

# Supports for pregnant women and for children in Hungary

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## Introduction

In Hungary there is no such a initiative for families expecting baby like the Foundation Mother and Child in Germany, but we have a complex system for caring pregnant women, families and children. This paper will contain information on the demographic situation in Hungary, the system of family and child-welfare and reactions for the issues suggested for discussion in the discussion paper.

## Demographic situation in Hungary

The fertility rate in Hungary is among the lowest in Europe. The number of births was decreasing constantly between 1991 and 1998. From then the fertility rate is stable: approximately 95-100 thousand children born in a year.

The average age of women at the time of first birth-giving is raised from 23 to 28 between 1990 and 2008. Behind this increasing we can find several reasons: the expansion of the education, the decreasing popularity of the institution of marriage, the difficulties of starting individual life and so on. In the same time the values are also changed: reaching individual goals have higher priority than ever. The ration of family with two children probably will decrease while we also expect the increasing of the number of families with one or three children.

There was also a big increase in the ratio of children who were born out of wedlock. Today the two-fifth of the newborn babies is bearing out of wedlock.

People usually desire more children than they actually will have.

## System of family and child-welfare

In Hungary, child-raising is backed by various financial and non-financial forms of supports. Most of them are available after the birth of the baby. But before the birth professional help is offered for every pregnant woman by the network of district nurses and the child welfare and family supporting services.

### Financial supports:

#### *Maternity contribution*

Upon the birth of every child a family is entitled to a one-off maternity contribution, as a contribution to the relevant costs. One pre-requisite for eligibility to the costs is that during the period of pregnancy the mother should use at least four times the free maternity consultancy

service (or once in the case of a premature delivery). Since 1 January 2003 the amount of the maternity support per child has been equal to 225% of the lowest possible amount of the old age pension in effect at the time of the birth of the child, or 300% in the case of having twins.

*Prenatal - child bearing aid*

During the 24-week period of maternity leave women who were employed before the birth giving got this amount in monthly basis.

*Childcare pay*

After the provision of the aid for the 24-week period of maternity leave, until the child accomplishes the age of 2 the so-called childcare pay (GYED) is furnished in an equivalent of 70% of the average wage or salary for a single calendar day, yet the amount is maximized in each year. This form of benefit is subject to the availability of social insurance coverage.

*Childcare aid*

Automatically, either of the parents (also grandparents under certain conditions) may rely on the childcare aid (GYES) until the age of 3 of the child raised in the same household, or in relation to twins until the children accomplish their compulsory schooling age. Eligibility is independent from the prior duration of social insurance coverage.

*Child-raising support*

Those parents, foster parents and guardians are eligible for child-raising support (GYET) who raise three or more children of minor age in their own households. The support is payable between the third and eighth year of age of the youngest child.

*Family allowance*

Family allowance is payable after each child.

## **Institutions for children**

In Hungary, those children are automatically eligible for nursery school services who accomplish their age of 3 until the end of the calendar year where the beginning of the given school year falls, but do not accomplish their age of 6 until 31 May, as well as those accomplishing the age of 6, but have not started their school studies, but remained in the nursery schools. At nursery schools, free services include participation in nursery school classes, as well as logopaedic classes and care to prevent the emergence of dyslexia, as well as the make-up programmes for children with special educational needs. Regular healthcare supervisions, as well as the use of the facilities and assets of nursery schools during the provision of the said services are also free of charges. From among basic services, reimbursement of costs should be paid only for meals, yet children in need may receive various allowances from these fees up to 100%. Another way to have care for children is reliance on family daytime nurseries.

## Other supports/targeted measures

The following facilities – among others – have been designed to promote the return of persons being inactive for childcare to the labour market:

- From the time when the child accomplishes the age of 1, there is an opportunity to enter fulltime job in addition to the childcare aid, child-raising or nursing allowance.
- START Programme: The objective of the programme is to provide support to the re-entry to the labour market for the long-term unemployed, for parents raising small children, for family members taking care of close family members to have employment after childcare benefits and to enable them to work while receiving the benefits.

Those persons may participate in the programme who intend to establish legal relations for work within one year (365 days) following the termination of the disbursement of the childcare aid, childcare pay, child-raising support or nursing allowance, or wish to enter work after the child has accomplished the age of 1 with the concurrent disbursement of the child-care aid provided that their labour relations have been terminated during the any unpaid leave or absence used in the period of the childcare aid, childcare pay, child-raising support or nursing of a family member, or they have no employers (or had no employers even before the disbursement of the childcare aid).

The support is associated with the persons of those participating in the programme; it is a public contribution allowance to be granted automatically for a term of two years, and paid to employers that engage the eligible participants of the programme within the framework of labour relations.

For the support of the harmonization of workplace and family obligations, in each year since 2000 the Family Friend Workplace Award has been announced as to be granted to the companies and institutions implementing outstanding family friendly measures.

Applications may be submitted in six categories – micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises, large companies, budgetary organizations and non-profit organizations – by presenting the established practices. The questions in the application datasheet are associated with the following main topics:

Data pertaining to employees, policies and practices (e.g. distribution of employees by the position, family status, method of work, promotion systems, issues in relation to childcare, wages and salaries, trainings, etc.). Issues concerning equal opportunities (e.g. regulations, practices, etc.) in this section, there are several questions inquiring about the documentation of the individual measures. Family friendly policies, practices for the support of the harmonization of work and private life (e.g. work organization, leaves and holidays, other benefits, etc.). Matters concerning the organizational culture (e.g. family friendly organizational culture, involvement of employees, social corporate responsibility, etc.) Miscellaneous questions (e.g. development, monitoring, etc.).

The winners of the competition are entitled to use the logo of "Family Friendly workplace" for a year.

*Child poverty*

In 2005 out of a population of 10 million there were 2.2 million dependent children below the age of 20 living in Hungary. Families with children on the whole are poorer than childless ones. Family poverty is closely related to the number of children in the family. From 2008 Hungary has a special strategy for combating child poverty<sup>1</sup>.

## Key issues for debate at the Peer Review meeting

The complex system showed above is support the families/women. On average all these support are governmental however many services are operated by NGOs or other stakeholders (like the Church).

Hungary tries to handle the question in a complex way in which there are support (in cash, in kind and institutional), targeted labour-market policies (for parent with children) and targeted gender policy as well.

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<sup>1</sup> See the two documents attached:

- National programme to combat child poverty
- Parliamentary Resolution 47/2007 (V.31) OGY on the National Strategy 2007-2032 "Making Things Better for our Children"