



Hungary

Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children

A Study of National Policies

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1. The extent and nature of child poverty and well-being in Hungary

There are approximately two million children (aged 0-18) living in Hungary, and they amount to roughly 20 % of the population

Table 1: Population by age group as of 1 January 2007* (thousands)

	Male	Female	Total
0-4	248	234	482
5-9	248	236	484
10-14	289	275	564
15-19	319	305	624
Total	1 104	1 050	2 154

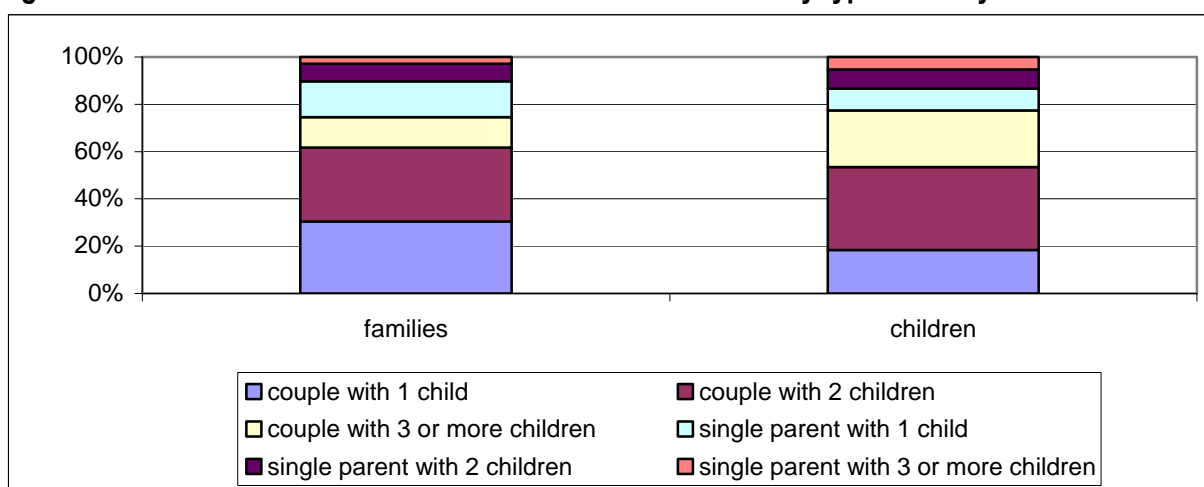
Source: Population, Popular Migration (Néesség, népmozgalom), Central Statistics Office, 21 March 2007.

<http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xftp/idoszaki/nepmozg/nepmoz06t.pdf>

*Preliminary data, partly estimated.

Starting in 2005, there have been the beginnings of a modest growth in the live birth rate. In addition, in recent decades we have seen a rise in the number of unmarried women giving birth. In 2006, fully 35.6 % of all babies born were children of unmarried mothers. Since 1990, the ratio of children born outside of marriage increased by 2.7-fold, while since 1980 it grew by 5-fold. Nearly 25 % of households with children are single-parent households, and these households are raising nearly 22 % of all children. About 16 % of all households with children are raising three or more children, and nearly 30 % of all children live in these latter households.

Figure 1: Families with children and the breakdown of children by type of family



Source: *Yearbook of Welfare Statistics, 2005*, HCSO, 2006, p. 25.

1.1. Income poverty of families with children

When reviewing the evolvement of child poverty and the current situation, we have relied principally on data and publications from the Central Statistics Office and social research institute Tárki. In addition, we have scrutinised the documents of a new programme office that has been working for the past year and a half to design a programme to combat child poverty, and have also scrutinised a number of surveys focused on this issue. The freshest data from investigations (such as PISA or HBSC) intended to go beyond the domestic situation and make comparisons with other countries possible are from 2003, rendering them less than adequate when presenting current problems. At this time Hungary has no systematic investigations of the issue, for a system of domestic indices able to track trends in child poverty has not yet been designed. The first EU-SILC data collection of 2005 did not trigger a breakthrough in this regard.

Child poverty has been a major problem in Hungary for the past 15-17 years. At the time the State socialist regime collapsed, children were not the most at-risk age group. About 25 % of them were in the lowermost income quintile at that time, a ratio that shot up to 40 % by the turn of the century. In all cases, the sources for these data are household income surveys, so it is more accurate to speak of poverty in households with children and the poverty risk of households raising children aged 0-18.¹ At present, the poverty rate in households with children is nearly 50 % higher than the overall rate for all Hungarian households, and is nearly double the rate for households without children.

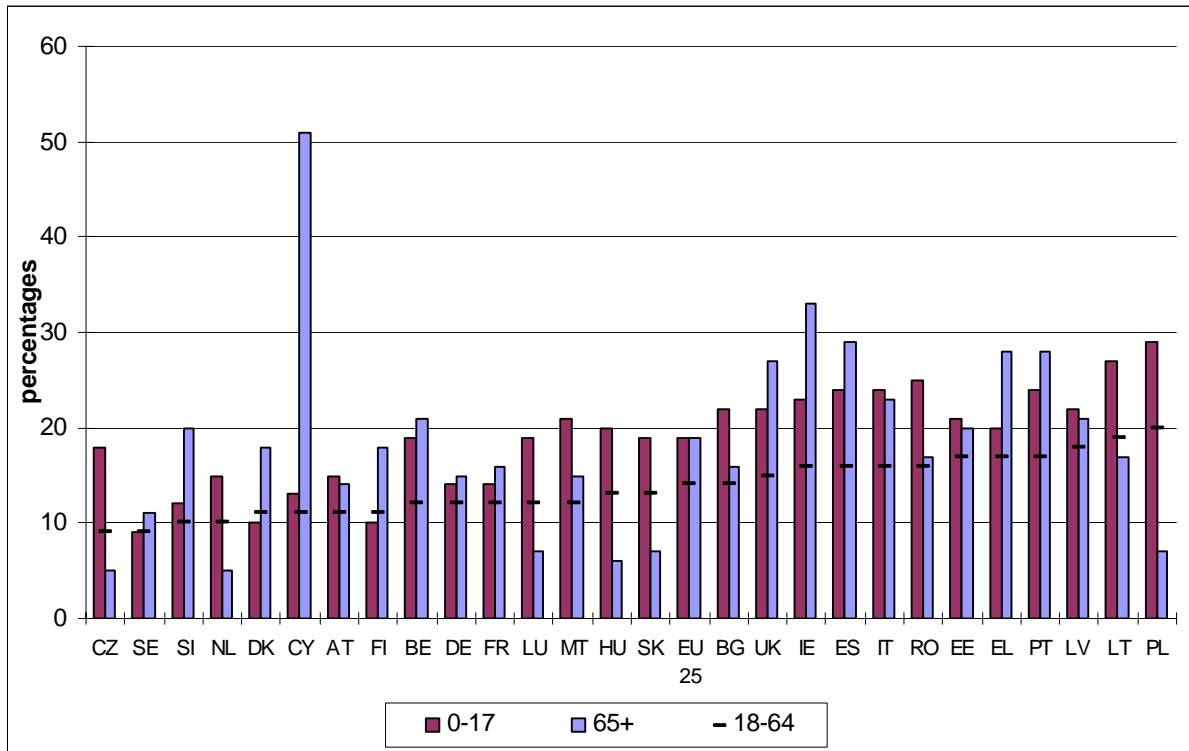
Some 12 % of the overall population and 19 % of all children, meaning 420 000 children, were living below the widely accepted poverty line in 2005. (This threshold is 60 % of the median value of equivalent income per unit of consumption.)

¹ We also need to note that statistical data collections and surveys done in Hungary treat the 0-18 age group as the child-population. Laeken indices use the 0-17 age group, the reasons for which are hard to interpret since basic international documents (such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) treat persons under 18 as children. As far as this matter is concerned, Tárki, which is the dominant player in domestic research, has issued a similar opinion.

'From our point of view, either we must adhere to the customary 0-18 grouping or we might shift to 0-16 or possibly to the 0-15 used hitherto as the Laeken indicator, since there are professional arguments and traditions favouring any of these configurations. However, there is no rational argument whatsoever for choosing the exact age of 17 as the boundary between childhood and adulthood.'

Social statistical situation analysis on the 'National action plan for social cohesion', Tárki, Budapest, May 2006, p. 90.

Figure 2: The at-risk-of-poverty rate for children, elderly people and the overall population — 2004 percentages



Source: *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion*, Brussels, 6 March 2007, SEC(2007), p. 329.

The per capita minimum pension, which is used as a measure for the aid threshold, is higher than the above threshold. Children living below this level were entitled to regular child-raising support, and since 2006, have been entitled to a regular child protection benefit. In 2005, 650 000 children received the support, while in 2006 the new benefit which replaced it was granted to nearly 550 000 children.² The minimum subsistence level calculated by the Central Statistics Office is even higher. In 2004, some 28 % of the population and 40 % of the children — 850 000 children — lived below the subsistence level calculated by the Central Statistics Office.

The presence of children in a household clearly changes the income situation of that household. The per capita incomes of households with one child amount to 81 % of the incomes of childless households — according to the latest data from the household budget survey — while the per capita incomes of households with three or more children are only 52 %. In those households where the

² We do not yet have precise data on access to this benefit in 2006, but it is clear that there was a significant decline in the number of children receiving the regular child protection benefit. The reason behind this is most likely that when the family support system was altered to include the money given as aid in the family allowance, the additional money pushed the incomes of some households above the aid eligibility threshold. It is also probable that when the nature of the aid was changed, some families chose not to apply for it. We discuss this in greater detail under the heading describing assistance.

head of household is economically inactive, the per capita income is only 37 % of that of childless households.³

Poverty rates are closely correlated with the number of children in a family. While the poverty rates of households with one child are lower than the overall rate for the entire population, the risk of poverty is two and a half times higher than average in households with three children or more.

'The poverty of families with children is connected principally to the existence of the children and the resulting lower rate of economic activity. It is differentiated by the actual number of children. The poverty rate of families with one child is more or less the same as that of childless families. The problem begins when there are two children. Their poverty rate is a full 70 % higher than that of single-child families. The most powerful poverty fault line — as elsewhere in Europe — is the three-child family. The poverty rate of families with three children or more is three and a half times higher than that of single-child families.⁴ Of the large families, 60 % live below the minimum subsistence level. Forty-five per cent of poor children live in large families.'⁵

Table 2: Poverty rates of families with children 2004 — percentages of people living below various poverty thresholds

	Below 60 % of the median income (in %)	Below minimum subsistence level calculated by the Central Statistics Office (in %)
Total, households	14	28
Total, households with children	19	41
Of this:		
1 child	11	29
2 children	19	34
3 children or more	36	60

Source: Several cross-sections of child poverty — background analysis, 'Programme to combat child poverty', March 2006.

<http://www.gyerekesely.hu/dmdocuments/1melleklet-m-3.pdf>

Tárki Monitor survey, 2005. Central Statistics Office: Minimum subsistence: Central Statistics Office Household Budget Survey 2004 and author's own calculations.

Note: 60 % of the equivalent median income — the median income that calculates with the number of children — is the poverty threshold (OECD 1 scale).

A number of factors have contributed to this unfavourable trend in the poverty risk of households with children. The first and most important has involved changes in the labour market that particularly hit households with children. We are not speaking merely about the appearance of unemployment, but much rather about the drastic decline in the rates of economic activity among both males and

³ Central Statistics Office reports on economics and society (A KSH Jelenti, Gazdaság és társadalom), 4/2006. <http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xftp/gyor/jel/jel20604.pdf>

⁴ According to the calculations of László Hablicsek the average number of children in Roma families between 1991 and 1995 was about 3.3 and between 1996 and 2000. 3.0 with considerable regional differences. Kísérleti számítások a roma lakosság területi jellemzőinek alakulására és 2021-ig történő előrebecslésére, Active Society Foundation, 2005. http://www.szochalo.hu/uploads/media/Hablicsek_Roma_Projekcio_Osszefoglalas.pdf

⁵ A gyerekszegénység néhány metszete — háttérelmzés [in Hungarian] (Several cross-sections of child poverty — background analysis), 'Programme to combat child poverty', March 2006. <http://www.gyerekesely.hu/dmdocuments/1melleklet-m-3.pdf>

females. In addition to changes in the employment situation, a decisive role in the unfavourable financial situation of households with children has been played by price liberalisation, by the termination of central price supports that had played a significant role before the collapse of communism, and last but certainly not least, by the drop in the value of supports to families. In Hungary today, the most vulnerable households with children are ones in which the education level of the parents is low and the family lives in certain low-employment regions of the country, predominantly in rural areas. Similarly to the risks observed in other EU Member States, households with three or more children, single-parent households, and minority households — in Hungary, Romany households — live under the least favourable conditions.

According to Eurostat data, Hungary is in the lower ranks of ‘midfield’ among the EU Member States as far as child poverty is concerned. However, looking at a Unicef report published on 2007 on 21 advanced countries and focusing on material poverty, the situation is much more dramatic, for we are in 20th place. The data may appear to contradict one another, but really do not, for on the one hand, the Unicef study operates with older statistics, while on the other, it included the ratio of children in households with no employed person as a separate component to complement the various income levels, as well as the deprivation suffered by the children.⁶

1.2. Deprivation and social exclusion

In addition to poverty of income, the other poverty factors of consumption deprivation and housing deprivation, subjective poverty, and cumulative deprivation and isolation, have been subject to increasing analyses in recent years.

Results of a study of the lowermost third of the population in 2001 and repeated in 2006⁷ found that basic needs were more or less met in today’s Hungary. Even among poor households, it is rare (but does include several tens of thousands of people) for them not to have access to regular daily meals (3 % of children and 2 % of adults lack regular meals). However, the significant portion of people living in poor households are unable to meet needs which are extensively accessible to contemporary society, and are socially accepted as basic needs. These include appropriate heat in winter and private lessons for children to improve their chances of advancing. The data clearly show that poverty is not only a lack of money or assets. In some cases, there was an improvement in the meeting of needs in the data collected in 2006 (regular fruit consumption, and somewhat more children wearing newly purchased shoes, while more parents are wearing newly purchased coats, etc.) The most significant shift is connected to school needs. There has been significant growth in the number of households from which the children regularly attend school programmes, regularly participate in sports, and have access to computers. This is related to central programmes aimed at various types

⁶ ‘Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries’, *Innocenti Report Cards No 7*, Unicef, 2007.

⁷ Ferge, Zs., Tausz, K., and Darvas, Á., (2002) *Küzdelem a szegénység és a kirekesztés ellen.*[in Hungarian] (Struggle against poverty and isolation), International Labour Office, Budapest, and *A szegénység és kirekesztés változása, 2001-2006* [in Hungarian] (Changes in poverty and isolation, 2001-2006) 2006 (NKFP/5/012/2004) Eötvös Loránd University Poverty Research Centre, 2007 (manuscript).

of school advances. There has also been a rise in the proportion of children taking private lessons, but in 2006, the number involved fewer than one third of households ⁸.

Table 3: Satisfying needs

Children's needs, VAN %	2001 (N=774)	2006 (N=575)
child – three meals on weekdays	97	97
child – fruit once a day on weekdays	81	91
child – fruit once a day on weekends	79	86
child – separate bed	94	93
child – warm outer clothing for winter	96	96
child – dress-up clothes	90	93
child – two pairs of shoes, purchased for that specific child	59	65
child – at least one bicycle	74	80
child – birthday or name day present	83	86
child – own toys	85	89
child – own books	85	86
child – at least two weeks vacation, once a year	22	28
school child – all equipment needed for school	86	95
school child – opportunity to regularly participate in sports	38	58
school child – participates in regular school programmes	75	83
school child – private lessons	20	28
school child – access to a computer	29	55
school child – pocket money	51	55
Parents' needs and household equipment VAN %		
can provide – at least one hot meal a day	98	98
can provide – meat, at least every other day	52	70
can provide – appropriate home heating in winter	84	86
can provide – newly purchased warm winter coat	23	39
can provide – television	94	98
can provide – washing machine	93	94
can provide – refrigerator	91	96
can provide – home insurance	44	44
can provide – money for public transport	64	80
can provide – holiday or travel once a year	6	9
can provide – Christmas celebration with gifts	78	84
can provide – at least one bank card	55	64
can provide – at least one valid passport	30	31

Source: Changes in poverty and isolation, 2001-2006, (NKFP/5/012/2004) Eötvös Loránd University, Poverty Research Centre, 2007, (Manuscript).

⁸ According to the data of the PISA survey, 50 % of Hungarian 15-year-old students participate in extra-curricular classes, with the average of the OECD countries being approximately 25 %. In 2004, 29-63 % of 10 to 16-year-old students were provided with tutoring in the form of extra-curricular classes. (The ratios are differing according to the level of education and the type of the school.) 15-74 % of the same cohort visited so called 'competitiveness developing' classes. Mayer József: II. A „második esély” iskolái és az esélyteremtés. <http://www.oki.hu/printerFriendly.php?tipus=cikk&kod=masodikEsely-eselyteremtés>

Various research projects have yielded more or less similar results in defining the sector of the population in the most hopeless situation and the size of that group. On this basis, we find that in Hungary about 5-8 % of the population live in lasting and profound poverty, which goes beyond poverty of income into consumption deprivation, a poor place of residence and housing conditions, and a subjective view of impoverishment as cumulative poverty. The number of children in this segment of the population can only be estimated. There are about 100 000-200 000 people between the ages of 0 and 18 living in deep deprivation in Hungary. The danger of heritable poverty is most serious among this group although they are not the only ones threatened by the known mobility data.

The 2001 poverty investigation showed that one in five households within the lowermost third of the population lived in serious cumulative deprivation. This is nearly 6 % of the entire population. While less true of households with one or two children, one in every third household with three children or more experienced cumulative labour market, income, housing, and consumption disadvantages.⁹

The Tárki analysis found that household monitor data showed that 23 % of the population were able to meet only the most fundamental demands, while 28 % were deprived as far as household equipment was concerned, 19 % lived under deprived housing conditions, and 46 % expressed subjective feelings of poverty. With a poverty threshold calculated using the OECD 1 scale, at 60 % of the median income, 14 % of the population showed poverty of income and one third of the population was affected by cumulative financial deprivation. According to the data, in 2005, one in three persons were cumulatively deprived and/or experienced poverty of income (37 %). Of those, 8 % experienced both poverty of income and cumulative deprivation, signs of lasting and profound poverty. The risk of cumulative deprivation is highest among households where the head of household has a low education level and among Roma. Non-financial poverty and cumulative deprivation are closely connected to poverty of income. The chances that persons living amid income poverty would also suffer cumulative deprivation were four and a half times higher than they were for persons who were not poor from the income point of view.

The major yield of the analysis and the methodology used was that it was able to quantify the non-financial material deprivation linked to a low level of income. By making it measurable, it was possible to identify and learn about an 8 % segment of society that “lives in poverty of income and cumulative deprivation,” whom the shapers of social policy (and not just the welfare policy decision-makers in the strict sense of the term) need to pay special attention. One fourth of these people live in the region of Northern Hungary, while another 23 % live in the northern plains. About one third live in small settlements (with less than 2 000 residents), and 53 % are members of households where the education level of the head of household is at most eight grades of primary school. Twenty-eight per cent are in households with three children or more.¹⁰ The Tárki data call attention to the particularly high risk of cumulative deprivation among Roma.

⁹ Ferge, Zs., Tausz, K., and Darvas, Á., (2002), *Küzdelem a szegénység és a kirekesztés ellen*. [in Hungarian] (Struggle against poverty and isolation), International Labour Office, Budapest, p. 116.

¹⁰ Havasi, Éva, (2006), *Megélhetési nehézségek, anyagi depriváció* [in Hungarian] (Difficulties making a living, financial deprivation) in : *Feketén-fehéren* [in Hungarian], *Household Monitor Reports 2005*, Szívós, P., and Tóth, I. G. (eds), Tárki, Budapest, p. 67.

1.3. Main features of households with children that live in poverty

'The main social factors leading to poverty — among the entire population — are a low rate of economic activity and high unemployment; a low education level and/or lack of a skill; a 'poor' place of residence, meaning a small settlement in a depressed region; a poor health status and/or a disability; or being Romany. These same factors trigger child poverty. Children whose parents are uneducated, jobless, live in small settlements, and are Roma are particularly hurt. Children with a single parent or a household member with a disability — either a parent or a child — are also in a difficult situation.'¹¹

1.3.1. Employment

A look at employment rates shows that only Malta's and Poland's were less favourable than Hungary's. The average rate of economic activity for the first 25 EU Member States was 63.8 % (71.3 % for males and 56.3 % for females). The rate in Hungary was 56.9 % (63.1 % of males and 51.0 % of females).¹² In recent years, unemployment among women grew more rapidly than among men and in 2005 — for the first time since the collapse of communism — it exceeded it (7.6 % for females as against 7.1 % for males among people of economically active age and 7.5 % for females and 7 % for males among 15 to 64-year-olds).

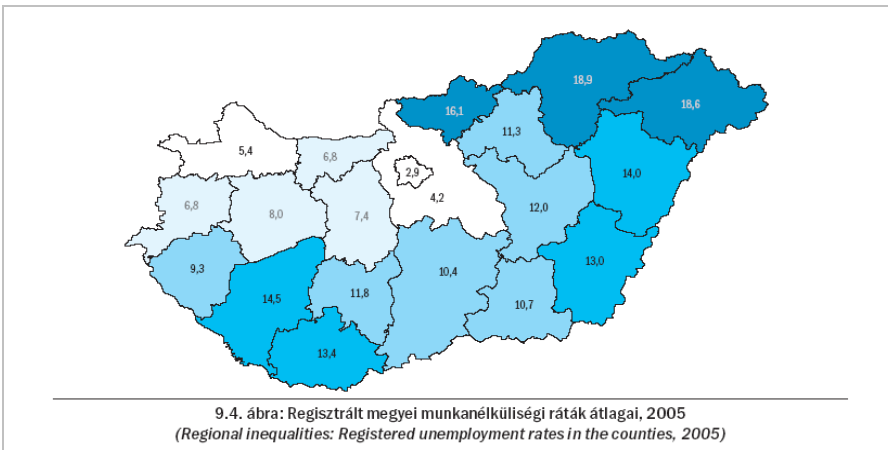
'The employment rate between December 2006 and February 2007, using the 15 to 64-year-old age group suitable for international comparisons, was 57.3 %, 0.6 % higher than one year earlier. Between December 2006 and February 2007, the number of unemployed persons was 313 000 giving a jobless rate of 7.4 %. The former of these indices was 14 000 lower and the latter was 0.4 % lower than the corresponding values of one year earlier. (The harmonised jobless rate projected on the basis of the dynamics of registered unemployment data published by Eurostat for January, as the middle month of the period, were as follows: the first 15 EU Member States: 7.2 %, the EU Member States: 7.7 %, Hungary: 8.2 %.) In Hungary, 49.3 % of the jobless people have been seeking work for one year or longer. The average duration of time between jobs amounted to 17.2 months.'¹³ There are significant differences in employment and jobless rates from one region of the country to the next. These differences on the county level are even more significant. Within the EU, Hungary has the sharpest regional inequalities after Italy.

¹¹ A gyerekszegénység néhány metszete — háttérelmzés [in Hungarian] (Several cross-sections of child poverty – background analysis), programme to combat child poverty, March 2006.
<http://www.gyerekesely.hu/dmdocuments/1melleklet-m-3.pdf>

¹² *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion*, Brussels, 6 March 2007, SEC(2007), p. 329.

¹³ Foglalkoztatottság és munkanélküliség 2006. december – 2007. február, [in Hungarian] (Employment and unemployment, December 2006 – February 2007) Central Statistics Office.
<http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xftp/gyor/fog/fog20702.pdf>

Figure 3: Regional employment data, 2006



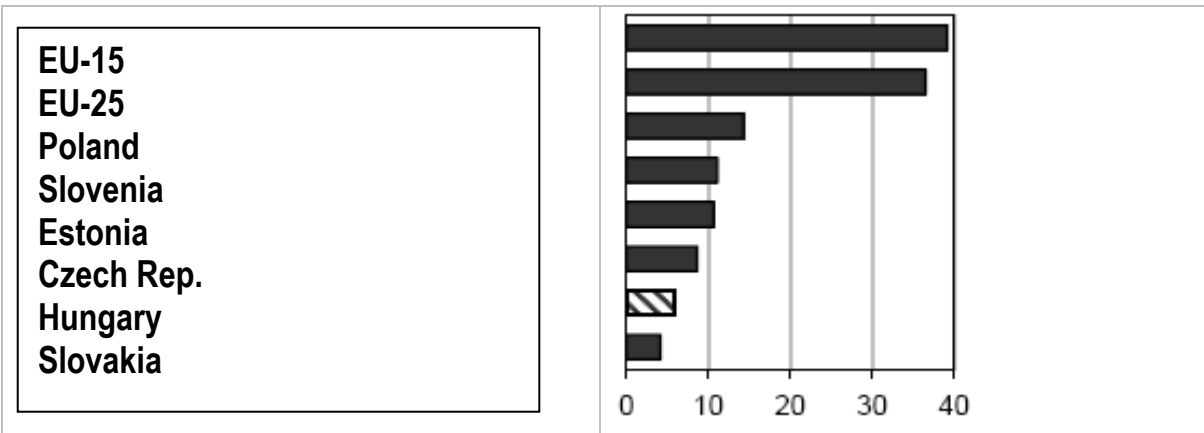
Source: The Hungarian Labour Market, 2007. Szerkesztette Fazekas Károly és Kézdi Gábor, Institute of Economics, HAS Hungarian Employment Foundation, Budapest, 2007.

<http://econ.core.hu/doc/mt/2007/en/stat.pdf>

It is generally known that the risk of child poverty is lowest in countries where the significant portion of women are on the workforce. Even in these countries, the best results occur when mothers work full-time and not part-time.

Part-time employment of women in Hungary is well below the EU average, and there has not been any significant change in this matter in recent years.

Figure 4: Part-time employment in Hungary and in several other EU countries, 2005

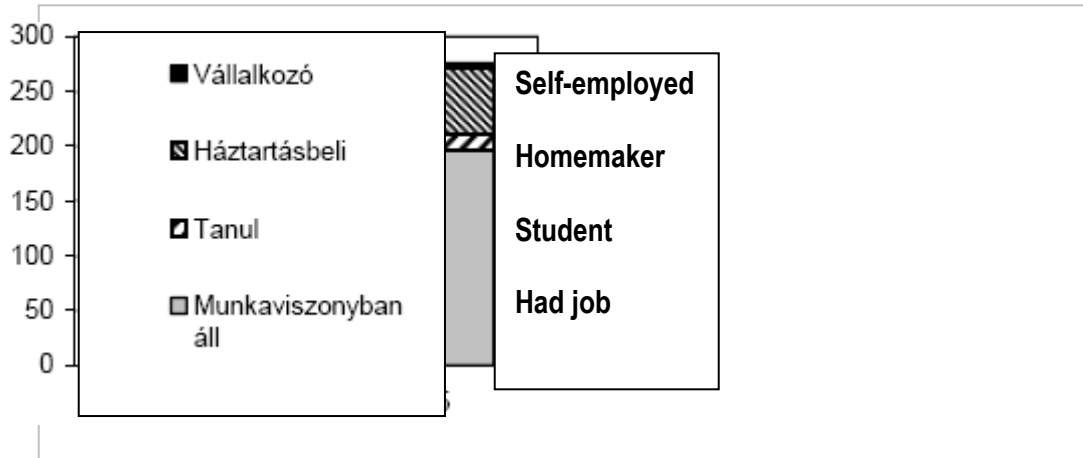


Source: <http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xftp/gyor/jel/jel20606.pdf> (p. 46, fig. 10.)

In 2005, some 9.3 % of economically active age females accessed childcare assistance, a number equivalent to 300 000 persons. Typically, women with lower educational levels, who therefore were less likely to be able to find work, took advantage of the cash benefits for the entire period of time they were available. A growing portion of the people accessing this benefit — nearly three quarters

(72 %) — would like to get a job or start a business. At the same time, nearly 100 000 people, or one third of them, have no job to return to. Parents of young children have a harder time finding work because daycare facilities are in short supply in many places. At present, 8 % of the people taking advantage of some form of childcare hold regular jobs or do occasional work, nearly 70 % of them are not working because they want to spend their time with their children, while 14 % would want to work but have no-one to care for their children.¹⁴

Figure 5: Prior status of person accessing childcare benefits



<http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xftp/gyor/jel/jel20606.pdf> (p. 45, fig.9)

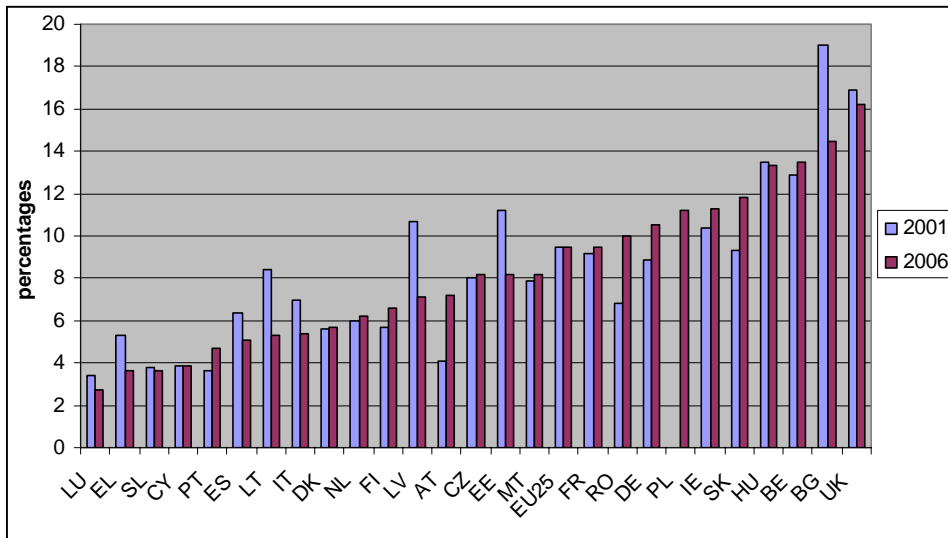
As far as the domestic evolvement of child poverty is concerned, most likely an important role was played by the fact that the economic activity level of the women undertaking motherhood changed significantly over the course of the 1990s. While in 1990, 8 out of every 10 women who undertook motherhood were economically active, by 2000, only 6 out of 10 had jobs before giving birth. From the point of view of the children, it is decisive that there is a low level of employment for people with low education levels, people in disadvantaged situations, and for women.

At present there are 265 000 children in Hungary living in households where no one is employed, most of them (51.3 %) in two parent households¹⁵ where neither the father nor the mother has a regular income from work.

¹⁴ A KSH jelenti, [in Hungarian] (The Central Statistics Office reports), June 2006.
<http://portal.ksh.hu/pls/ksh/docs/hun/xftp/gyor/jel/jel20606.pdf>

¹⁵ *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion*, Brussels, 6 March 2007, SEC(2007), p. 329.

Figure 6: Children living in jobless households, 2001 and 2006



Source: *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion*, Brussels, 6 March 2007, SEC(2007) 329, Eurostat, Labour Force Survey — Quarter 2 results.

It is important to underline that in line with the dominant trends of the OECD countries ¹⁶ the poverty research data connected with activity of the labour market shows that households in which no one had a job were not the only ones hit by poverty of income. At the time of both surveys (2001 and 2006), there was an economically active household member in roughly two thirds of households with children, while in one fifth of them, two or more adults had work. However, there was a distinct deterioration in this area, as well as in the sources of income of these same households in the time between the two surveys, where the ratio of households with incomes from market sources dropped from 72 to 65 %.¹⁷

¹⁶ 'It has been found that in nearly all OECD countries, child poverty rates are significantly higher for jobless families than for families with at least one parent who has work, and are also higher in single-income families than in dual-income families, and in single-parent households compared to two-parent households. While nearly everywhere, jobless families are the most disadvantaged among the poor, the analysis has found that in the average of the OECD countries, only around one third of the poor families with children are jobless, although this ratio varies widely — from less than 20 % (Austria, Greece, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, Portugal, Turkey and the United States) to 60 % or more (Australia, the Czech Republic, Germany and Norway).

Whiteford, P. and Adema, W., 'What Works Best in Reducing Child Poverty: A Benefit or Work Strategy?', *OECD Social, employment and migration working papers No 51*, March 2007.

¹⁷ Ferge, Zs., Tausz, K., and Darvas, Á., *Küzdelem a szegénység és a kirekesztés ellen.*[in Hungarian] (Struggle against poverty and isolation), International Labour Office, Budapest, p. 116, 2002; and *A szegénység és kirekesztés változása, 2001-2006* [in Hungarian] (Changes in poverty and isolation, 2001-2006) 2006 (NKFP/5/012/2004) Eötvös Loránd University Poverty Research Centre, 2007 (manuscript).

1.3.2. Housing

Prior to the collapse of communism in Hungary, most people renting Government-owned apartments lived in cities, and these apartments were distributed on the basis of a combination of welfare and political considerations. After the state-socialist regime collapsed, Government-owned housing was privatised on the large-scale, resulting in very few remaining rental units. At present, 92 % of all housing is owner-occupied, a figure that far exceeds the level typical for Europe.¹⁸ ¹⁹According to Central Statistics Office data, the ratio of substandard housing, lacking indoor toilets and/or bathrooms, sewage systems, kitchens, and possibly even foundations — when the building is made of adobe brick — is more or less constant at about 13 %. The ratio of this type of home within overall housing has been growing while corresponding settlement sizes are decreasing. Twenty-one per cent of homes owned and rented by local governments are substandard.²⁰ At the same time, the ability of local governments to offer housing assistance is sorely limited by tight budget constraints. They also have very little funding for renovation of rental housing.

According to Central Statistics Office data for 2004, people were living in 3 606 homes that qualified as emergency residences only, while 408 apartments owned by local governments were declared hazardous. In 49 settlements, people moved into homes as squatters. During this time, 625 families, including families with children, were evicted.

‘On average, families with children live under better housing conditions than the population overall. However, the significant portion of poor people who have children live in substandard housing. One in four poor families with children does not have an inside toilet or bathroom, one in five homes lacks running water, and one in two has traditional heating. These substandard housing conditions are equally true for poor people with children and for poor people in general.’²¹

Table 4: Important specifics of homes, including of poor households and poor households with children

Specifics of homes	Total households	Total poor households	Poor households with children
Estimated value of home, million Forints	10.9	6.3	6.9
Socially undesirable housing zone, outskirt	3.5	9.9	10.6
Toilet is not inside home	6.6	26.8	26.8
No bathroom	6.0	25.7	26.2
No running water	3.5	19.0	18.5
Heating is traditional (stove of some sort)	17.6	48.0	50.0
Damp walls, seepage, etc. cause serious problems	16.7	30.4	31.4

Source: Central Statistics Office Household Budget Survey, 2004.

¹⁸ Helyzetkép a lakásviszonyokról, 1999–2005 [in Hungarian] (Snapshot of housing conditions, 1999-2005), Central Statistics Office, 2006, p. 12.

¹⁹ In the countries of the first 15 EU Member States 39 %, in Germany 62 %, in Austria 45 %, in England 34 % are the average rates of the rented flats.

²⁰ *Welfare Statistical Yearbook, 2005*, Central Statistics Office, 2006.

²¹ A gyerekszegénység néhány metszete – háttérelmzés [in Hungarian] (Several cross-sections of child poverty – background analysis), ‘Programme to combat child poverty’, March 2006.
<http://www.gyerekesely.hu/dmdocuments/1melleklet-m-3.pdf>

According to the poverty research survey already quoted several times, housing conditions that influence the current lives of families as well as the future of children show that the convenience level of the homes, the crowdedness and the neighbourhood surroundings are more or less constant. In both 2001 and 2006, one fifth of poor households with children had no indoor toilets and no bathrooms. For poor households with children, 77 % were equipped with running water/toilets/bathrooms, and in the rest, at least one of these items was missing. There has not been any change in the number of residents per room either. In both years studied room occupancy exceeded two persons. In the case of households with children, 20 % are in overcrowded homes, where the number of residents per room exceeds three. For 10 % of households with children, the building where they live is hard to approach, because there is no built road leading to it. The proportions were almost identical in both 2001 and 2006, and there appears to be no change whatsoever in this area.²²

Signs of the hard time people have holding onto their homes, and of the heightened risk of losing them can be seen in that households with children living in poverty have significant debts.

Table 5: The risk of poverty (defined as living at less than 60 % of the median income) to the overall population and to households with children, described as having subsistence difficulties (in the opinion of the heads of household), 2004

Category	Nationwide		Households with children	
	Average	Poor	Average	Poor
Has happened that they were unable to pay ...				
..rent or condo fees	1.00	2.02	1.30	2.22
..utility bills	1.00	2.32	1.42	2.77
..mortgage	1.00	2.39	1.52	2.94
..other loan	1.00	2.05	1.54	2.61
Have had financial, subsistence problems	1.00	2.10	1.24	2.39
Total	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

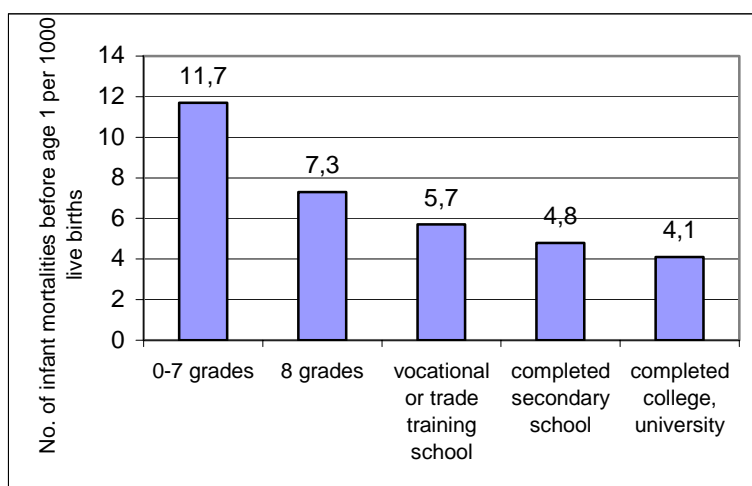
1.3.3. Health

Hungary presents a rather contradictory image if we look at the health status of its children using generally accepted indices. The infant mortality index has been steadily improving but is still significantly higher than the average for advanced countries (OECD gives the rate as 6.6 in Hungary as opposed to the average of 4.5). The rate of low birth weight infants (below 2 500 grams) is highest in Hungary — OECD in 2004 gives Hungary's rate as 8.7 as opposed to the average of 6.4. However, almost all children — 99 % — have received mandatory immunisations (the average in the OECD countries ranges from 90 to 94 %).

²² Ferge, Zs., Tausz, K. and Darvas, Á., *Küzdelem a szegénység és a kirekesztés ellen* [in Hungarian] (Struggle against poverty and isolation), International Labour Office, Budapest, 2002, p. 116; and *A szegénység és kirekesztés változása, 2001-2006* [in Hungarian] (Changes in poverty and isolation, 2001-2006) 2006 (NKFP/5/012/2004) Eötvös Loránd University Poverty Research Centre, 2007 (manuscript).

There are many correlations between poverty and inequality on the one hand and morbidity and mortality statistics on the other, although we have much more data on international than on Hungarian conditions in this regard. Demographers have been focusing on some of these correlations for quite a time now. For instance, we know that there are higher-than-average rates of premature deliveries, more low-birth-weight infants and higher infant mortality rates among mothers with low education levels.

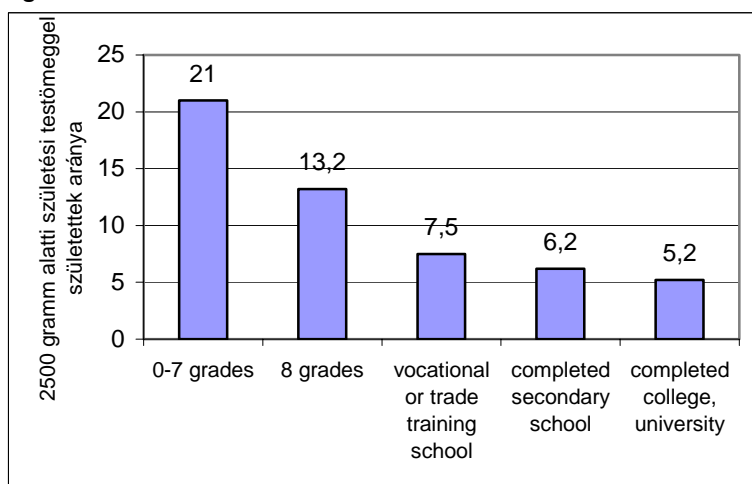
Figure 7: Correlation between mother's education level and infant mortality rates (2002)



Source: Gyermek egészségügy [in Hungarian] (Child health). Section written by Gabriella Páll, Johan Béla National Centre for Epidemiology.

<http://www.ogyei.hu/anyagok/gyerekfejezet.pdf>

Figure 8: Correlation between mother's education level and infant birth weights (2002)



Source: Gyermek egészségügy [in Hungarian] (Child health). Section written by Gabriella Páll, Johan Béla National Centre for Epidemiology.

<http://www.ogyei.hu/anyagok/gyerekfejezet.pdf>

At present we have too little data on child health to draw any correlation between the family's financial and social status and the health of the child. However, a study by health experts²³ prepared in 2004 verified that 'a low birth weight increases the risk of disease in adulthood.' Another spotlighted conclusion of this report concerns child poverty directly. Its studies show that 'Most child mortality over the age of one is the result of preventable external factors (accidents).'²⁴

A micro-regional survey conducted in 2007 indicates that poverty principally results in the undernourishment and low body weight of infants and preschool children. This is sure to have far more serious consequences on the health and neurological structure of these children than on children who are older when they become undernourished. It appears that when children are institutionalised, significant amounts of the consequences of hunger and substandard nutrition can be offset.²⁵

Studies on expected years of healthy life (YHL) have indicated that the difference between the educated and uneducated segments of the population is growing. The primary reason for this is that the index has improved for the more highly educated population segment. At age 35, people with low education levels and rural residents can count on the fewest remaining years of healthy life. The difference between the groups with the fewest and the most remaining years of healthy life is 20 years for males and 15 years for females.²⁶ We need to note that Eurostat's publication on the subject, which includes 17 countries, finds that Hungary has the worst prospects of all countries in the study despite the indices for healthy years of life for females at age 0 and 67.²⁷

There are numerous factors behind this including unequal access to healthcare facilities, and services that differ significantly in quality.

For the settlements with populations of less than 2 000, 3 % have a primary care paediatrician, while in settlements with populations of 3 000-5 000, the rate is 31 %, and in settlements with populations of 5 000-10 000 the rate is 89.3 %. Various estimates suggest that approximately 70-75 % of children receive primary care paediatric services, while the rest — generally children living in disadvantaged regions, micro-regions and settlements — must seek out adult primary care services for treatment.

Hungary has a tradition of providing paediatric paramedic services in the home. In 2005 a new law was adopted, increasing the number of paediatric paramedics working in schools from 375 to 842, while reducing the number working in the field from 4 595 to 4 110. The emphasis of paediatric paramedic operations has been shifted from the home to the schools, where they have access to 60 % of the children. In principle, field paediatric paramedic services cover the entire country, while

²³ Gyermek egészségügy [in Hungarian] (Child health). Section written by Gabriella Páll, Johan Béla National Centre for Epidemiology.

<http://www.ogyei.hu/anyagok/gyerekfejezet.pdf>

²⁴ Gyermek egészségügy [in Hungarian] (Child health). Section written by Gabriella Páll, Johan Béla National Centre for Epidemiology.

<http://www.ogyei.hu/anyagok/gyerekfejezet.pdf>

²⁵ Bass, L., A szécsényi kistérségben élő gyermekek antropometriai jellemzői [in Hungarian] (Anthropometric characteristics of children in the Szécsény micro-region), Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Child Programme Office, 2007 (manuscript).

²⁶ Faragó, M., Egészségesen várható élettartamok Magyarországon, 2005 [in Hungarian] (Expected years of healthy life in Hungary, 2005), Central Statistics Office, 2007.

²⁷ Quote from Miklós Faragó: Egészségesen várható élettartamok Magyarországon, 2005 [in Hungarian] (Expected years of healthy life in Hungary, 2005), Central Statistics Office, 2007, p. 11.

school paediatric paramedics work with all 3 to 18-year-olds. In settlements with populations exceeding 5 000, paediatric paramedic coverage is 100 %, but in settlements with fewer than 1 000 residents it is only 37.2 %. In settlements with 1 000-1 999 residents coverage is 78.8 %.

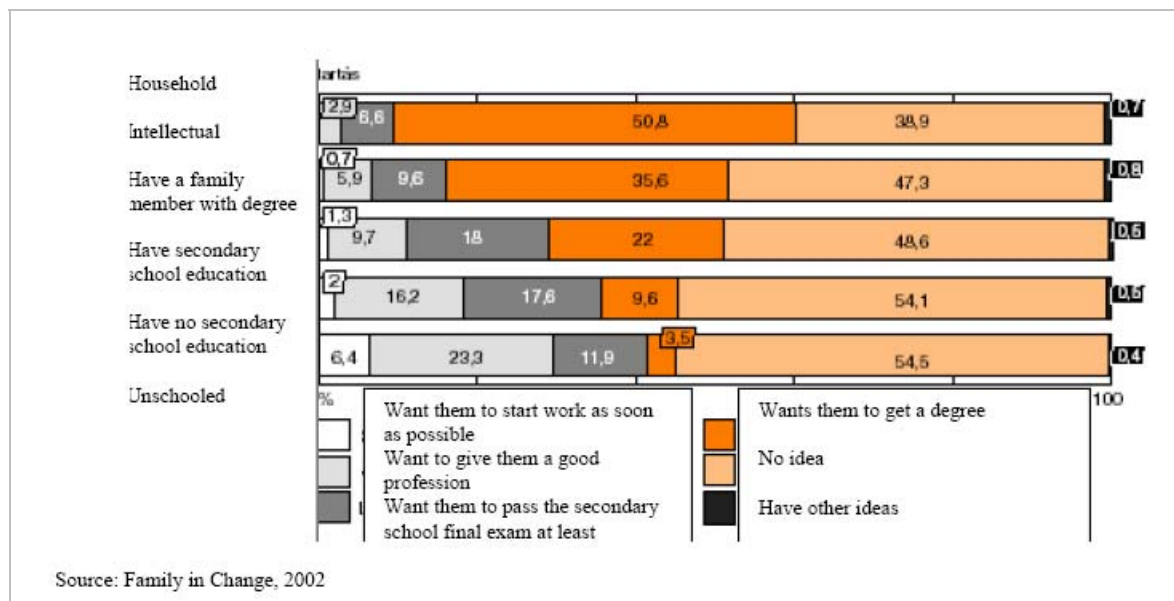
Here is where we need to call attention to the fact that there are only 0.2 psychiatric beds per 10 000 residents in Hungary. This is clearly low by international standards. Personnel conditions are also unsatisfactory. There are too few specialists. In fact as of the year 2000, there were only 44 child psychiatrists working in Hungary, attempting to do their jobs within a disorganised institutional structure. Specialist care is provided on only 184 beds of which 120 are acute, 30 are rehab, and 34 are reserved for chronic care.²⁸

1.3.4. Education

The education system can play a vital role in breaking the cycle of inherited intergenerational poverty. In 86 % of poor households with children, the head of household has not completed secondary school (this is also true for 59 % of all poor households).²⁹

In Hungary today, the social factors determining mobility are extremely powerful. Only 10 % of children whose fathers had only a primary education manage to finish university or college while the corresponding rate for the children of university or college graduates is 68 %. At the same time, one quarter of the children of fathers with only primary educations do not advance beyond primary education themselves.

Figure 9: Distribution of families with children based on their concept regarding the future of their children as per education of the family members, 2001 (in %)



²⁸ Professional College of Psychiatrists, 2000.

²⁹ Central Statistics Office Household Budget Survey, 2004.

Young people's educations and inequalities therein are influenced by the region in which they live and by the size of the settlement. The smaller the settlement, the more likely it is that their education levels will be low, preventing them from progressing beyond 'skilled worker.' Settlement size triggers differences in the schools themselves, in the education levels of the teachers, in the number of teachers, in facultative curricular programmes, in student competence levels and in knowledge quality.

Only about 4-5 % of children do not enrol in some form of secondary education after finishing primary school, but the Hungarian education system operates with a shockingly high dropout rate.

Table 6: Continuing education data for Romany and non-Romany students

Type of school attended	Romany students				Non-Romany students
	1993/94	1996/97	2000/2001	2002/2003	2002/2003
			%	%	%
None	49.8	16.5	9.9	8.1	1.1
Special trade training school	9.4	8.6	5.5	6.2	1.3
Trade training school	30.2	61.6	62.8	63.8	33.1
Specialised secondary school	10.0	9.3	16.2	15.9	39.0
General secondary school	0.6	3.7	5.6	5.9	25.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
No. of schools		168	419	452	497

Source: Cross-sections of child poverty — background analysis. Programme to combat child poverty, March 2006. Kemény (1994) Roma segregation — Questionnaire for school principals 2000 prepared by Education Institute, and segregation research, questionnaire for school principals, prepared by the Research Institute for Higher Education, 2004.

The ratio of Roma among children starting out with economic and social disadvantages and living within the immobile segment of society is quite high. While it is estimated that Roma make up 5-6 % of the overall population, they account for 30 % of the people whose education levels do not exceed eight grades of primary school.

One sign of the poor performance of the Hungarian education system is that over the years they spend in school the educational disadvantages of children who come from a disadvantaged background do not decline but, in most cases, increase, while school performance in general is closely correlated with the cultural capital of the parents. A major problem, particularly serious for children from disadvantaged circumstances, is an absence of instruction in basic skills. A PISA study conducted in 2003 among 29 OECD countries put Hungary in 19-20th place in reading comprehension and in mathematical-logical abilities. School segregation plays a defining role in this. This means that a portion of poor children and the majority of Gypsy children are shunted off into separate schools, school branches, or classes that often operate under worse conditions and have less to offer children. It is still a widespread practice to put Romany children into 'special education' classes, which are a dead-end in the education system. They are schools or classes designed to handle children who are slightly retarded or who have behavioural problems. Young Roma children

are ten times more likely to be enrolled in these 'special education' schools or classes, previously called 'supplementary primary schools.' The negative outcome of this process is reflected in low continuing education rates and the failure of this group to hold its own on the workforce because it has not been taught the necessary skills, the low level of social mobility, and the intergenerational poverty cycle.

The level of parental education is a significant predictor of student performance in problem solving across all participating countries. The effect of one standard deviation difference in parental education ranges from 11 score points in Portugal (the lowest for an OECD country) to 33 score points in Hungary (the OECD average is 20 score points). Parental education explains between 1 and 19 % of variance in problem-solving performance in all participating countries (the OECD average is 10 %). The effect is strongest in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic (between 26 and 33 score points), and least pronounced in Finland and Portugal and the partner countries Brazil, Indonesia, Hong Kong-China and Tunisia (between 7 and 11 score points).³⁰

The 2003 PISA test showed that Hungary was the only participant OECD country where both signs of major crisis in the education sector were apparent: we saw poor quality in the education system overall combined with significant social inequalities. Deviations in the knowledge levels of students in Hungary were due far less than usual to differences in individual abilities, and far more to disparities in their social status. On a global scale, Hungarian schools show the greatest inequalities. Hungary is one of the countries where the social status of parents is the predominant factor influencing their children's school performance. Our school system is the least able to counterbalance the differences brought from home.³¹

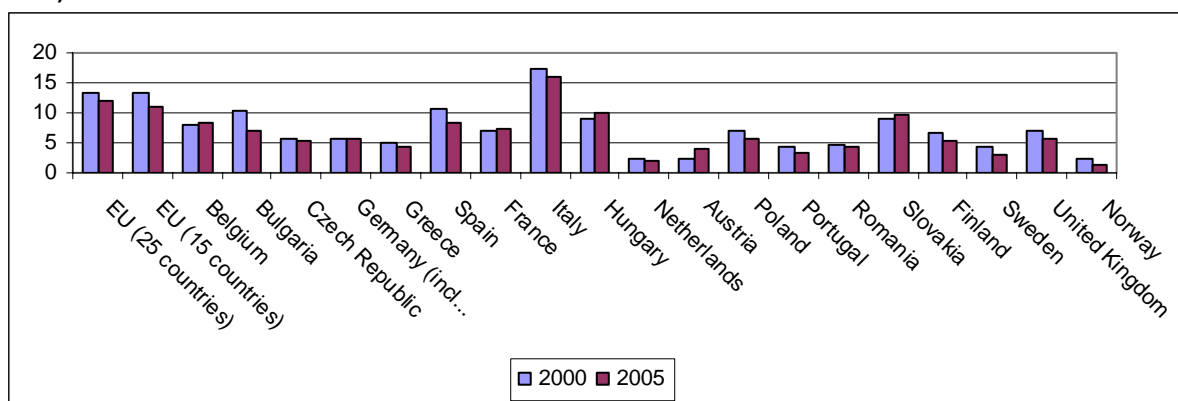
1.3.5. Regional and settlement inequalities

Inequalities between regions and settlements are huge. There are many ways to verify this, but we will limit ourselves to a series of data comparing the first 25 EU Member States. Inequalities in employment indices are just slightly lower than Italy's and about the same as Slovakia's, indicating a highly unfavourable situation. We also need to underline that while in most countries (including Italy) these data show a downward trend, in Hungary the regional inequalities increased between 2000 and 2005.

³⁰ <http://www.pisa.oecd.org/dataoecd/25/12/34009000.pdf>

³¹ The rejuvenation of education is vital — Hungary's future is at stake!

**Figure 10: Dispersion of regional employment rates — total
Coefficient of variation of employment rates (of the age group 15-64) across regions (NUTS 2 level) within countries**



Source: Eurostat.

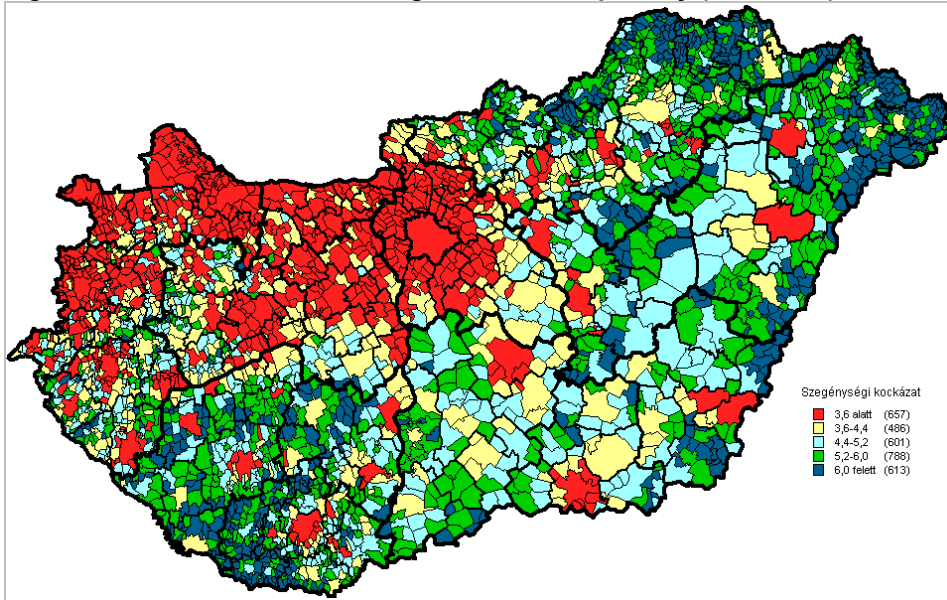
When working to combat child poverty it is vital to pinpoint the regions and micro-regions where urgent and heightened intervention is necessary. At the request of the programme office designing the project to grapple with child poverty, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences' Regional Research Centre prepared an analysis of Hungary's settlements. The following is a summary of the results:

In nearly 20 % of the settlements (613 settlements), there is a high risk of child poverty.³² There was a regular and close correlation between settlement size and the demonstrable risk of settlement-level poverty, in which smaller settlements are at greater risk. Romany residents are over-represented by fourfold in these settlements. The level of 'settlement convenience' in the homes, and in the institutions and commercial establishments are significantly below the nationwide average in these settlements. The age pattern of residents in the settlements showing the highest poverty risk is young, which is closely correlated with growing residential segregation.³³

³² We used the following variables to shape the typology: rejuvenation index (the proportion of children under age 15 against people over the age of 60), proportion of secondary school graduates against the entire over-18 population, per capita/month income of residents in 2003 and amount of pension per resident in 2005, ratio of households with no employed member, ratio of jobless among population of economically active age, ratio of recipients of regular child protection support for children aged 0-17 and ratio of pension recipients under the age of 60 in 2005.

³³ Zsuzsanna Bihari, Katalin Kovács (2006). Gyermekszegénység vidéken: Magas szegénységi kockázatú települések a magyar településállományban. [in Hungarian] (Rural child poverty: Hungarian settlements with a high risk of poverty. Településtipológia és rangsor (Settlement typology and ranking).

Figure 11: Settlements, according to the risk of poverty (mean is 4)



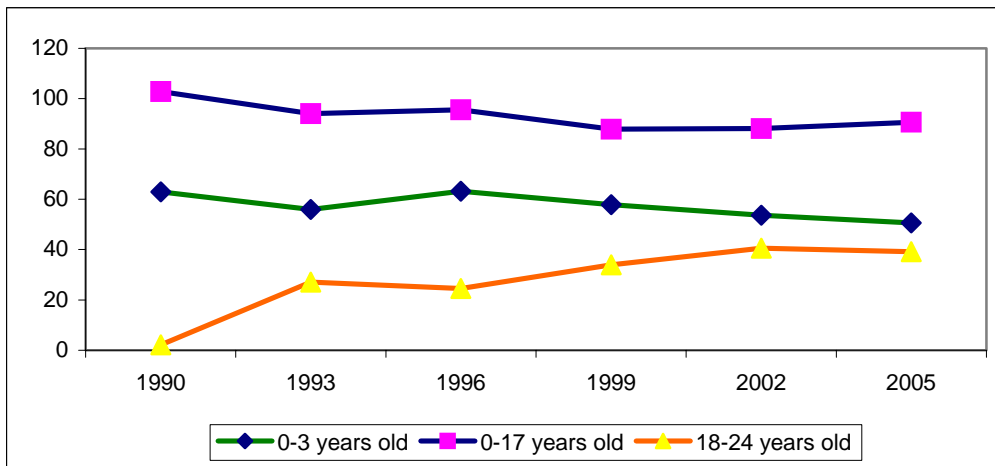
Risk of poverty
 below 3.6 (657)
 3.6-4.4 (486)
 4.4-5.2 (601)
 5.2-6.0 (788)
 over 6.0 (613)

1.3.6. Children in Government-run institutional care

As of 31 December 2005 there were 17 456 children in Government-run childcare institutions (children's homes, group homes with quasi-parent facilitators, foster families), while another 4 240 young adults aged 18-24 received post-institutional assistance. The number of children removed from their families has been declining steadily, while the number of young adults receiving post-institutional assistance has been growing.³⁴ Compared to the overall child population, the number of 0 to 17-year-olds in institutional facilities declined dynamically in the past 20-30 years, but there has been no significant change over recent years. There are 91 out of 10 000 children of the same age being raised outside their families. That number puts Hungary in midfield in international comparisons. Despite significant emphasis on the 0-3 age group by both professionals and decision-makers, there has been no significant change.

³⁴ Briefing on family, child and adolescent protection, 2005, Ministry of Welfare and Labour, Budapest, 2006.

Figure 12: Institutionalised care (per 10 000 residents of the same age)



There have been quite significant changes since the early 1990s in the placement of children being raised institutionally. Initially, 30-32 % of these children were raised in foster homes, a number that has increased to 53 % today. The nature of institutional care has also changed. The large institutional dormitories have been reduced to smaller children’s homes (maximum 40 children) and a rising number of children being placed in small group-homes with a family atmosphere (we do not have precise statistics on this.)

1.3.7. Child abuse

A 2003 Unicef study on the frequency and seriousness of child abuse listed Hungary as one of the most jeopardised places in the world.³⁵ The data most likely do not precisely reflect actual conditions since countries differ in where and how violence against children is committed, but there definitely are serious problems in Hungary. Hungarian adults consider child abuse a private family matter. Eighty per cent of Hungarians consider it acceptable to beat children. There is a law on the books in Hungary requiring professionals who notice child abuse to report it, but there are no sanctions for failing to comply with the law. Courts are also likely to treat child abuse quite lightly. In 2005, child welfare services reported almost 12 000 cases of child abuse, which is probably only a fraction of the physical, emotional and sexual abuse that really occurs.

³⁵ A league table of child maltreatment and deaths in rich nations, *Innocenti report card issue No.5*, Unicef, September 2003.

1.3.8. *Crime committed by children and adolescents*

Table 7: Trends in juvenile crime compared to overall crime

	Children	Adolescents	All perpetrators
2001	3 730	11 631	120 583
2002	3 959	11 689	121 885
2003	3 553	10 473	118 145
2004	3 963	12 325	130 182
2005	3 697	12 197	133 790

Source: Trends in juvenile crime, 2005. National Police Headquarters, Crime Prevention Division, Department of Crime Prevention and Equal Opportunity.

<http://www.police.hu/data/464201/statisztika.pdf>

In comparison to the overall child population, 0.25 % perpetrated some crime, which is about average. The 10-year average for adolescent perpetrators meshes exactly with the actual numbers for 2005. The number of adolescent perpetrators was 2 458 per 100 000 adolescents (2.46 %!) which was the worst figure in this regard since 1996.³⁶

1.3.9. *Homelessness among children*

Since we have no statistics to rely on, we have to use indirect means to estimate the size of this problem. Data from institutions brought about or used for transitional care of children (the substitute parent network, transitional children’s shelters, transitional family shelters) from 2005³⁷, tell us that every fourth child (537 out of 2 023) placed with ‘substitute parents or in transitional family shelters, and every other person living in transitional family shelters (3 500 out of 6 041) (of which children make up over 4 000) is because of parental housing difficulties, possibly homelessness.

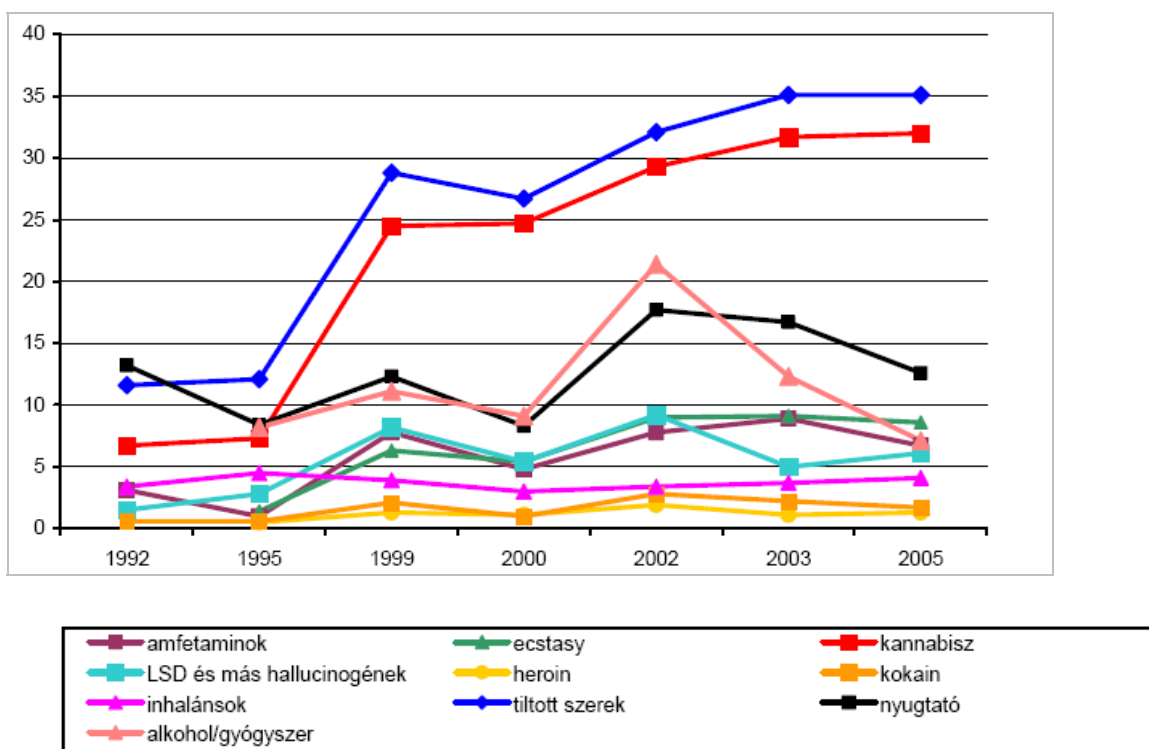
The number of persons receiving care in these facilities grew by 50 % compared to 2004 data (in 2004 the number of children involved was 4 000, while in 2005 the number was up to 6 000). This reflects the growing seriousness of the problem on the one hand, and the rising number of institutional facilities on the other.

³⁶ Trends in juvenile crime, 2005. National Police Headquarters, Crime Prevention Division, Department of Crime Prevention and Equal Opportunity.
<http://www.police.hu/data/464201/statisztika.pdf>

³⁷ Briefing on family, child and adolescent protection, 2005, Ministry of Welfare and Labour, Budapest, 2006.

1.3.10. Drugs

Figure 13: Lifetime prevalence values and trends per substance between 1992 and 2005, among 10th grade secondary students in Budapest (percentages)



Amphetamines

LSD and other hallucinogens

Inhalants

Alcohol/pharmaceutical products

Ecstasy

Heroin

Other banned substances

Cannabis

Cocaine

Tranquillisers

Source: Elekes, Zs. and Paksi, B., Alkohol- és egyéb drogfogyasztási szokások budapesti 9-10 évfolyamos középiskolások körében [in Hungarian] (Alcohol and other drug consumption habits among 9th and 10th graders in secondary schools) 2005b, unpublished study, quoted by Annual Report for EMCDDA, 2006, prepared by National Drug Spotlight 'Hungary'.

'In 2005 the primary research done in Hungary focused on regions and several specific groups as opposed to nationwide investigations. The results of this research has played a dominant role in evolving local drug strategies, in conformity with the goals of the national strategy to combat drug abuse. The collection of data from Budapest secondary schools, covering a 13-year span, makes it probable that in recent years there has been a decline or even a halt in the spread of banned substance consumption among Hungarian young people. It is not possible to draw any summary conclusions based on the results of attitude investigations conducted in 2005 as far as the respondents' attitudes towards and information on drugs is concerned. The results of the research do however call attention to shortcomings in society-level communications.³⁸

³⁸ Annual Report for EMCDDA, 2006, prepared by National Drug Spotlight 'Hungary'
http://www.szochalo.hu/fileadmin/szochalo/Uj_Szochalo/tudomany/deviancia/EMCDDAJelent_s2006.10.31.pdf

2. Policy framework

2.1. Overview

It is clearly necessary for society and for the Government to make a serious effort to reduce poverty. At the request of the prime minister, preparations for a programme against child poverty were initiated in the autumn of 2005. The programme was designed by a research team operating within the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which came together for this specific purpose. The programme is based on the concept that reducing child poverty is a top priority within the Government effort to lessen poverty and social exclusion. The sufferings and disadvantages of children must be alleviated as quickly as possible, for children are the most vulnerable members of society. Hungary must alter the medium and long-term mechanisms that reproduce child poverty and low education levels, for this is the only way that sustainable social and economic development can be assured.

A programme section called the 'Short programme' was introduced in early 2006 and by the end of that year a draft parliamentary resolution called 'Making Life Better for Children' had been designed. This latter was adopted by the cabinet in February 2007 and submitted to Parliament in March. Following committee deliberation, debate by the full House began on 3 April and a final vote is expected in May. At this time there appears to be consensus regarding the importance of the issue, though there are disagreements among the parties regarding some of the tools to be employed (particularly with regard to family support tools).

The tasks and goals appear to be clear and accepted. The most significant question now appears to concern what EU funding can be mobilised to this end. The 2007 budget showed no changes to reflect that the Government wanted to plough any significant funding into this effort. Preliminary calculations indicate that a minimum of HUF 30-50 billion (about EUR 120-200 million) a year in supplementary funding will be needed to get the comprehensive programme off the ground.

As the title of the parliamentary resolution suggests, the strategy is aimed at improving the lot of all children, but emphasises all efforts and policies targeting children in disadvantaged situations. In parallel, there is continuous debate within the Government and professional circles about employing the principle of means testing. Most supports for children are currently universal entitlements. However, since families with children are generally worse off than the childless segment of the population, the targeting of benefits has nevertheless improved significantly, with the defining portion of family supports going to families on the lower levels of the income scale.

'Children are entitled to special protections: the signatory states recognise this and use every means at their disposal to guarantee the right of all children to living standards that enable them to develop appropriately in the physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social senses alike. The law adopted to further this must consider the interests of the child above all else. The goal of the national strategy is primarily to reduce the hardship of children and their families and improve the development chances of children in accordance with this law. The law includes all children, but children whose interests are most severely violated and who are limited most in development by privation must be given priority.' (Text of parliamentary resolution)

One part of the Government effort to reduce child poverty has involved concerted and priority measures to do so since it took office in 2006, appearing on multiple levels and in many sections of Government operations. In the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, there is a special commissioner coordinating efforts in this area. This commissioner is also secretary of the Social Policy Commission that operates alongside the Cabinet. Each of the involved ministries has a senior appointed official charged with managing children's issues. There is a Chances for Children group operating within the Office of the Prime Minister. Reducing child poverty is a top priority target of the Government platform, the development plans and of the related operative programmes. However, cooperation among the ministries and between the central and local governments still leaves much to be desired. Unless significant progress is made in this area, the complex nature and success of the strategy will be jeopardised.

Table 8: Evaluation of the major Government measures to alleviate child poverty

	Strong points	Weak points
Overall effort to combat child poverty		
	The Government programme, the 'National strategy to make things better for the children', and the 'Chances for children' flagship programme being designed within the framework of the 'Second national development plan', all plan with complex interventions and developments (operating through multiple ministries and management levels, and including many institutions and professionals).	<p>a) The amount of budget and development funding to be available for these programmes is not yet clear.</p> <p>b) Shortcomings and problems related to cooperation among the various ministries can make it very difficult to maintain the complex nature of these programmes.</p>
Policies to ensure an adequate income for children and their families		
Access to (quality) employment	<p>There are a number of programmes underway to promote employment for disadvantaged persons and for people raising children.</p> <p>Support in job seeking, amended in 2006, should reduce joblessness.</p> <p>Incentives to legalise the underground and the semi-legal economies (using ad hoc employment certification to document short-term work, etc.) are already producing results.</p> <p>Efforts to integrate the activity of the employment and the social welfare systems have gotten underway and can trigger a decline in long-term unemployment.</p>	<p>a) Economic forecasts suggest there will not be any significant rise in employment in the next few years.</p> <p>b) Current experience and data with the programmes are sporadic, and there is not enough information on which to base plans.</p>
Social protection benefits and tax benefits	<p>The standardisation of family supports, introduced in 2006, has significantly improved access to them.</p> <p>The rise in the family allowance in 2007 is preventing any further decline in real value.</p>	<p>The family allowance level is not differentiated enough to meet the needs of families that are running very different risks of poverty.</p> <p>Indexing still has not been adopted as a law.</p>

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	<p>The introduction of household-based welfare assistance in 2006 set the institutional foundation for a guaranteed minimum income.</p>	<p>The maximum household-based amount of welfare assistance is significantly below the subsistence minimum.</p> <p>Housing expenditure is not included when calculating assistance.</p>
Subsidised services (e.g. free school meals, holidays).	<p>A comparatively large circle of children receives free textbooks.</p> <p>A comparatively large circle of children has access to free or low-cost meals in crèches, pre-schools, and schools.</p> <p>There is per capita support to provide meals during summer recesses.</p>	<p>Textbook packages that schools may choose among differ in price. Local governments should be covering the difference, for this is a problem for poorer families.</p> <p>Children in the upper four grades of primary school are entitled to only a 50 % price reduction, which many do not take advantage of.</p> <p>Many settlements do not organise them.</p>
Policies to ensure access to essential services		
Education	<p>There appears to be a clear Government intention to reduce inequalities and increase the effectiveness of public education.</p>	<p>The amount and source of funding for the programmes designed is not yet clear.</p> <p>Education is not being treated as a portion of the complex programme to eliminate child poverty but as a separate category</p> <p>It is not possible to discern the extent to which Government intent has been accepted by the schools and by the local governments that maintain them.</p>
Child care	<p>The 'Second national development plan' has set expanding the circle of childcare facilities as a top priority project.</p> <p>A newly adopted law mandates the admission of disadvantaged children to pre-school</p>	<p>Access to facilities is lowest in the settlements that are the most disadvantaged (crèches, preschools).</p> <p>Neither quality requirements nor the amount of available funding are known, and it can easily happen that the bidding system will favour the settlements which are already in a better situation.</p>

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Housing	There are several Government programmes to support access to homes on the open market for families with children.	No data has been made public on these programmes. There is little funding to support the construction of subsidised rental housing.
Health	A child health programme called 'Children, our common treasure,' is underway.	Given the absence of budget funding, the programme is just hobbling along and there are very few signs of any change.
Social services	The welfare act and its amendments have brought about the legal foundation and the framework for financing the essential social services.	A significant portion of settlements lack the funding and/or the intent to establish the institutions and services specified by law.
Transport		
Policies to promote the care and protection of children at risk including integrated early intervention initiatives or policies to assist children with special needs (disabled, children in institutions, etc) or policies to counter discrimination		
Policies to promote the care and protection of children at risk	Government measures have been increased to prevent the segregation of Romany children and improve their chances to get an education. The legal groundwork for the integrated education of children with disabilities is in place and the proportion of these children in integrated pre-schools and schools is increasing. There is now an ombudsman for educational rights.	There is as yet no data on results. There are very few qualified professionals and not enough local government resources to provide the extra services and funding needed. The ombudsman's authorities are limited.
Policies to counter discrimination	The Ombudsman for Education operates on a high level although his authority is limited. Romany civil rights organisations have achieved initial success in combating the school segregation of Romany children in the courts. Thanks to repeated testing, hundreds of children initially placed in 'special needs' classes were reinstated in the mainstream educational system.	Too few people turn to the Ombudsman to seek remedy for violated rights. Many teachers and schools are unaware of the rights of children to education. They do not know the special rights of children coping with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. Making the teaching community aware of children's rights is not managed effectively. There is still mass school discrimination. The Roma Integration Secretariat operating within the Ministry of Education and Culture has been weaker than during this Government's previous term in office.

2.2. Analysis of three main policy areas

2.2.1. Income security of families with children

We discussed elements of the family support system in our previous report. To summarise the components: supports universally available are the family allowance (családi pótlék), childcare assistance (GYES), childcare support (GYET), and maternity support (anyasági támogatás). Other forms of support linked to payment of social insurance contributions are delivery/confinement assistance (terhességi gyermekágyi segély), childcare fees (GYED), and sick pay for a parent who stays home with a sick child (gyermekápolási táppénz). The child protection benefit (rendszeres gyermekvédelmi kedvezmény) is a form of aid. The most specific feature is that it is a passport-type benefit which, when granted not only slightly increases the family income, but also establishes entitlement to free or low-cost preschool and school meals and free textbooks for some groups of recipients. In addition, there is a tax write-off available to families with three or more children if their income is below a certain level. The family benefits play a significant role in alleviating the hardship of the poorest families with children, since these benefits amount to an average of 18 % of overall household incomes for families in the lowest income decile.³⁹

The goal, when changing the family support regime that had been in operation before 2006, was to establish a uniform system that truly included the persons entitled to the assistance. This was the reason why regular child protection support (rendszeres gyermekvédeli támogatás), which had been distributed earlier to several hundred thousand children, was built into the family allowance. It was also the reason why the earlier tax write-off for children, which had acted as a vehicle of negative redistribution, was narrowed down substantially.

The aid that was terminated was replaced by the regular child protection benefit cited above. The conditions for entitlement are the same as they had been for the child protection support provided until 2006. Despite that, there has been a significant decline in the number of people receiving it. In 2005, the aid was provided for nearly 650 000 children, while in 2006 it was granted to only about 550 000. There are two possible reasons for the decline. One is that some families exceeded the income eligibility ceiling with the increased family allowance, while the other is that families that were unable to take advantage of the supports offered in kind (meals, textbooks) decided that it 'wasn't worth the effort' to submit the applications for the support. This type of family would be one with small children who do not attend preschool, or one with older children who are no longer entitled to free meals as part of the assistance.

One definite advantage of the new family allowance is the very high (97 %) access rate, but increases in the amount are still not linked to any form of automatic indexing. In addition, the allowance is not sufficiently differentiated by the number of children in the family. The allowance for single parents also should be increased. 'The family allowance system is generally accepted in Hungary, the related administration is above-board and transparent, and access is just about complete. If the system is maintained appropriately (so that it retains its real value and so that families at higher risk of poverty receive additional support) it can contribute to reducing the number of children living in relative poverty. We need to emphasise that the risk of poverty increases steeply with the third child born to a family and continues to rise sharply with each additional child. Therefore,

³⁹ Social statistical situation analysis on the national action plan for social cohesion, Táarki, May 2006, p. 61. (Based on Táarki Household Monitor 2005 data).

we need to pay special attention to large families. On long term, it is expedient to more strongly differentiate the family allowance system on the basis of the number of children in the family. Of course, many other factors (weakening the incentives that run counter to working, alleviating the problems of youth pregnancy) must be managed appropriately. This type of action needs to be targeted towards the specific groups. (There is important international experience to go along with the domestic Hungarian micro-simulation calculations that support the idea of differentiation by the number of children, because the move would have a significant poverty-reduction affect).⁴⁰

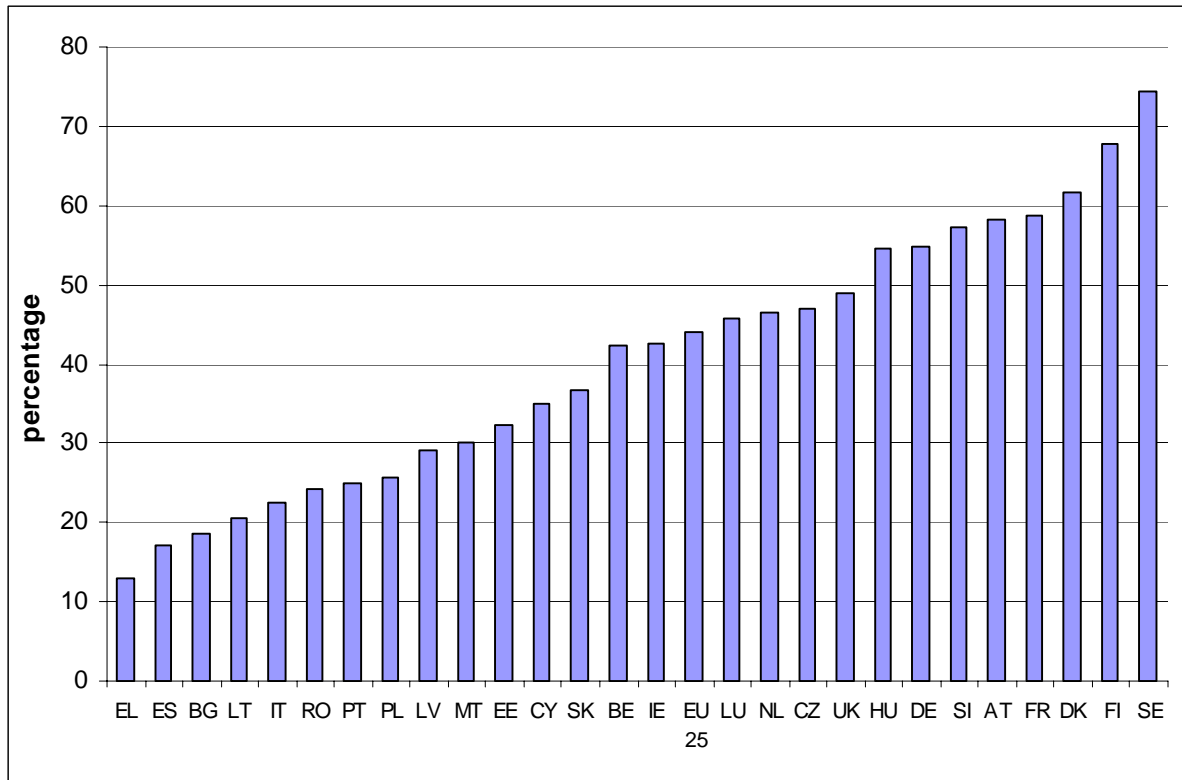
The change in the Government programme altering eligibility for childcare assistance (GYES), which allows assistance recipients to work full-time while receiving it, was intended to counter the negative affects of staying off the workforce for a long time. Parents on unpaid leave to care for a child and receiving confinement assistance, and either childcare assistance (GYES), childcare fees (GYED) or childcare support (GYET) may be granted extra points on the admission examinations to colleges or universities, while recipients of childcare assistance (GYES) may participate in skills training courses organised by employment centres. Employers who hire a person returning to the workforce from childcare assistance (GYES) or from caring for an adult family member for which the person received a nursing fee, will be granted a reduction in the mandatory social insurance contribution for two years.

The Government offers a variety of supports as incentives to increasing part-time employment, but in 2006, only 5.7 % of employed women worked part-time.

Of course, in themselves family benefits cannot resolve the problems leading to the poverty and social exclusion of families with children. Living conditions for families with children tend to be best in countries where the employment rate is high, and where the amount of family benefits are predictable and adjusted to the inflation rate.

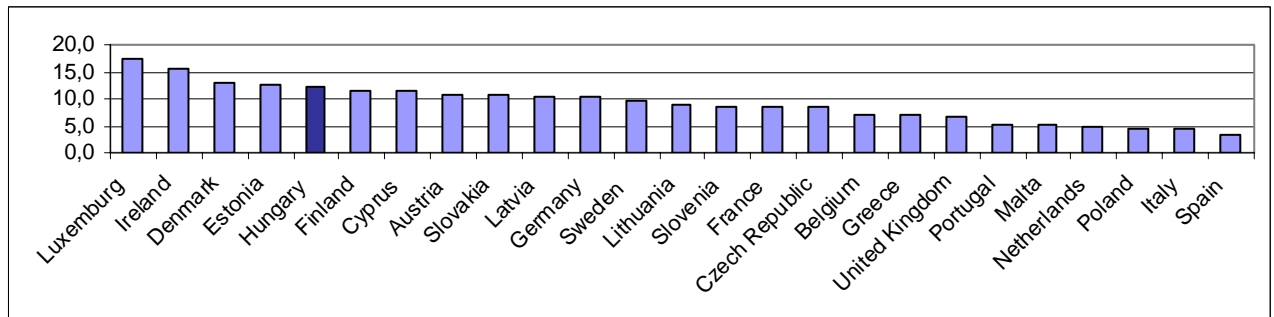
⁴⁰ Draft parliamentary resolution called 'Making things better for children'.

Figure 14: The impact of social transfers on the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children, 2004
Percentage reduction in the overall poverty-risk rate for children (aged 0-17) allowed by social transfers other than pensions



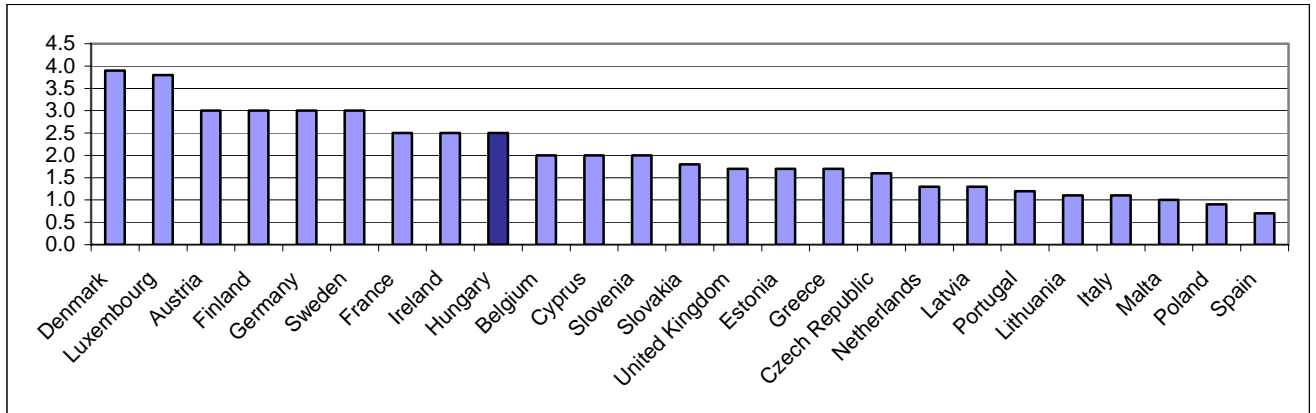
Note: provisional data for Hungary and the United Kingdom; age bracket 0-15 for Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

Figure 15: Welfare expenditure for families/children within overall welfare and protective expenditure, 2004 (in %)



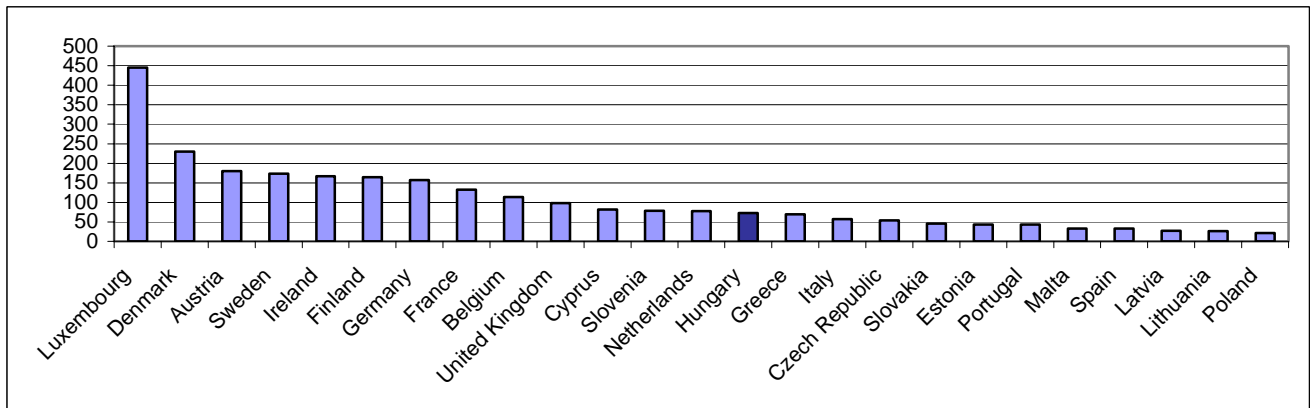
Source: Eurostat.

Figure 16: Welfare expenditure for families and children as percentage of GDP, 2004



Source: Eurostat.

Figure 17: Per capita expenditure on families and children (PPS), 2004 (EU-25 = 100)



Source: Eurostat.

2.2.2. Improving housing security

The current administration announced a programme it called 'Nest building' in 2005, intended to alleviate the housing problems of young people and families with children. The Prime Minister described it as a huge step towards achieving a more just and fairer housing support system.

Table 9: Main components of the ‘Nest building’ programme

	Entitlement	Amount of support	Number of people expected to access programme or actually accessing it
Government guarantee on loans to purchasing housing	Couples below the age of 30 and single parents who have no home of their own, able to put down a 10 % down payment. There is a ceiling on the price of the apartment. If it is new, the ceiling in Budapest and other cities of county stature is HUF 15 million, elsewhere it is HUF 12 million. In the case of an existing apartment, the ceiling (in the same order) is HUF 12 million and 8 million.		
Benefit when building a home (welfare benefit)	For people below the age of 35 who have children.	1 child: HUF 900 000 2 children: 2.4 million 3 children: 3.8 million 4 children: 4.6 million For all additional children HUF 200 000 per child (approx. HUF 250 = EUR 1)	
Benefit when enlarging a home (50 % of welfare benefit)	Couples below the age of 35 and single parents, to enlarge or purchase an existing home — Maximum price of home in rural areas HUF 8 million, in Budapest or other cities of county stature, maximum price is HUF 12 million.	1 child: HUF 450 000 2 children: 1.2 million 3 children: 1.9 million 4 children: 2.3 million (approx. HUF 250 = EUR 1)	
Rent subsidies	For families with children in all rented housing, depending on the size of the rental, the family income and the family’s assets.	30 % of the rent or maximum HUF 7 000 per month central rent subsidy — local government may match that amount (that would be a maximum of HUF 14 000, but the overall amount cannot exceed 60 % of the rent)	Involves 40 000 families. Central Statistics Office says about 150 000 families live in rental housing
Pre-fab apartment upgrades			27 000 apartments
Supports through tax system	Tax exempt: When property is rented out by local government as a welfare benefit — the rental income is tax exempt if the rental lease is for at least five years Maximum HUF 750 000 in employer supports towards housing, given no more often than every five years, are tax exempt		
Total			Preliminary surveys suggest that they will affect about. 80 000-90 000 families

Despite its goals, this programme, clearly designed to assist people into moving into homes of their own, offers long-term solutions only to families who have the money to cover the down payment and the jobs that give them the earnings to pay the mortgage.

Support to establish a home, designed for young people (hereinafter: young adults) under the age of 24 who grew up as temporary or permanent wards of the Government is meant to help them into a home of their own, or a long-term rental. The support is 40-60 times the amount of the minimum pension. (In 2006, the minimum old-age pension was HUF 26 830).

The pre-fab housing upgrade programme was designed to improve housing quality for the residents. It was begun in 2005, and in the first year it affected 27 000 homes.

A slum elimination programme was designed primarily to alleviate the housing difficulties of Romany families. Estimates suggest that there are 500-600 segregated slum projects in Hungary where Gypsies live in destitution. The programme went into operation in nine such projects in 2005, while in the second phase it was expanded to include 11 projects.

There are a variety of aid configurations intended to help people keep the homes they live in. Home maintenance support may be provided by local governments to families and individuals under certain conditions. The homes may not exceed a given maximum size, and home upkeep expenses must be more than 20 % of the total household income. The household per capita monthly income must be less than 150 % of the current minimum old age pension (HUF 26 830 in 2006) unless the family is participating in a debt mitigation programme. In 2005, 302 893 people received this type of support.⁴¹

The debt mitigation programme offers cash assistance and counselling to low-income persons who have built up debts.

Gas bill and district heating bill subsidies are intended to help low-income families manage the higher costs of recent rate hikes. Families receiving supports for a family member with a disability or enhanced family allowances as a large family are entitled to subsidies to cover their gas bill. Families receiving district heating bill support must be old-age pensioners, recipients of accident-disability pensions, or families who would be entitled to gas bill subsidies but would prefer to receive a district heating bill subsidy instead.

The prerequisite for receiving these supports is that the per capita household income may not exceed 200 % of the minimum pension or, if the person lives alone, it may not exceed 300 %.

In Hungary, the Constitution guarantees the right to social security, but that does not include the right to remain in one's home. The result is that even families with children can be and are evicted. Transitional homes for children and families have been established to prevent children from becoming homeless and to keep families together. In 2005, there were 1 534 children in transitional children's homes, and 4 632 families in transitional family facilities. In 486 cases, children were transferred to transitional homes because of a housing problem, while the corresponding figure for

⁴¹ *Yearbook of Welfare Statistics 2005*, Central Statistics Office 2006.

adults was 3 025 cases. Of the children transferred to transitional homes, 23 % remained there for longer than 12 months, while the equivalent figure for adults was 26 %.⁴²

2.2.3. Education

Starting with the latter half of the 1990s, the matter of inequalities in education and the need to enhance the effectiveness of the education system were topics that Government policies increasingly focused on.

In 2007, the Government has an arsenal of tools with which it plans to support disadvantaged children throughout their school careers. In addition, many NGOs are attempting to assist disadvantaged children. Given space constraints, we will only touch on the most important Government programmes at this time.

'We must have comprehensive measures that extend to all sectors of society if we are to reduce child poverty. The national strategy is designed to support all configurations that give absolutely top priority to children, not merely to help in developing areas of detail. This means we have to coordinate existing programmes and ones just getting off the ground within local settlements, within micro-regions, and on nationwide level, too. On all of these levels and in all areas of detail (in particular, the areas of employment, wage policy, education, housing, health care, social and child welfare services, and child protection) we need to see new measures that are coordinated with one another in building-block style.'⁴³ The flagship programmes of the 'New Hungary development plan' play a top priority role in implementing the Parliamentary resolution. The goal of the 'Chance for children' flagship programme is to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty by implementing complex programmes. This effort is connected to a flagship programme on rejuvenating Hungarian pedagogy and schools, to bring them into line with the 21st century. Both programmes require intensive cooperation with the flagship programme to advance the most disadvantaged micro-regions of the country if they are to succeed. There will be HUF 270 billion (about EUR 1.1 billion) available for the '21st century school.' (Of this, HUF 65 billion (EUR 260 million) is to be used to improve information technology in the schools, HUF 100 billion (EUR 400 million) for school renovations, HUF 94 billion (EUR 375 million) to upgrade educational content, and HUF 14 billion (EUR 56 million) will be available for the 'Inclusive School' programme and for the development of schools in the most highly disadvantaged micro-regions). Funding for the 'Chance for children' flagship programme is still being coordinated.

▪ Counterbalancing the disadvantages of early childhood

'A lack of parental resources narrows down a child's chances to developing his or her abilities in a timely and diverse manner, so we need to step into this process at a very early time, preferably at birth. An absence of subsistence security and unmet needs combined with a lack of appropriate models do not prepare a child for an adult life lived according to socially accepted norms — so early

⁴² Tájékoztató a család, gyermek- és ifjúságvédelemről 2005. év [in Hungarian] (Briefing on family, child, and adolescent protection, in 2005), Budapest, 2006.

⁴³ Parliament, draft resolution.

education is important in this area, too. Therefore, very early intervention, for which we are all responsible, is necessary to interrupt the flows that reproduce poverty.⁴⁴

Expanding the circle of crèche and alternative childcare services for this age group is one of the urgent priorities of the national development plan. One change in administrative policy is that district preschools are now mandated to admit all children from disadvantaged backgrounds over the age of three.

- **Promoting courses for mobility**

Students accepted into the 'Something for the road scholarship programme' receive assistance from mentors to in an effort to help them complete their studies, and both students and mentors are granted monthly stipends. If the student meets certain criteria, the mentor is granted an end-of-year bonus. The scholarship programme consists of the following components: 'Road to secondary school', for seventh and eighth graders; 'Road to matriculation', for students in secondary schools that offer matriculation certificates; and 'Road to a trade', for students learning a vocation that is in short supply. To date 20 045 students have received these scholarships. They attend 1 675 schools and are being assisted by 7 739 mentors.

The 'Arany János talent support programme' offers support to talented students living under poor social circumstances in small settlements.

One portion of the programme is to assist young people living under poor social circumstances attend university or college. In this programme, the central budget agrees to pay tuition fees. If the given school only accepts scholarship holders, disadvantaged students will be admitted if they attain 80 % of the points demanded of other students for scholarship admission. In addition to preferential admission, mentors will assist students admitted under this scheme.

- **Financial incentives to institutions**

Schools may organise talent development programmes and courses to promote the integration of students whose welfare situation and development levels need counterbalancing. They may access per capita funds available to develop talent and integrate students. This particular per capita funding only may be accessed if desegregation is completed for every child in the settlement. In addition, in order to access these significant extra funds, teachers in these schools are required to attend extension training sessions, maintain an ongoing relationship with parents, and regularly evaluate programme outcomes.

HUF 2 6 billion (EUR 10.4 million) is available for equal opportunity and gap reduction in 2007/08. In addition to primary schools, secondary schools and trade schools may now also request assistance to equalise opportunity for disadvantaged children. The prerequisite to receiving the funding is that there must be a complete absence of segregation in the school in every classroom. In other words,

⁴⁴ Parliament, draft resolution.

the school may not segregate its multiply disadvantaged students in any way whatsoever. In addition, pre-schools may receive one-off funding if they meet the rules of integration.

- **Changes in teaching requirements and administration**

Restrictions on free choice of schools: free choice of schools had been permitted since 1985 and a consensus of experts believe it contributed to growing inequalities within the school system as well as to segregation. In 2005, the public education act was amended so that the proportion of disadvantaged children living in a given area must be taken into consideration when evolving the boundaries of school districts. The primary school of a given district is mandated to admit all children with multiple disadvantages in the district, or, if the child wants to attend a different school in the same settlement, that school must admit the child if it has the space.

Children whose performance is weak can be encouraged to improve in a more balanced manner by tightening up restrictions on allowing a teacher to fail a child and forcing him or her to repeat grades in the first three years of school, and by requiring teachers to describe children's progress verbally as opposed to issuing quantified grades.

As of the 2008 school year, in fifth and sixth grades it will be mandatory to spend one fifth of classroom time teaching children how to advance their abilities. Schools not able to meet this requirement will have to prepare an action plan to be implemented starting next year, describing the new methods they plan to use to boost basic skills as well as the time they plan to devote to this.

- **Improving subject materials**

At present, there is a programme underway to improve subject materials. It is supported by EU funds and is intended to enhance the use of competence-based methods. So far, 1 500 schools have joined the effort.

Intentions are to continue with this project. The second national development plan will have HUF 40 billion (EUR 160 million) available for this purpose and intends to make this new subject material available to all schools, the state secretary for education has said.

- **Trade school development programme**

Within the framework of regular school classes, trade schools can organise gap-reduction classes for students who want to learn a trade in the schools without having finished primary school.

- **Building a quality assurance system**

Funding available for quality assurance, measurement, evaluation, and monitoring (HUF 300 million — EUR 1.2 million — in all) as part of national public education monitoring will be available for students in schools producing under-average results.

- **Developing the school infrastructure**

Following three years of preparatory work, the ‘Light of our lives’ programme got underway on 22 March 2006. This programme is intended to reconstruct the lighting and heating systems of schools, welfare, healthcare, cultural, and sports facilities. One portion of the programme is to exchange obsolete and expensive lighting and heating systems for modern and thrifty ones.

- **Equal opportunity in education plan**

When offering support to education development projects, freedom from discrimination, an absence of segregation and active measures to equalise opportunity will be the prerequisite for receipt of funding. The activity to create opportunities must be documented in an organised way and settlement-level equal opportunity in education programmes must be designed and implemented.

2.2.3. The coordination between central and local policy-making — one good practice

In the preparatory phase of the ‘National programme to combat child poverty’, an experimental sub-regional development programme was initiated to improve the lot of children. The programme was introduced in the Szécsény sub-region (one of Hungary’s disadvantaged sub-regions — it consists of 13 settlements of Nógrád county and 20 000 people including 4 000 children below the age of 18 and a significant Romany population) in the autumn of 2006.

When designing the experimental programme, our point of departure was that every local community was unique. While operating within the broad framework of the national programme, each community had to set its own local priorities. Joint targets conforming to the strategy had to be designed in cooperation with members of the community, and these are what had to be achieved within the sub-region. Local programmes are not suitable for reforming major welfare systems (welfare supports, social insurance, education and healthcare, etc.), for making radical changes in the legal environment or for changing the redistribution of budget resources. At the same time, they are uniquely suitable for making the various institutions more child and family friendly, for alleviating and eventually eliminating segregation in practice and for seeing to it that all residents receive the information to map out the services they need as groups, families, and individuals.

The basic goals of the sub-regional programme are:

- to concentrate significant forces along the crucial points, to assist child development from the earliest age, to improve teaching, education overall and training, from both the institutional and participatory aspects;
- to optimise services (healthcare, education, social, employment, etc.) offered to families with children — meaning to improve their professional level, accessibility, and effectiveness;
- to promote the acceptance and dissemination of production and consumption models imbedded in the community within a given sub-region and through this;
- to support the evolvement of the frameworks, methods, and tools needed for sustainable development;
- to significantly expand the network of conditions that creates and sustains jobs and services tailor-made to meet local needs;
- to promote harmonised social coexistence less likely to be prejudiced and to exclude others;
- to promote decision-making and decision implementation based on democratic participation and cooperation.

Initial experience shows that following lengthy preparation, cooperation evolved with local decision-makers and professionals has the power to mobilise significant local forces to implement our goals. The sub-region has begun a network of interrelated programmes involving early childhood development, education, adolescent support, community development and employment programmes that conform to local needs and programme targets alike. Clearly, a fundamental programme requirement is that funding be available. The only way to mesh the calculated needs with currently obtainable resources was to temporarily leave out several extremely important but too expensive areas of action. The most painful one was that there was no way to improve housing or neighborhoods to any great degree although this would have been particularly important in some settlements where Gypsy families live in segregated and deteriorated housing. If there could be radical improvements to alleviate slum conditions other efforts would be far more effective, and until such improvements can be made all our other achievements are at risk.

3. Monitoring the implementation and impact of policies to prevent and alleviate poverty and social exclusion among children and to promote the well-being of children

Hungary has an extensive set of resources to provide statistical data. We have a great deal of data on trends, causes, and effects of child poverty thanks to the Central Statistics Office and various other research facilities. In some areas however, most particularly in Government data reporting, there are serious shortcomings. There are particularly significant problems when trying to evaluate the effects of various Government measures. An 'excellent' example of this is that neither the Welfare Ministry nor the Government Welfare and Employment Office provide data on their websites or in printed form on the participants in programmes to promote employment of mothers of small children or on people participating in housing programmes. The data system of the Central Statistics Office ('National statistical data programme' — OSAP) collects data on almost everything (services, children's health status, environmental and housing conditions, etc.) but only some of these data are accessible, and only after a significant time lapse. As part of the education integration programme, since 2005 doctors and paediatric paramedics have documented data on the psychosomatic status of all five-year-olds as part of an effort to determine whether they are mature enough to attend school. For the moment, there is not enough funding for any uniform processing of this data. Unfortunately, the publication on the first VÉKA (EU-SILC) survey was not really a breakthrough on the topic.

The main arguments of the national strategy report concerning monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of the different provisions and of the different measures are well funded, the outlined plans are promising, however, there are no visible changes yet in this field.

There have only been sporadic examples of methodical monitoring of the various welfare and other programmes. The Ministry of Welfare and Labour has conducted impact studies on the consequences of changes in the rules on access to regular welfare assistance as of 2006, but has not made the results public. We know that the change in aid provision was significant within the overall family support system and that there was a substantial decline in the number of people accessing the funds, but we have yet to learn why. We have only basic data available on the use of capitation supports provided when schools are integrated. (We know the number of children to whom the support was provided, but there has been no systematically collected data on the services introduced with the funding, or on the type of improvements made).

Important changes were triggered by EU membership because it required Hungary to report and to use common indices. That meant we had to perform a number of evaluations. To do this, the Inter-ministerial Committee Against Social Exclusion established a subcommittee of experts called the Democratic Workshop to Coordinate Methodology and provide Scientific Orientation [METHOD] within the Committee against Social Exclusion. That committee prepared a working document called *Monitoring Social Cohesion in Hungary: Proposal for Country-Specific Indices*, and made a number of proposals along these lines. One is concerned with the indices needed to describe the status of children.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Social statistical situation analysis as part of the 'National action plan on social cohesion', Táarki, 2006.

From the point of view of our subject, a significant initiative was taken by the National Development Agency, one that qualifies as pioneering in the EU. It sets up five key dimensions (public finances and the national budget, long-term employment, long-term growth, disadvantaged groups, and social distribution) and determines what effects on these factors the various operative and regionally operative programmes actually have.

A draft resolution before Parliament, which includes specific indices for evaluating programme performance and which is intended to improve chances for children, might prove to be a breakthrough in monitoring and programme evaluation practices. In it, Parliament instructs the Government to elaborate a follow-up system to monitor the tasks set forth by the national strategy. It also calls on the Government to include professional organisations concerned with welfare issues and NGOs in a monitoring committee that is to be charged with assisting, following up and evaluating the national strategy and its operations. To execute the national strategy, we need to design the criteria with which to determine accountability for programme implementation and for the monitoring indices. The monitoring committee established under the national strategy will continuously follow up and evaluate the implementation of tasks to eliminate child poverty and the outcomes of that implementation, as part of the EU open coordination processes. The Government will provide the information that the independent group needs to conduct its evaluations and shape the indices.

Annex 1.

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