally and intellectually.” - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 23.

In 2024, the Action Plan for the **National Disability Programme** (2015-2024) 2024-2025 was adopted¹⁷⁵. The Plan of Action identifies a number of progressive, forward-looking tasks for children in early development, education and training, which have long been advocated by the profession.¹⁷⁶ Their implementation and follow-up is the challenge for the period ahead.

In 2024, the Gyvt. § 7 (2) a) was repealed in 2024. This provision stipulated that the placement of a child under the age of 12 with a foster parent may be waived if the child is permanently ill, seriously disabled, if placement with a foster parent is not in the child’s best interest or is not possible due to the child’s condition. According to the **explanatory memorandum** to the amendment, the amendment

¹⁷⁵ 1186/2024 (28.VI.) Government Decision on the Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Disability Programme for the years 2024-2025

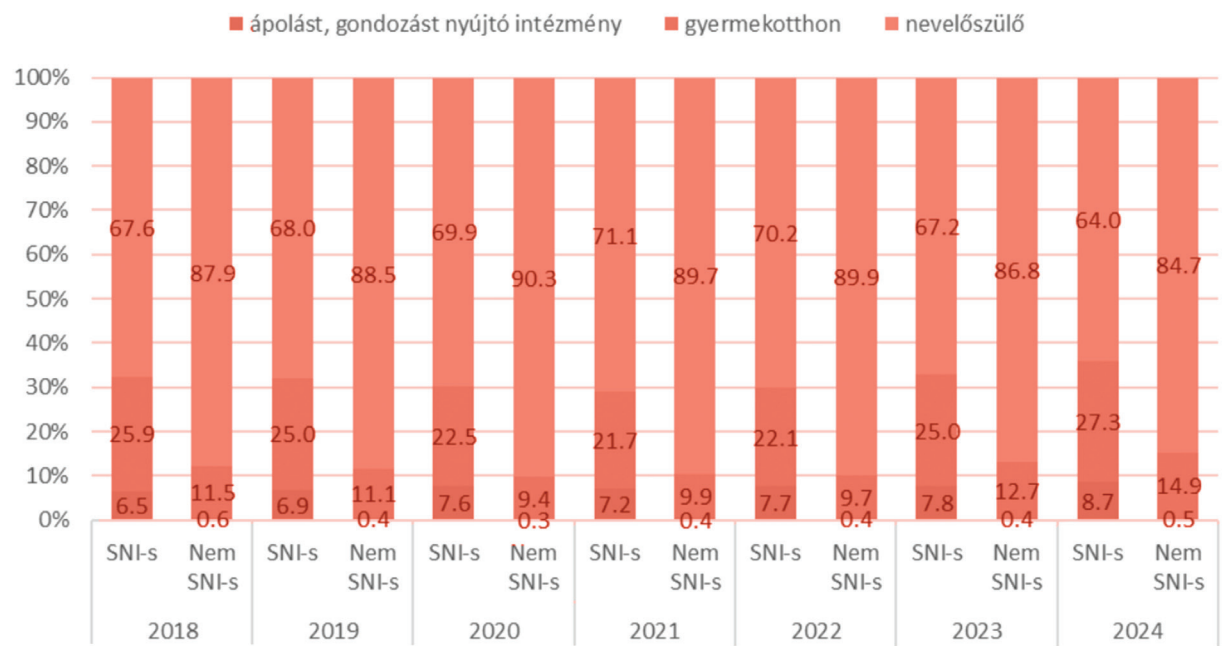
¹⁷⁶ These include, for example, the need to carry out research on the activities of inter-institutional working groups run by networks of itinerant teachers and itinerant tutors for children in integrated education. In addition, the current situation of access to educational institutions for children with disabilities should be reviewed with the involvement of the public education, social and health sectors, and proposals should be made for its further development, and the integrated, inclusive education of children and pupils with special educational needs should be supported, and the co-educational role of the Integrated Methodological Special Needs Education Institutions should be strengthened. Among the tasks relating to social services and care, it was mentioned, for example, the increase in the number of places for foster parents for special, special and dual-needs children, and the development of specific infrastructural conditions and professional services for foster parent networks with such places. It was also decided to continue training for foster parents of children with disabilities and to develop and implement a targeted recruitment methodology. Also in the context of the development of social services, the promotion of extended and weekend opening hours for basic services (day care for disabled people, support services) is proposed, in order to facilitate the family carer’s employment and physical and mental recovery, as well as to improve the disabled person’s community life. The Action Plan also includes the task of making the adoption of disabled children or children with special needs more acceptable by setting up support services (e.g. individual counselling, adoption training). It also includes the task of launching awareness-raising campaigns to prevent abuse of disabled women and children, which can provide appropriate assistance to victims of abuse.

follows a proposal made by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2020, which places greater emphasis on the priority of placement in a family environment for children who are deprived of their family.

The situation of placement of **children with special educational needs** in specialised care has been regularly addressed in the annual reports.¹⁷⁷ Among children with SNI aged 0-11 years, the proportion of children living in institutions (children's homes or care institutions) is higher (around 30%) than among children without SNI (around 10%) (see Figure 5).

The low number of special and special foster carers continues to be a barrier to the placement of children with SNI and dual needs in specialised care. On 31 December 2023, there were only 11 special foster carers. Although the number of special foster carers is significantly higher (2397), there are 4 counties (Fejér, Heves, Komárom-Esztergom, Somogy) where there are no special foster carers at all¹⁷⁸. In contrast, the number of children with SNI, special needs and dual needs due to disability or persistent illness was 6 264 on 31 December 2024, representing 29.5% of all children in special care.¹⁷⁹

Figure 5: Distribution of children with special educational needs (SNI) and non-SNI aged 0-11 living in specialised care by place of care, 2018-2024.



Data source: data collection KSH 1209 OSAP

¹⁷⁷ Source of data: 1209 OSAP data collection (Report on the situation of specialised child protection services in the field)

¹⁷⁸ Source of data 1208 OSAP data collection (Report on the situation of children's homes, foster care networks and out-of-home placements)

¹⁷⁹ Source of data: 1209 OSAP data collection (Report on the situation of specialised child protection services in the field)

Under an amendment to the law adopted in 2024¹⁸⁰, the number of places in residential care homes for disabled people can be increased from 12 to 14. These institutions will accommodate children and adults together. According to the latest available data on residential institutions, as of 2023, 594 children were living in residential care, nursing or rehabilitation¹⁸¹, 382 of them were aged 0-13 years and 212 were aged 14-17 years¹⁸². There were 14 children living **in supported housing** on 31 December 2023, **more than double the** number of children living in this form of care in recent years.¹⁸³

The proportion of children with special educational needs is growing rapidly every year. This trend remained unchanged in the school year 2024/2025, **according to the preliminary data of the KSH**, there were 112 007 children with special educational needs in integrated and special groups. **According to the data for the school year 2023/2024**, 8.8% of primary school pupils have special educational needs, but while this figure is 7.5% in the first grade, it is close to 11% in the eighth grade. **The number of children with severe and multiple disabilities in special education was 2,635, which has been stagnating at this level for several years.** In primary schools, 4 300 teachers

working as special needs teachers and teachers with special needs, 880 teachers with special needs and 1 200 teachers working in the mobile network of special needs teachers and teachers with special needs helped children with SNI.¹⁸⁴

The significant increase in the number of children with SNI has led to a growing need for specialised care for these children in pre-school education. However, **according to** a survey of nursery school managers published in 2024, nursery schools face challenges in educating children with SNI. The primary reason cited by managers was a lack of knowledge among pre-school teachers, which can be attributed to a reduction in training content and time spent. In addition, they believe that caring for children with SNI places a significant additional burden on kindergartens.

In 2024, according to the amendment to the Gyvt.¹⁸⁵, „Children with special educational needs or children with early development and care needs may be provided with day-care in a full integration day-care group with other children or in a partial integration day-care group in a special day-care group, as specified in the national basic programme for day-care education and care.”

¹⁸⁰ Section 66/A (2a) of the Act

¹⁸¹ Care home for disabled persons, home for disabled persons, rehabilitation institution for disabled persons, rehabilitation residential home for disabled persons, residential home for carers of disabled persons.

¹⁸² Source of data OSAP 1202 (Statement of operational data on institutions providing long-term residential and temporary accommodation)

¹⁸³ Data source: data collection OSAP 2257 (Data on subsidised housing)

¹⁸⁴ **On the website of** the Education Office, a summary of the “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” was published on **the needs assessment** to underpin the RRF project

¹⁸⁵ Gyvt. Paragraph 42 (3a)

„I think that they (children with disabilities) are very exposed, and not just to the terrible state of health care, but to peer abuse, and there’s a level of discrimination really on health grounds (...) and this is a private opinion for me, but I think the laws and regulations are terrible, because I’m permanently ill, I’m incurable, I’m in daily pain, I’m limited in my daily life, and I’m not entitled to anything.”

(Insight of a Minor Colleague)

Also, a **recent study** shows, based on statistical data, that children with severe disabilities¹⁸⁶ are at high risk of not attending nursery, kindergarten or school. It also shows that as they get older, they fall further behind their peers in terms of the grades they complete, which in the longer term reduces their chances of entering the sheltered labour market¹⁸⁷. The research highlights the fact that children with reduced mobility are the most excluded from child-care and public education institutions, underlining the importance of accessibility. The results also show that **children with disabilities are at higher risk of social exclusion**. This is not only because of their health problems, but also because these children are more likely than their peers of the same age to live in lower status families.

The results show that there is no significant difference in the spatial distribution of low-status families with severe disabilities, suggesting **that the disability of children places such a heavy burden on the family that, for example, their employment opportunities are reduced, thereby worsening their financial situation**. However, children with non-severe disabilities are over-represented in the Northern Hungary, Northern Great Plain and Southern Great Plain regions, suggesting that **the development of non-severe disabilities is also associated with disadvantage**. Adverse living conditions and less attention to children may lead to poorer health status of children, which may result in greater restraint in these families.

Raising a child with a disability in a family is a life situation that poses

¹⁸⁶ The study uses the term limitation, which includes not only disability but also limitation due to health reasons. See the study referred to in the background link, pp. 50-52

¹⁸⁷ Sheltered employment is a special form of publicly subsidised employment where both working conditions and working conditions are adapted to the employment needs of disadvantaged workers with disabilities and where a higher proportion of the workforce is also disabled and people with a reduced capacity for work. Open labour market or sheltered employment? Open labour market or sheltered employment? (E., 2017), pp. 147-155, 148.

many challenges for families. **According to census data**, the proportion of such children **in single-parent families is higher** (2.8%) than in two-parent families (1.8%), suggesting that couple relationships are often strained by the difficulties they face. These parents are more likely to be unable to work because of the constant care they have to provide. Only 36% of parents with a child under 24 with a disability are in work. According to research by the Find Yourself Association, the biggest problem for parents of children with disabilities who are raising children alone is **financial difficulties**, and they are also constantly **anxious** about their child's future, but misunderstanding, loneliness and **isolation**¹⁸⁸ are also major problems. Parents said that what they need most is rest and recharging, and that the provision of childcare would be a great help. 2024 has also seen the disclosure of several cases of families with a disabled child. Their difficulties also include, at the top of the list, a parent's lack of full capacity and anxiety about their situation and their child's future.

¹⁸⁸ In this context, it should be pointed out that children with disabilities and their companions may be entitled to more extensive discounts for public transport (local and intercity public transport) under the new legislation (Government Decree 38/2024 (29.II.), which will enter into force in 2024. For both local and intercity transport, the following are entitled to a 100% discount: a child entitled to or entitled to a higher family allowance; 1 accompanying person of a child entitled to or entitled to a higher family allowance. And for local transport, a child or pupil with special educational needs and up to 2 accompanying persons are entitled to a 100% discount. The additional discounts are listed in Annex 1 to Government Decree 38/2024 (29.II.) on travel discounts for public passenger transport.

H. Basic health and well-being

“States Parties to the Convention recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to medical care and education. They shall make every effort to ensure that no child is deprived of the right to benefit from these services.” - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 24.

Health and health care

We report on problems in GP and paediatric care in our annual reports. Data for 2024 are not available at the time of finalising this manuscript. Based on the latest available data, **the number of unfilled GP practices has continued to increase** marginally¹⁸⁹ from 2022 to 2023, leaving 103,817 children without access to care locally (including children in adult and mixed practices) as of

31 December.¹⁹⁰ **Nationally, 12.9% of GP practices were unfilled, up from 10.7% a year earlier.** There are significant regional differences in the proportion of unfilled practices. The counties of Nógrád (26.3%), Békés (22.2%) and Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok (22.0%) have the highest vacancy rates, while the counties of Csongrád-Csanád (6.4%) and Budapest (6.6%) have the lowest.¹⁹¹

„If you want to make an appointment, you will certainly not get it within a month, it will take half a year to get there.”

(Insight from a Minor Colleague)

¹⁸⁹ On 31 December 2022, 103 731 children aged 0-18 years did not have access to local children's GP care. Source.

¹⁹⁰ In these municipalities, the population is served by a general practitioner's practice in another municipality under a contract of some kind, due to the obligation to provide care in the area.

¹⁹¹ Data source: data collection No 1021 of KSH OSAP (Report on the activities of general practitioners and general paediatricians)

In 2024, Budapest will be the last city to introduce the **new on-call doctor** system. The idea is that everyone, regardless of where they live, should call 1830, where a member of the National Ambulance Service (hereinafter: OMSZ) will answer the call and direct the caller to the right place. On-call childcare is also available on this number. There are three specialised childcare places in Budapest. According to the **OMSZ information sheet**, in Budapest, the primary childcare service is available between 16 and 22 hours on weekdays and between 8 and 22 hours on weekends, compared to the adult service, which is available between 22 and 8 hours on weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. According to the information sheet, outside the obligatory on-call hours, children are seen by health facilities on a general referral basis, which parents can find out by calling 1830. The on-call system is non-emergency, and in the event of a medical emergency, the ambulance should be contacted on 112.

In 2024, there were also several cases in the press about **problems in hospital care for children**. One of the most high-profile **cases was the temporary closure of the paediatric surgery in Szeged**, where care was interrupted for 7 weeks because the operating theatre did not meet EU and national standards. The closure meant that 200 operations were cancelled and acute patients were referred to Pécs, Debrecen or Budapest. **The NNGYK an official procedure** ordered the hospital to provide the service through , and during the summer **government funds** were allocated to renovate the paediatric surge-

ry department. **The children's ward at the hospital in Ozd suffered from** also a shortage of doctors. A paediatrician working at the hospital was involved in an accident, so hospital care for children also had to be suspended for weeks, with only day-care outpatient services available. The children who needed hospital care had to be transported to Miskolc. These high-profile cases have also highlighted the serious human resources and infrastructure problems in the health care system.

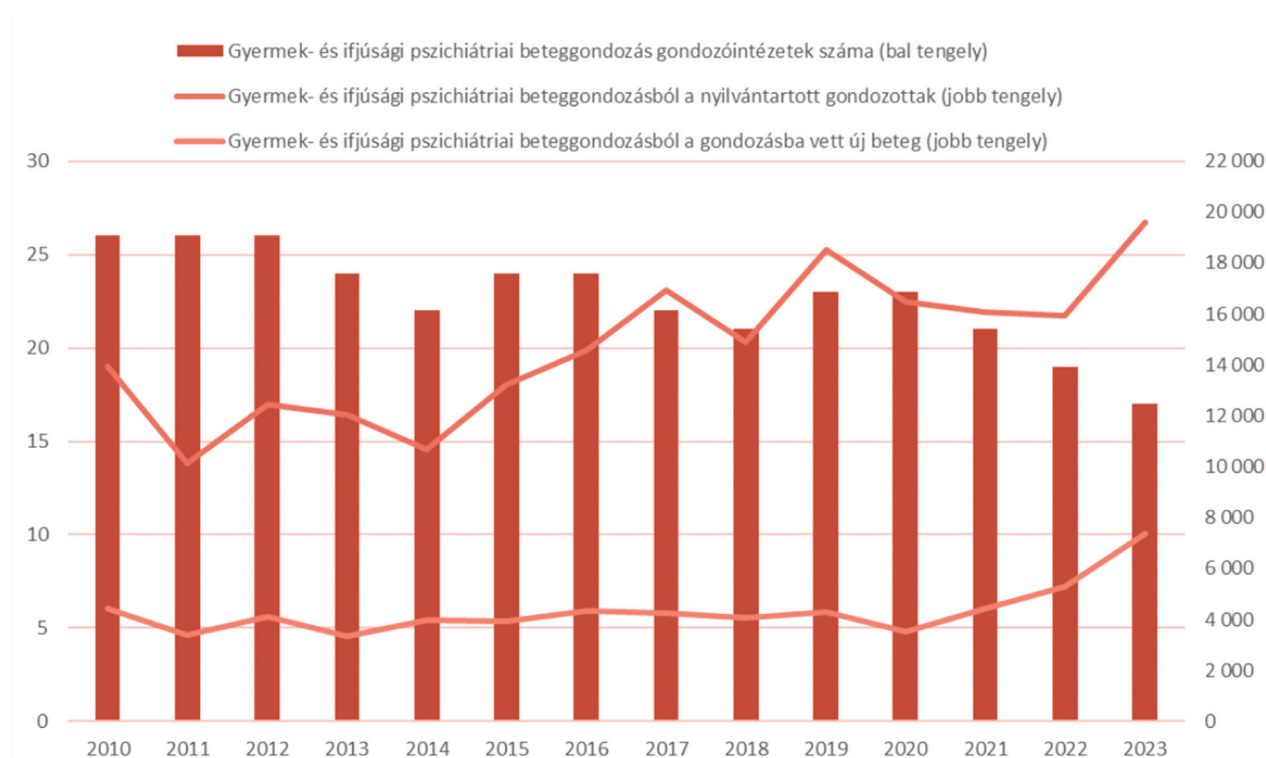
According to data available on **the website of** the National Health Insurance Fund Management Agency (hereinafter: NEAK), **the number of vacant practices in school medical services has also increased (18.2%)**, compared to 16.9% a year earlier.

In the years after COVID-19, **the deterioration of children's mental health has been a continuing problem**. The care system has been severely overburdened for years, and those in need of care face long waiting lists in most cases, as the system is not expanding substantially. Data received from the NNGYK show that the **number of outpatient services has stagnated** from 2023 to 2024. Inpatient care expanded slightly in terms of beds, with 10 more beds available in inpatient and rehabilitation inpatient care than a year earlier. However, this was mainly an expansion of existing psychiatric services. **There are still 11 counties in the country where child and adolescent psychiatric inpatient care is not available**. These data are also in line with the **data registered in the KSH** (see Figure 6). The **number of**

psychiatric care institutions¹⁹² has decreased from 26 to 17 since 2010, while the number of minors registered as care recipients¹⁹³ is increasing. Since 2022, the number of new cases has been increasing rapidly: while in previous years around 4,000 new care recipients were admitted, in 2022 there were nearly 5,300 and in 2023 more than 7,300. In addition to increasing the number of places, it is also important

to focus on the supply of professionals, as the latest available figures show that there are 50-60 child psychiatrists in practice nationwide. The average age of professionals is high and many work in addition to their pension.

Figure 6: Child and adolescent psychiatric care data, 2010-2023.



Source of data: KSH Stadat

¹⁹² A care home is a preventive health care institution for outpatients. They provide regular care for patients who have been identified and referred in the course of their care, and for patients who have been screened, referred for specialist examinations or volunteered.

¹⁹³ A patient registered at a specific date (usually at the end of the year) who is receiving regular treatment or care (monitoring).

The results of a 2024 **study on** the prevalence of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in Hungary and children in publicly funded care showed that ADHD diagnoses have been increasing over the past 10 years, but concluded that 6 out of 7 children with ADHD do not receive publicly funded care. And the consequences of untreated ADHD are not only negative for the patient, but also a serious socio-economic burden.

A **study** published in 2024, covering a large number of cases and spanning several decades, reported that **people who had cancer in childhood** were more health-conscious than their peers. The researchers found that people either see their childhood cancer as a lifelong **trauma** or as a kind of „**shield**”.

The authors also highlight that affected children suffer significant disadvantages in social integration and acceptance compared to their siblings.

Last year, we reported on the reform of the **public health service system**, under which the state took over the maintenance of public health services from the municipalities. During the transition, the main problem for defenders was a lack of information. But during 2024, many faced the **prospect of a pay cut**, because while their basic salaries had risen, many of the benefits previously provided by local authorities were not included in the new system. In recent years, the provision of midwifery services has been stable at national level, with **6-8% of posts vacant** each year, **according to the KSH**.

The health of minors

Experience from the care system over many years indicates that young people's mental health has deteriorated significantly in recent years (see previous chapter). The results of a **study** on children's well-being show that **the crises of recent years (climate crisis, wars, epidemics) have seriously jeopardised young people's mental health**.

Another **study** looked at the relationship between children's mental health and device use. It found that **the prevalence of depression, self-harm and suicidal ideation has been increasing among young people since the outbreak of the**

coronavirus. The use of digital devices alone is not associated with poor mental health, and use in a controlled environment is the least likely to compromise mental well-being. Excessive use, especially excessive use of social media, can be a problem.

In 2024, **research** was carried out on digital media use by children aged one and a half. The results show that the majority of children use digital devices regularly. 71.7% of them watched TV daily, 43.6% weekly and 21.2% watched videos on a mobile phone or tablet daily. On average, children spent 85.7 minutes in front

of a screen. **Children's screen time was strongly associated with the sociodemographic background of their mothers.** Children of higher status mothers were much less likely to spend more than an hour a day on screen. The results also showed that **children who used digital media devices for more than 30 minutes a day were less likely to have parents who told them stories and played with them almost every day.**

In its recent report, Blue Line reported that for the year 2024, most children called the helpline due to **anxiety and depression** - and a significant proportion of callers were found to have a diagnosed mental illness during the conversation. The Blue Line also reported that experience has shown that it **is difficult to access appropriate mental health care**, mainly due to capacity problems in the care system. The report also found that many callers seek help for abuse and that suicidal thoughts and self-harm have increased. **The number of people reporting self-harm has increased nearly 5.5-fold since 2020, while the number of people experiencing suicidal thoughts has increased 2.5-fold in four years.** Other helpline calls also included emotional problems, fear, anxiety and unresolved tension as the main reasons. According to KSH data, there were 11 completed suicides in the 0-17 age group in 2023, which was

fewer than in the previous two years (13 in 2022 and 20 in 2021). Among those who committed suicide, 9 were boys and 2 were girls, highlighting **the higher vulnerability of boys.**

The Wilderness Garden Foundation **has expressed concern** that in 2024 **the age of children who are self-harming and attempting suicide is getting lower: 11-12 year olds in grades 5-6 are also affected.**

In 2024, ESPAD¹⁹⁴ will be launched to collect internationally comparable data on young people's **drug consumption habits.** Last year, only **some preliminary data** were available showing that tobacco consumption has increased over the last five years. Alcohol consumption has not changed much, but **binge drinking¹⁹⁵ continues to be widespread among young people and drug use has increased.** The results show that **one third of respondents had not participated in any prevention activities in the two years prior to the survey.**

In 2024, there was no drug or alcohol strategy in place in Hungary. The last drug strategy expired in 2020 and there was no alcohol strategy. From July 2021, an amendment to the Nkt. came into force, according to which drug prevention (and sex education) can only be taught by teachers in schools and by professionals providing school health services. In

¹⁹⁴ European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs

¹⁹⁵ In the ESPAD research, binge drinking is defined as drinking five or more drinks in one session. A drink is defined as one and a half dl of wine, or a pint (half litre) of beer, or a glass (4-5 cl) of spirits, or a cocktail, or two bottles (5 dl) of pre-mixed alcoholic beverages. Source. In.: Németh, Á., Költő A. (eds.): Health behaviour in school-age children. (N.N.E.F.I., pp. 58-77, 58) (N.E.I., pp. 58-77)

addition, only organisations registered with the body designated by the legislation may hold sessions on the subject. However, such a register has not been established for many years. Already in early 2025, **a draft proposal was** posted on the Government's website, under which the NNGYK will have the power to authorise and register organisations that can hold school sessions.¹⁹⁶

No significant progress was made in the field of **youth didactics** in 2024. According to the NNGYK data, outpatient care is available in only two counties, while inpatient care is available again in 4

counties. A **study** focusing on addiction care in 2024 also reports that there are significant **capacity gaps** in this area.

Between 2016 and 2021, **the number of abortions among girls aged 14-17 years decreased**, with a slight increase in 2022. The most recent data, for 2023, show a decrease again, but not reaching the 2021 level. 1187 abortions were performed in 2021, 1273 in 2022 and **1215** in 2023.

In 2023, **underage mothers** gave birth **to 1494 newborns**, the same number as in 2022.

Quality of life

“States Parties to the Convention recognize the right of every child to social security (...).” - Extract from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In 2024, **inflation** fell at a record pace, but **according to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office**, consumer prices in December were still 4.6% higher than a year earlier, and food prices overall were 5.4% higher than a year earlier, with some food groups showing even higher increases. The price of flour rose

by 36.2%, eggs by 21.9%, milk by 19.5% and vegetables by 17.3%, significantly **increasing family expenditure**.

¹⁹⁶ Even before the 2021 law change, the NNGYK was responsible for coordinating health promotion programmes, according to the **annual report of National Drug Focal Point** the

„There is no financial security in families, which creates fear in children. Families send children away for summer work because of lack of money.”

(Insight of a Minor Colleague)

According to the **latest data from the HCSO for 2023, poverty indicators**¹⁹⁷ **have improved** compared to the previous year, but **have not reached the 2022 level**. The proportion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the 0-17 age group was 21.1%. Among households with children, **single-parent households are** the most at risk, with 32% at risk, followed closely by **two-parent families with three children**, where the rate is 27.8%. At the same time, according to **Eurostat**¹⁹⁸, the number of children living in **severe deprivation** (below 40% of median income) and poverty in Hungary **is steadily increasing**. In 2014, 118,000 children under the age of 18, or 7% of 0-17 year olds, were living in such conditions, rising to 13.1% (224,000 children) in 2023. Among children under 5, 47,000 were in this income group in 2014 and 76,000 in 2023. These children are raised in households with an average income of less than 150-170 thousand HUF per month (this refers to

households of 4 persons, 2 parents and 2 children aged 14).

Recent of the resultsCohort research¹⁹⁹ refer to the age of one and a half years for children. The overall picture of the financial situation of families is positive. Among families with a one-and-a-half-year-old child, 6.7% of families have difficulties buying a nappy and providing the child with suitable clothes, while 5.6% of families have problems buying fruit and vegetables. **The proportion of families with serious financial problems is higher in smaller municipalities** than in larger villages and towns. These results confirm that **single mothers with young children are in the** most difficult financial situation, with nearly one fifth of these families having difficulties in meeting the financial burden of the household.

¹⁹⁷ At the time the manuscript was being finalised, it was made public that the detailed examination of the data raised professional and methodological concerns about data quality.

¹⁹⁸ Eurostat publishes data collected by the CSO, so there may be concerns about the quality of the data in these cases.

¹⁹⁹ The Cohort '18 Hungarian Birth Cohort Survey is a survey launched by the Population Research Institute of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH), which tracks the growth of children born in 2018/19. The study provides a better understanding of childbearing and child-rearing conditions in Hungary, as well as the parental, family and social characteristics that determine the development of children born here. Source: <https://www.kohorsz18.hu/>

„We have noticed inflation and price increases in shops, in school canteens, which tend to have relatively high prices anyway, and even in sports clubs and other places like art schools and specialised clubs.”

(Insight of a Minor Colleague)

While the amount of the **family allowance** has remained unchanged since 2008, the benefits and tax credits available are mainly available to families with a higher status. **Analysis**, also based on the COHORSE sample, confirms that **higher status families are the main beneficiaries of these benefits, which thus increase rather than reduce inequalities.**

In 2024, as part of a new economic action plan, the **government announced that** it will further increase tax credits in two phases. Also part of the economic action plan is the **work credit**, which aims to help young workers start their careers - a provision that also affects children because of the lowering of the compulsory school age to 16. The scheme provides an interest-free loan of HUF 4 million to young people aged 17-25 who are starting their careers but are no longer in education. The loan is available for free use and has a 10-year term. In exchange for the discount, the young person must have a registered Hungarian address and work for at least 5 years from the date of the loan. The fact that the loan is available from the age of 17 may be a

cause for concern and does not encourage learning, but the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has called on the Government to raise the compulsory school age from 16 to 18.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ CRC/C/HUN/CO/6

I. Education, leisure, culture

“The States Parties to the Convention agree that the education of the child shall be directed to the following aims: (...) to promote the development of the child’s personality and the development of his or her mental and physical talents and abilities to the fullest extent of his or her potential (...)” - Excerpt from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

At the end of 2024, the **Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy** was amended to comply with EU criteria. The amendments also affect children. The so-called Barcelona targets include a 33% rate of formal care for children aged 0-2 years. And the reformed responsibilities of municipalities allow for a wider range of compulsory local provision of nursery care, adapted to the needs of the municipality. Municipalities must also provide nursery care in settlements with less than 10,000 inhabitants if the number of children under 3 years of age exceeds 40 or if at least 5 parents with young children have indicated their need for such care (before 2017, only settlements with more than 10,000 inhabitants were obliged to provide nursery care). The criterion for the provision of crèche care has been the norm for more than six years, thanks to the amendment to the Gyvt. in force since 1 January 2017, introduced by Act CCXXI-II of 2015. The challenges related to this provision and the implementation of the Strategy until 2024 have been reported in detail in previous reports on children’s

rights, but it is worth highlighting here that the system faces systemic and persistent problems in terms of equal opportunities, inclusive education, structural discrimination or child well-being, without any substantial positive shift.

The **publication** „Public Education Indicators 2023”, published in 2024, presents the current situation of public education in Hungary with detailed statistical data and analysis. The report highlights **deteriorating student performance, increasing teacher shortages and rising early school leaving rates**. It also highlights the spread of church schools and **the rise of social selection**, which contribute to widening educational inequalities.

According to the KSH data for the school year 2023/2024, 324 thousand children will receive pre-school education, 712 thousand pupils will receive primary school education, and nearly 428 thousand pupils will receive secondary education. 2.6 thousand children with severe and multiple disabilities will comp-

lete their compulsory education in the framework of developmental education. The number of pre-school and full-time pupils has decreased by 2.8% since 2015, in line with demographic trends. **According to preliminary figures for 2024/2025, the number of children in education has increased, with the exception of primary school pupils.** The number of pupils attending kindergarten increased by 1300 and secondary school by 1500, but the number of pupils attending primary school decreased by 1900.

In the school year 2023/2024, the number of kindergarten places was the same as in the previous year, so the proportion of children not having access to local kindergarten was 31%. Although at national level the number of places exceeds the number of kindergarten pupils and even at district level there are still sufficient places available in most districts, at municipal level it is not always possible to accommodate children without exceeding the number of places. The EU target of 96% of children between the age of 3 and the start of school by 2030 is to be achieved, as early childhood education is a key factor in educational success and the acquisition of key competences. While 97% of 4 and 5 year olds attend nursery school, 86% of 3 year olds attend only nursery school.

In the 2023/2024 school year, primary school pupils continued their studies in 3,550 schools in 1,728 municipalities across the country. The number of full-time teachers employed in primary schools

was nearly 73,000, about 1,200 fewer than in the previous year, and 66.2% of teachers were over 45 years old.

Hungary is currently ranked 4th worst in the European Union in terms of **early school leavers**²⁰¹, improving from 12.4% in 2022 to 11.6% a year earlier. **Research** into the phenomenon has found that several factors are influencing the trend. The lowering of the age of compulsory schooling, the centralisation of the public education system and the strong presence of segregation have all contributed to the failure of policy to halt the rise in early school leaving.

The Bank of Hungary's 2024 **study** shows that **there is currently a shortage of 16,000 teachers in the Hungarian education system.** The study gives a comprehensive picture of the serious problems in the Hungarian education system and the steps needed to address them. **Over the past 20 years, the proportion of teachers over 50 has increased from 23% to 47%, while the proportion of early career teachers has fallen from 15% to 7%.**

²⁰¹ Early school leavers are defined as young people aged 18-24 who have completed primary education or less and who have not participated in any education or training, whether regular or non-regular, during the four weeks preceding the survey.

„In the past year, a lot of teachers have resigned, gone into private teaching, or if not, students notice a general discouragement and lack of motivation, which in the long run affects the motivation of the children. Children are being asked unrealistic old adages in admissions, for example, from which they have absolutely no benefit and will have no benefit in the future.”

(Insight from a Minor Colleague)

In 2024, Hungary will have been a member of the European Union for 20 years. In the field of education, many EU funds have been available during this time, but few resources and opportunities have been used. According to the TÁRKI **Social Report**, some projects have been successfully implemented, but there has been no significant improvement in student achievement. This is **due, among other reasons, to the reduced autonomy of educational institutions, the predominance of lexical knowledge in curricula, scarce resources and teacher shortages**. One of the **EU targets is to** have a maximum of 15% of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science by 2030. In 2022, the share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in these subjects in Hungary was 22-29%. The low performance of Hungarian pupils is similar to that of pupils in OECD countries.

The data from the National Police Headquarters show that the **number of school guards has increased significantly for** the school years 2023/2024

and 2024/2025.²⁰² At the beginning of the 2023/2024 school year, there were 589 school police officers in 589 schools and 748 in 2024/2025. Since its introduction, the 2023/2024 school year has seen the **highest number of actions**, 234, and 173 actions by 31 January 2025. The regional distribution of the number of school inspectors varies considerably. The highest number of school guards (120) is in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county, while the lowest number (7) is in Vas county.

On 1 September 2024, a **government decree** came into force, according to which **smart devices capable of** telecommunication, image or sound recording and internet connection in educational institutions **are considered restricted objects**. Their possession during school hours is only possible if authorised by the headmaster for health or educational purposes in the educational system.²⁰³

The Rosa Parks Foundation's 2024 **research report** highlights the serious problems in the education of Roma pupils with

²⁰² At the time of writing, the **press** reported higher figures: the ORFK reported the participation of 933 educational institutions, and the police had 830 school guards as of 1 January 2025.

²⁰³ For more on this, see Legislation and measures.

special educational needs. The report says that **expert assessments** for special educational needs **remain a matter of concern from a children's rights perspective and often violate parents' procedural rights**. In addition, the practice persists that it is not only children's abilities **but also their social background that determine** whether or not someone is declared to have special educational needs.

In September 2022, the Hungarian Association of Student Sports launched the **Active School Programme** with 75 schools,

with a total of 304 schools joining by 2024. The aim of the programme is to encourage students to be more active and thus lead healthier lifestyles. According to the results of **a survey of** 10-19 year olds in 2024, **a quarter of students are very often or almost always active during breaks between lessons**. 56.44% of pupils spend more than 2 hours a day on the phone, which is a health risk factor, 22.05% spend more than 2 hours a day playing video games, 21.95% spend more than 2 hours a day on the computer and 17.78% spend more than 2 hours a day watching TV.

„When preparing for a recording, we have no time for anything else/ourselves. Mental wellbeing is gone when we record. There is no time to relax, it makes us lose concentration. If there was a 20 minutes during school that the children could spend on something other than studying, the community, concentration and lessons would improve.”

(Insight from a Minor Colleague)

Recreation, leisure, leisure, cultural and artistic activities

“The child has the right to rest and leisure, to play and engage in recreational activities appropriate to his or her age, and to participate freely in cultural and artistic life.” - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31.

In the 2023/2024 school year, the **National NETFIT Individual Student Fitness Test** () was conducted for the tenth time. The results of 654 014 pupils from 3702 schools were recorded in the IT system of the

Hungarian Federation of Student Sports (MDSZ). According to the MDSZ, the Institutional Fitness Index, which measures the fitness of school pupils, is clearly increasing, but is still below the pre-pand-

emic level (Figure 7). **A quarter of pupils are overweight**, but the **proportion of overweight or obese pupils has been on**

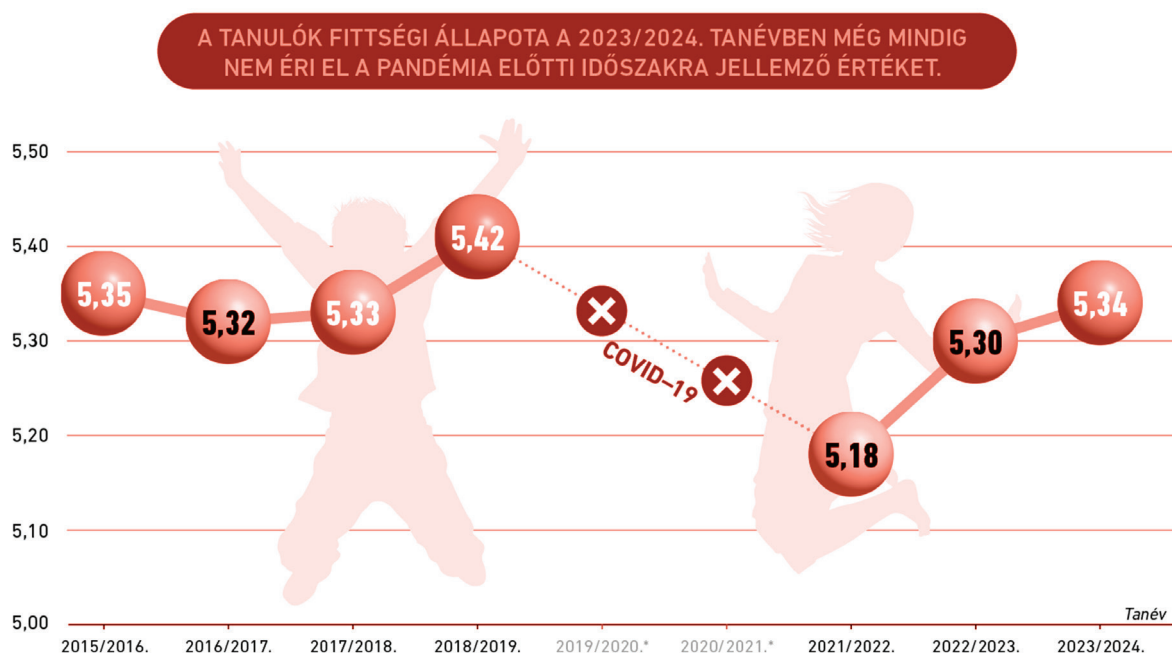
a downward trend since the lifting of the pandemic closures.

„We don't have a lunch break a lot of the time. They've made the timetable that way, and not only does it leave us hungry, but it makes us less able to concentrate and we won't be able to eat lunch later.”

(Insight from a Minor Colleague)

Figure 7: Evolution of the national average Institutional Fitness Index

Az országos átlagos Intézményi Fittségi Index (IFI) alakulása*



*A 2019/2020. és a 2020/2021. tanévben a Covid-19-járvány miatt nem történt meg a NETFIT® felmérés.

Source: **MDSZ**

A **study** published in 2024 comprehensively evaluated the practical implementation of **Whole Institution Health Promotion** in primary schools in Hungary. Of the 3,601 institutions surveyed,

2,892 responded to a questionnaire that examined how schools support teachers in health promotion along three questions. **More than two thirds of schools (68.5%) included health promotion in**

their pedagogical programmes and two thirds also supported teachers with health education and skills training. **The most common topics covered by prevention programmes were smoking (73.6%), drug use (71.3%) and alcohol consumption (61.9%),** all three of which were most frequently addressed in public schools. Problems with internet and device use were addressed by 60.9% of schools, while gambling addiction was addressed by only 18.9%.

Half of the institutions - mainly public and larger schools - **have committed to preventing bullying online and offline.** Sessions were most often led by teachers (64.5%), school staff (76.9%) or exter-

nal experts (66.9%), and the more different types of professionals involved, the more addiction issues they were able to cover. **Systematic support for students' mental health was most common in parochial and small schools.** Private and small schools were most likely to provide a welcoming, safe school environment, which was strongly associated with the frequency of **teacher community-building** sessions.

The quality of addiction prevention was good in only 20.4% of schools. The better quality of implementation was due to public or church maintenance, complex teacher training and a diverse implementation team.

„Children have less and less free time and, in addition, leisure activities and hobbies are becoming more expensive due to inflation, and therefore, for example, it is no longer a question of what you want to do, but what you can do with the money you have or what is the most realistic.“

(Insight from a Minor Colleague)

Factors influencing children's arts education were examined in a 2024 **study** based on 458 parent responses. The study showed that the family as the primary socialisation environment has a significant impact on a child's interest in **music**.

J. Special security measures

“States Parties to the Convention shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who, either alone or together with his or her father and mother or any other person, seeks to be recognized as a refugee or to be considered as a refugee under the relevant international or national rules and procedures, shall be accorded the protection and humanitarian assistance necessary for the enjoyment of the rights recognized in the Convention and in other international instruments relating to human rights or humanitarian law to which those States are parties.” - UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 22.

Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children

Asylum-seeking children continue to face systemic violations in Hungary.²⁰⁴ It is not possible to apply for asylum in the country, with a few²⁰⁵ exceptions. In 2024, it was still only possible to submit a so-called asylum application at the Hungarian embassy in Belgrade or Kiev, and on this basis the **National Directorate General for Aliens** (OIF) decided whether an applicant could formally enter Hungary to apply for asylum. This procedure violates the rights

of asylum seekers and EU asylum law, for which the Court of Justice of the European Union **has ordered** Hungary to pay a fine of €200 million²⁰⁶ in 2024.²⁰⁷

Since 2016, the police have been forcing all foreigners crossing the border irregularly, regardless of whether they are children or adults, to the Serbian side of the fence, and although the European Court of Justice ruled the enforced returns illegal in

²⁰⁴ The Court of Justice of the European Union has ruled that Hungary’s asylum procedure violates EU asylum rules.

²⁰⁵ The list of persons who may exceptionally submit an asylum application in the territory of Hungary is set out in Article 5 of Government Decree 361/2024 (28.XI.).

²⁰⁶ Judgment of 13 June 2024, Commission v Hungary, C-123/22, EU:C:2024:493.

²⁰⁷ The state has still not complied, and the fines have been increasing by €1 million a day ever since.

2020, in 2024, for example, the authorities carried out 5,713 enforced returns²⁰⁸, denying the possibility to apply for asylum (no data on how many of these were under 18). The European Court of Human Rights has also ruled on the unlawfulness of refoulement in several judgments²⁰⁹, and in 2024 the Court ruled on several cases involving children.²¹⁰

The first time an unaccompanied minor filed an asylum application at the Hungarian Embassy in Belgrade was in 2022. Ten **unaccompanied minors were able to apply for asylum in Hungary** in 2023 and **four in 2024**. If a person arrives as an unaccompanied minor and is assigned a child protection guardian, the guardians (if they wish to lodge an asylum application on behalf of the child) must also travel to Belgrade to lodge the paper. This creates serious difficulties for the already overburdened guardians and often leads to a significant loss of time in sorting out the child's status in Hungary.²¹¹

Hungary **has granted asylum status** to (mainly) Ukrainian citizens and their family members **fleeing Ukraine** since the outbreak of the Ukrainian-Russian war. By the end of 2024, Hungary will have granted a total of almost 40,000 asylum statuses. According to OIF records²¹²,

16 thousand of the almost 40 thousand asylum seekers are children. In comparison, the Education Office registers only 2400 „asylum seeking, refugee, asylum seeking” children.²¹³

The Carpathian Foundation **published** the results of its research on Ukrainian refugees living in Hungary in the summer of 2024. The 73 households sampled included 87 children (aged 0-17), 93 per cent of whom (81) were interviewed in a child questionnaire (always asked from an adult household member, family member, mostly the parent). A quarter of the children (24%) were in primary school, 30 per cent in upper primary school at the time of the survey, 9 per cent were in kindergarten and 6 per cent were in secondary school. **One third (32%) were not in education**. They typically, but not exclusively, belong to the youngest age group. Ten children (the youngest, typically 0-2 years old) did not attend an institution because **their parents were at home with them** and did not want to enrol their child in an institution yet. For two or two children, the reasons given **were lack of the necessary vaccinations and language barriers**, in one case **lack of the necessary documents**, and in one case not planning to stay in Hungary. Four of the children over the age of six are not attending school be-

²⁰⁸ In 2020, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that the claw-back was unlawful, and infringement proceedings are still ongoing for non-implementation of the ruling. On 30 November 2023, the Court of Justice of the European Union held a hearing on the case, during which it put questions to representatives of both the European Commission and the Hungarian government.

²⁰⁹ Example: Case of SHAHZAD v. HUNGARY; Case of S.S. and OTHERS v. HUNGARY

²¹⁰ Example: Case of K.P. v. HUNGARY; Case of M.D and OTHERS v. HUNGARY

²¹¹ The list of persons who may exceptionally submit an asylum application in the territory of Hungary is set out in Article 5 of Government Decree 361/2024 (28.XI.).

²¹² The data was sent to the Hungarian Helsinki Committee by the National Directorate General of Aliens on 19 February 2025.

²¹³ The data was sent by the Education Office to the Hungarian Helsinki Committee on 5 February 2025.

cause of language barriers; one is seven years old, the other three are 16-17 years old, and all lived in a city with county status. The situation of two of them, aged 17, was also complicated by the lack of necessary documents.

In the experience of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, the Hungarian state has not conducted a comprehensive and accessible information campaign on the application for asylum and the basic rules of residence in Hungary. As a result, **many asylum seekers and even state institutions were still not aware of the information needed to access basic education and health services in 2024.** For example, in the experience of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, health care providers were in many cases still unaware in 2024 that refugees from Ukraine with asylum seekers or with Hungarian or Ukrainian documents (e.g. passport, ID card) are entitled to a wide range of health care services free of charge.²¹⁴ Although the Hungarian legislator has provided for the creation of a „technical identifier” to replace the social security number,²¹⁵ the experience of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee shows that even last year many health service providers encountered problems in providing free care to refugees from Ukraine, for example, many children were left without medicines in winter or were not admitted to hospitals with serious illnesses.

As of 21 August 2024, only asylum seekers from „war-affected” Ukrainian territories **are eligible for** central state accommodation.²¹⁶ The first list of areas such was published by the government on 4 July 2024. It has not been updated since then (until the closure of the manuscript). Those who were staying in state-subsidised accommodation but lost their entitlement as a result of the decree could submit a fairness claim to the government commissioner for persons fleeing the Russian-Ukrainian war in Hungary. However, the government commissioner rejected applications for fairness without giving reasons, and even sometimes different treatment was given to different members of the same family. As a result of the decree, 2-3 thousand families, mostly with young children, were on the streets in mid-August, with 120 people **in the village of Kocs**, for example, becoming homeless overnight. Since then, the sheltered families have won two lawsuits²¹⁷ against the government commissioner, but the experience of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee is that their housing situation has not been resolved and that the available facilities often mean that whole families live in one room, which they can barely afford.

²¹⁴ A case in point in the practice of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee.

²¹⁵ Government Decree 171/2022 (IV.29.) on certain data management issues related to health care in the context of the crisis in Ukraine.

²¹⁶ Government Decree 104/2022 (12.III.), the text of which was amended by Government Decree 134/2024 (28.VI.), which entered into force on 21 August 2024.

²¹⁷ Judgments of the Metropolitan Court of Budapest No 14.K.703.627/2024/20 and No 14.K.702.978/2024/67.



Eviction of vulnerable families on 20 August 2024. Photo by Bernadett Nagy, Hungarian Helsinki Committee.

Justice for children

According to the ENYÜBS data, there has been an increase in the number of recorded crimes committed by 0-13 year olds since 2022, but a significant increase in 2024. While in 2023 there were 2523 offences registered, in 2024 there were 4350.²¹⁸ The rise in child offending indicates **a crisis** serious, one of the most extreme manifestations of which in 2024 was the case of a 12-year-old girl who stabbed a classmate and compiled a death list of those she wanted to kill. The information that has been made public shows that the girl's family had serious problems, including a case where police intervention was necessary in a conflict between the parents. This is why it is important to support children as part of effective crime prevention programmes. Experts and professional organisations have been reporting for years that the mental health of children is deteriorating.²¹⁹

There has certainly been an increase in crime committed by 0-13 year olds, with theft and assault up, but there are some oddities in the 2024 statistics. For example, 763 offences were recorded for the offence of 'circumvention of technical measures to protect information systems', making it the second most

frequently committed offence by 0-13 year olds in 2024.²²⁰

According to data from the National Office of the Courts, **26 child offenders and 2164 juveniles were finally convicted in 2024**. These figures are almost identical to the statistics for previous years. Probation (927 offenders) and probation (1 085 offenders) were also the most common sentences in 2024. One juvenile offender was sentenced to imprisonment, but his sentence was suspended. In the 14-17 age group, 426 custodial sentences were imposed and 344 were suspended.

According to data from the National Prison Service, **in 2024, no child aged 12-13 was in a prison** with a final conviction or under arrest. **Among 14-17 year olds, 7 were in prison with a final sentence in 2024**. 6 were released from final execution in 2024. Among them 1 was released on parole, the others were released after completing their sentence. Most of them spent between 1 and 6 months in prison. On 31 December 2024, 9 persons were serving their final sentence, most of them for homicide (4 persons). 50 persons were arrested during 2024.

²¹⁸ It is important to note that as the number of offenders has not been registered since 2018, it is not possible to know how the number of offenders is evolving, as an offender who has committed more than one offence will be registered more than once in the statistics.

²¹⁹ For more on this, see the chapters on Basic health and well-being and Adolescent health.

²²⁰ No offences were registered for this situation in previous years, and all the offences were committed in a single county, so it can be assumed that this is in fact the case of a single minor.

According to data recorded in the HCSO, in 2024, 161 persons were sent to a correctional institution with a final sentence, most of them for robbery (69 persons) or theft (45 persons). On 31 December, 187 persons were serving their sentence, of whom 2 were aged 12-13, 96 were aged 14-17 and 89 were in the 18-21 age group. 218 people were arrested, also mostly for robbery (93) and theft (46). On 31 December, 147 people were in custody in reformatories. Of these, 7 were aged 12-13, 124 were aged 14-17 and 16 were aged 18-21.²²¹

Information on the placement of minor children in correctional institutions is available at²²², while such data are not available for correctional institutions. **During 2024, a total of 6 young children were placed with correctional**

foster parents, two of whom were living in correctional institutions on 31 December. This year, there was one case of a juvenile who gave birth to a child while in correctional care.²²³

Family counselling and family therapy sessions are available in the reformatories to promote re-socialisation. The data show that the Covid-19 epidemic has set back the implementation of these sessions, as while 83-94 children were offered family counselling in 2018 and 2019, the number of children affected is around 20 from 2020 onwards. Family therapy is not very common, with 1-3 children per year attending such sessions, but there were also years when no such activities were carried out at all.²²⁴

Child victims and witnesses of crime

In 2024, the number of child victims in the 0-13 age group decreased slightly compared to the previous year, while the number of **child victims in the 14-17 age group increased** (see Figure 8). The most common crime against 0-13 year olds is child endangerment, committed by the

parent in 80% of cases. Assault was the second most common crime committed against them, with boys being victims of this crime more often than girls. The third most common crime was sexual violence, with a higher proportion of girls being victims, and the perpetrators in

²²¹ Data source: data collection No 1511 OSAP (Report on the situation of correctional institutions)

²²² This refers to cases where a convicted person under the age of 18 has given birth to a child while in prison or has had a child under the age of one.

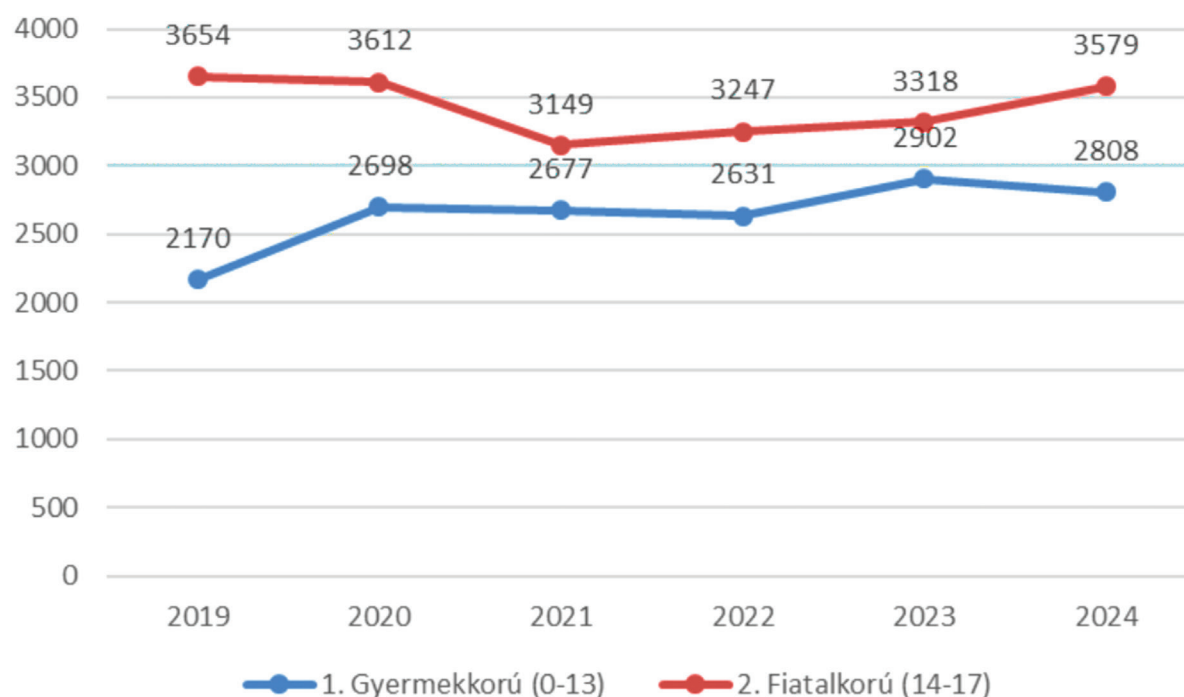
²²³ Data source: data collection No 1511 OSAP (Report on the situation of correctional institutions)

²²⁴ Data source: data collection No 1511 OSAP (Report on the situation of correctional institutions)

most cases being family, relatives or other acquaintances. 14-17 year olds were most often victims of theft. Assault is

also the second most common crime in this age group, with twice as many boys as girls being victims.

Figure 8: Evolution of the number of child and juvenile victims 2019-2024.



Source of data: ENYÜBS

According to the Ministry of Justice, **in 2024, 1117 cases of underage children were referred to the Victim Support Service, which** is more than in previous years. In 2024, there were 17 Victim **Support Centres** and four Victim Support Points in the country, where victims of crime can receive psychological, legal and financial assistance.²²⁵ In 2024, five of these ÁSKs were opened in Zalaeger-

szeg, Székesfehérvár, Kaposvár, Győr and Újbuda, and one Á victim support point was opened in Érd.

According to the Ministry of Justice, the Victim Support Line (+36 80 222 5225) handled only 3 calls involving underage children in 2024, similar to last year, although the number of calls was on an upward trend until 2022.

²²⁵ For minors, partial data are available on the assistance received, as the data are recorded by the person requesting the assistance, so if the assistance was requested by a legal guardian or other helper, the service provided to the minor is not included in the statistics.

According to the OGYSZ, there were still **5 Hearing and Therapy Centres** in the country in 2024. While the number of counsellors working in the Centres increased during 2024, from 23 on 31 December to 3 on 31 December, the number of clinical psychologists providing therapy decreased from 7 to 3.²²⁶ The data show that **the number of children interviewed in the Centres** has been steadily **increasing** since 2022: 190 in 2022, 301 in 2023 and 396 in 2024. In 2024, the number of interviews with the assistance of an expert adviser tripled, indicating that the investigating authorities are increasingly using this less child-invasive solution in their procedures. A further 102 children involved in abuse were interviewed by specialist counsellors in the context of an internal investigation. Compared to the number of children served by the Hearing and Therapy Centres, **the therapeutic support provided to only 19 children in 2024** seems low, even though the purpose of the centres is to provide a child-friendly framework for interviews and to support children in therapy. The reason for the low number of therapeutic assistance is not a reduction in the number of psychologists, but a lack of resources. The data shows that in 2024, the increase in the capacity of counsellors took away the budget for the Centres.

The situation of the Centres is also important because **research** published in 2024, cited several times before, points to the varying quality of forensic psy-

chologist's expert opinions and bad practices in witness interviews: *„The manner and number of interviews, the length of the procedure, the possibility of special (lenient) treatment and often the constant threat during the procedure are the reasons for the harsh re-traumatisation of the victimised children. The act of hearing is at the very least uncomfortable and distressing, distressing for the witnesses.”*

²²⁶ In 2024, there were 6 psychologists providing therapeutic support, 3 of them clinical psychologists, and in 2023, 7 psychologists were employed. The reduction in staff numbers is 1 person.

K. Follow-up to the Commission's previous concluding observations

Optional Protocol on Sexual Abuse against Children

“States Parties shall prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in accordance with the provisions of this Protocol.” - Extract from the Optional Protocol.

According to the US Embassy's **Tier 2 report**, Hungary has made significant efforts in the area of human trafficking in 2024 (compared to previous years), but the situation still falls short of minimum standards. Criticisms include **fewer perpetrators prosecuted and significantly fewer victims from vulnerable groups identified** (e.g. unaccompanied minors and children who have run away from care). According to the most recent data (2023), **163 victims were identified by the authorities, of which 25 were children** (in 2022 the figure was 41).

In February 2024, the Council of Europe's **Group GRETA** of Experts on Action aga-

inst Trafficking in Human Beings () published a report, which also **highlights the vulnerability of children in state care** (children's homes, residential care), highlighting the worrying decrease in the number of identified child victims in the statistics. In the 2019-2022 statistics processed by GRETA, the proportion of child victims was 16%.

In October 2024, an **international project training course** was held at the National Institute of Criminology, which included (among other topics) the interrogation of child victims of labour exploitation.

Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

“States Parties shall take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces under the age of eighteen do not become directly involved in hostilities.” - Extract from the Optional Protocol.

As in previous years' reports on the rights of the child, in 2024 the emphasis was on the patriotic education of young people and the promotion of their studies in defence. The number of students and schools participating **in the Cadet Programme increased in 2024** (see Tab-

le 9) In 2024, according to the Ministry of Defence's response to a public interest request, a total of 167 institutions, including 11 732 students, participated in the Cadet Programme, with 3 937 students in grade 9 (compared to 3 533 last year).

8. táblázat: A Honvéd Kadét Programban résztvevő partneriskolák száma 2018-2024.

	2018/2019 academic year	2019/2020 academic year	2020/2021 academic year	2021/2022 academic year	2022/2023 academic year	2023/2024 academic year	2024/2025 academic year
number of partner schools	54	68	78	95	120	144	167

Source of data: Ministry of Defence

According to data from the Ministry of Defence, the **teaching of the subject of defence**, which started in 2023, started in 141 secondary schools (43 high schools, 98 technical schools) and continued in September 2024. A total of 13 590 students are currently enrolled in the programme, of whom 2 549 are in the 11th grade in secon-

dary schools and 11 041 in the 9th grade in technical schools. According to a statement by the Minister of Defence, „*the aim is that within a few years all young people in Hungarian secondary schools will be able to learn about the system of defence in the classroom*”.

²²⁶ In 2024, there were 6 psychologists providing therapeutic support, 3 of them clinical psychologists, and in 2023, 7 psychologists were employed. The reduction in staff numbers is 1 person.

According to the Ministry of Defence's response to a public interest request, in the 2023/2024 academic year 166 students passed the intermediate level and 54 students the advanced level exams in defence studies.²²⁷

In 2024, the Hungarian Defence Forces organised the eighth **Defence** Camps. According to a statement by the Minister of

Defence, around 4,000 young people aged 12-25 participated in the camps, which were held in 56 locations in 118 rotations. This year, students could choose from 25 different **themes** (e.g. hussar, survival, chemical warfare). One of the organisers of the defence camps said that many of the students who had decided on a career path after the camps had decided to join the armed forces.



Source: honvedelem.hu

In 2024, the year-long **Honvéd Cadet Cup** was also held, with more than 2,000 cadets from 78 schools taking part in the 7-stage competition. The winning students and institutions won sports vouchers and airsoft guns worth a total of HUF 5 million.

In 2024, the Soldiers of a Thousand Years

was launched, and a defence quiz was also organised, open to students from cadet schools and other secondary schools teaching defence. The competition included both theoretical and practical exercises, including a quiz on artillery in a room with old mortars and replicas of former Nazis.

²²⁷ This figure, based on the Ministry's response to a public interest request, was as follows in previous years:

In 2022/2023, 161 students at intermediate level and 41 students at advanced level,

In 2021/2022, 166 students at intermediate level and 127 students at advanced level,

In the school year 2020/2021, 110 students at intermediate level and 122 students at advanced level,

In 2019/2020, 125 students at intermediate level and 86 students at advanced level.

The Defence Sports Association continued its multi-site **League of Courage** programme in 2024. One of the **announcements** about the event included the opportunity for children to „try laser rifle shooting, archery, hand grenade throwing and various obstacle courses.”

In the summer of 2020 the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Human Resources, the Hungarian Defence Forces Command and the representatives of the Defence Sports Association launched the **Bloody Yourself programme**, a child-

ren's defence, defence programme, based on a cooperation agreement, with the aim of enabling children in child protection care to „learn about the importance of defence and gain insight into a socially recognised career”. In 2024, the 11th Military Supplementary and Recruitment Office of Nógrád County also organised **activities** for children in children's homes as part of the programme. In addition to the events, the Recruitment Office also focuses on familiarisation with the armed forces and the presentation of new military equipment.



Source: honvedelmisport.hu

The Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the last reporting period also drew the attention of the State²²⁸ to the fact that children should not be allowed

to participate in military training sessions in which real firearms are used. It further highlighted that the Defence Cadet Programme²²⁹ must comply with the **Optional Protocol**.

²²⁸ “43.(b) Ensure that children are not allowed to participate in military training where firearms are used, including the Military School Programme, the Kratochvil Károly Defence High School and College, and establish regular monitoring of the civilian organisation Defence School's Patriotic School programme to ensure that its curriculum and teaching staff comply with the provisions of the Optional Protocol;”

²²⁹ We first wrote **about the Defence Cadet Programme in our . 2018** report. The basic aim of the Defence School (as it defines itself) is to help children understand from primary school age that “defence is one of the foundations of our national existence”. Within the framework of patriotic and defence education, special attention is paid to the promotion of defence-related sports, military tradition-keeping and war grave care.

L. Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure

Optional Protocol on the communication procedure

The third Optional Protocol, unlike its predecessors, does not derogate from a point of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but establishes a complaints mechanism for violations of children's rights, and entered into force in April 2014. It allows children to submit their complaints directly to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which investigates them and then instructs governments to take appropriate action. **Currently 54 countries have signed and 52 have ratified.** The Optional Protocol has not been signed by

Hungary, still the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights has a 2021 briefing ²³⁰ that the draft of the Ministry of Justice was already before the Government, but has not been adopted, signed and ratified.²³¹

In its Concluding Observations on the last periodic report, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child already drew Hungary's attention in 2020 to the fact that ratification of the Protocol is essential to further strengthen the implementation of children's rights.

²³⁰ AJBH (30.03.2021) - Information received in response to our request. In February 2025, we also contacted the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, but we did not receive a reply to our request by the time the Report was closed.

²³¹ In the chapter on Data Disclosure and Access to Public Data, we have written more about the fact that we have not received a response to our data request for the Optional Protocol for years.

Cooperation with regional organisations

Sustainability

In 2024, the Climate Working Group of the Civil Coalition for Children's Rights produced an unofficial Hungarian translation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's **Comprehensive Commentary No. 26** on the Rights of the Child and the Book, with special reference to climate change, thus promoting children's rights and environmental interests in Hungary. The document places particular emphasis on the links between climate change and children's rights and reinforced **the argument that the climate crisis is also a children's rights crisis.**²³²

This approach is reflected in the fact that 2024 was the first climate case brought before the ECtHR by young people, which was heard as a priority case by the court. Young Portuguese people aged between 11 and 24 complained that climate change is already having a serious impact on their lives and could have even more serious consequences in the future. They called for Portugal and several other countries, including Hungary, to be held responsible for not doing enough to combat climate change²³³. The ECtHR ultimately considered the request to be unfounded and rejected it.

„The news is usually about a disaster that has happened, not the process that led to it. The media often puts the blame on individuals, saying that it is our personal responsibility to save our planet, rather than mobilising companies and organisations. This causes anxiety in children, as most of us are only driven by the idea that our planet is going to be destroyed and we are to blame.”

(Insight from a Minor Colleague)

²³² See UNICEF **report in** English.

²³³ Further details of the case and the decisions Ágnes Lux: Successful unsuccessful climate cases on children's rights? Lessons from the Sacchi and Duarte cases, published in Public Law Review.

In 2024, young Hungarians also initiated a debate on sustainability. The **Our Budapest**, Programme already presented in the chapter on Respecting the Child's Voice, was developed by three of Hungary's largest student organisations - the **United Student Front**, the **ADOM Student Movement** and Fridays for Future Hungary. The programme presents young people's aspirations for sustainability and environmental protection, including the greening of the quayside, education for public transport, slow tourism and the promotion of sustainable attitudes.

This is the aim of the annual **Sustainability Week**, which was held for the ninth time in 2024, from 22-26 April, for school students. UNICEF Hungary also held its Climate Change Conference annual, while **IKK Nonprofit Zrt.** and the **Blue Planet Foundation**, among others, organised sustainability-related programmes, including **a climate change lesson given by** former President János Áder.

List of abbreviations used in the report

Institutions, organisations

AB	Constitutional Court
AJBH	Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights
ÁSK	Victim Support Centre
SA	State Audit Office of Hungary
EBFF	AJBH Directorate General for Equal Treatment
EJEB	European Court of Human Rights
IJSZ	Integrated Legal Protection Service
KSH	Central Statistical Office
NVSZ	National Defence Service
NAIH	National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information
NEAK	National Health Insurance Fund Management
NMHH	National Media and Infocommunications Authority
NSZI	Margit Schlachta National Institute for Social Policy
ODT	National Students' Council
OGYSZ	National Child Protection Service
OIF	National Directorate General for Aliens
OMSZ	National Ambulance Service
SZGYF	Directorate-General for Social Protection of Children

Legislation

Áptv.	Act LV of 1993 on Hungarian Citizenship
Btk.	Act C of 2012 on the Criminal Code
Gyer.	Government Decree 149/1997 (IX. 10.) on guardianship authorities and child protection and guardianship proceedings
	Convention on the Rights of the Child
	Act LXIV of 1991 on the proclamation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, signed in New York on 20 November 1989
Gyvt.	Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and Guardianship
Administration	
Nkt.	Act CXC of 2011 on National Public Education
Ptk.	Act V of 2013 on the Civil Code
Soctv.	Act III of 1993 on Social Administration and Social Benefits

Concepts

ADHD	attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
DÖK	student council
CONVENTION	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ENYÜBS	Uniform Criminal Statistics for Investigation and Prosecution
GYOD	care fees for children in residential care
MI	artificial intelligence
OSAP	National Statistical Data Collection Programme
Protocol	Minutes published by the Home Office on the processes of the detection and signalling system operated by the Family and Child Welfare Service
RGYK	regular child protection benefit
SNI	special educational needs



Hintalovon

Gyermekjogi Alapítvány

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Prepared by the Hintalovon Children's Rights Foundation

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