**Contribution of Hungary to the OHCHR Report to the High Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals and the rights of the child**

1. **How the rights of the child are being upheld as a priority in your country in the face of the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children’s rights and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.**

The Government declared an emergency situation for the entire territory of Hungary from 11 March 2020 in order to prevent the consequences of a human epidemic causing mass illness endangering the safety of life and property and to protect the health and life of Hungarian citizens. In accordance with all this, on 8 March 2020, the National Center for Public Health (hereinafter: NCPH) imposed a ban on visiting all inpatient and residential social institutions.

The NCPH’s decision covered all institutions providing specialized social care, the temporary home for families in the framework of primary child welfare care and the temporary home for children, as well as institutions providing child protection care (foster parents’ networks, children’s and residential homes and territorial child protection services) and reformatories. The purpose of the visit ban was to protect the beneficiaries and children from the threat of an epidemic. Simultaneously with the extension of the ban on visits, the NCPH also ordered a ban on leaving institutions. The purpose of the ban on leaving institutions was also to protect the health of beneficiaries and children by preventing the spread of the epidemic in institutions.

The Minister of Human Capacities, in his guide for the implementation of the NCPH resolution issued on 22 March 2020, set out the exceptions to the ban on visiting and leaving institutions for child protection institutions and reformatories.

In particular, the guide emphasized that professionals should avoid unjustified face-to-face meetings with regard to co-operation in order to settle the fate of those in a child protection institution, in particular by using non-personal forms of contact such as correspondence, telephone and IT. The child protection guardian was also required to keep in touch with the child under their guardianship, if possible electronically and by telephone, in view of the ban on visits. The child protection guardian should continue to have the right and obligation to take the necessary immediate measures in the best interests of the child and to submit in writing a request to initiate proceedings requiring immediate action.

In the case of children receiving child protection care and juveniles in reformatories, the Guide stated that it is necessary to ensure that children, dependents and juveniles stay in the open air for at least one hour per day, even during the emergency. Following the publication of the guide, the NCPH supplemented its decision with regard to the physical and mental health of children by stating that “an institution providing child protection care may also be left for the purpose of daily leisure activities organized by the institution”, thus expanding the possibility of leaving the institution. Children were allowed to participate in free time activities in groups.

Restrictions on visits to and leaving from institutions were lifted by a decision of the NCPH on 18 May 2020.

The measures enacted by the Hungarian Government comply with all of the provisions on the implementation of the rights of the child laid in Act 31 of 1997 on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration (hereinafter: Child Protection Act), as in addition to the security of care for children, the protection of contact, participation in education and protection against abuse were also guaranteed.

In addition to the continuous operation of the services that can be provided online, a personal meeting and a family visit are essential in order to protect the rights of children and to prevent and manage the vulnerability of children. In Hungary, the Minister for Human Capacities has issued guidance on child welfare services by reason of COVID-19.

The issued Guideline clearly states that in order to prevent and eliminate the vulnerability of children, the family and child welfare system provider must operate the detection and signalling system, and the signals must be received. However, family visits should be carried out in the case of serious threat even in the crisis situation.

The Guideline defined it as a task for social workers to be informed about the provision of meals and the completion of their studies of disadvantaged, cumulatively disadvantaged and vulnerable children who receive regular child protection benefits.

The guideline issues that kindergarten and school social workers should pay special attention to digital education of children and they should support the work of teachers.

The services of temporary home for families or temporary home for children were continuously provided during this period as well.

Based on the register kept by the Hungarian State Treasury, the table below shows the number of recipients of temporary care in the emergency period and in the same period in 2019.

Number of minors with a new agreement between 11 March 2019 and 18 June 2019

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Temporary homes for families | 1402 |
| Temporary homes for children | 185 |

Number of minors with a new agreement between 11 March 2020 and 18 June 2020

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Temporary homes for families | 1214 |
| Temporary homes for children | 91 |

Overall, fewer people required care during the emergency period.

1. **Particularly noteworthy examples of good practice towards realizing the rights of the child in your country, in relation to sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the goals under review - including specific laws, policies and actions to advance the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.**

In connection with the coronavirus situation, on 16 March 2020 public education and training institutions switched to an out-of-class digital work schedule. At the same time due to the start of the digital extracurricular work schedule, the Ministry of Human Capacities informed the bodies responsible for providing institutional child catering - local governments, the maintainers of nurseries, public education and vocational training institutions - that as there was no teaching break or holiday declared, it was necessary to provide institutional child catering in accordance with the Child Protection Act:

* for children receiving nursery care, one main meal in the morning, a hot main meal at noon and two small meals in the form of ten o'clock and snacks,
* for children and pupils in kindergartens, public education and vocational training establishments, in the form of a lunch hot main meal, and two small meals in the form of ten o'clock and snacks, taking the right to free or discounted institutional child catering into account.

In the institutional child catering system, 999,529 children received the care in the 2019/2020 school year and 602,313 of them received free or discounted meals, so the measure ensured the continuous care of a significant number of children in need.

During the transitional period of June 16-26 2020, institutional child catering was provided for pupils using institutional childcare, and holiday child catering was provided for non-supervised children. During the summer holidays of 2020, the local governments obliged to provide holiday catering requested central budget support for free holiday catering for 109,707 children.

In the case of children in child protection care, the Ministry of Human Capacities conducted a survey on the availability of technical conditions for participation in digital education and contact with relatives. We work with donor organizations to ensure that these conditions are fully available, as well as to purchase digital tools from a central budget, which has resulted in thousands of laptops and personal computers being handed over to foster families and children's homes, and are currently being purchased and delivered.