

**Report of Hungary  
on the implementation of CSW60 Agreed Conclusions on  
“Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development”**

*Review theme for CSW65*

**The Hungarian Government has taken the necessary steps to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the financial situation and the everyday lives of women, especially women in vulnerable situations.** Women with small children could find themselves in an especially difficult situation due to the effects of COVID-19. They are supported by the Hungarian Government with the following measures.

**Expanding social protection for women**

**During the “state of danger”** (i.e. the temporary state of emergency pronounced in response to the COVID-19 outbreak), the **conditions of receiving benefits for families raising children were facilitated by the Government**, so that no one, including single parents, would be deprived of these benefits as a result of the changed circumstances. The disbursement of **family benefits was automatically extended** until the end of the “state of danger”. As a result, even if parents’ entitlement to childcare benefits (benefits based on social security status), child-care allowance (a benefit provided as a subjective right) or child-raising support (a benefit for families with 3 or more children) expired during the state of danger, their entitlement to the benefit was automatically paid for, for the entire duration of the “state of danger”. Grandparents did not lose their entitlement to the so-called “grandparents’ childcare benefit”, even if the parent or a third party took care of the child during the “state of danger”. With these measures, during the difficult economic situation, the **preservation of jobs of the parents** was also supported, as they were allowed to stay on unpaid leave in case they received childcare benefits or childcare allowance.

**Parents raising a chronically ill or severely disabled child received special support** for this period, as well. If a parent, because of raising a chronically ill or severely disabled child, was entitled to a higher amount of family allowance and eligible for childcare allowance (which is provided until the child turns 10 years old), there was no need to do the necessary reviews or to send the documentation until the end of the “state of danger”. In this case, the entitlement to benefits will not expire until the last day of the second month following the end of the “state of danger”.

Students in public primary or secondary education and students engaged in vocational training were eligible for **schooling support** until the age of 20, and in case of special education needs, until the age of 23. They received support not only until the end of school year 2019/2020, but also until the end of the state of danger.

**The above-mentioned measures** regarding the prolongation of the entitlement to family benefits as well as the schooling support and the simplification of procedures for parents raising children with disabilities **support first of all women**, because in most cases, it is women who

stay at home with their children after giving birth, they are the beneficiaries of family benefits and they are the ones who do the home care of chronically ill or severely disabled children.

### **Additional family support measures**

There was also a **moratorium on repayments** of employer loans and rents provided by the National Asset Management Program and the guarantee fee for the Baby Expecting Subsidy, under which no interest or fees could be charged for the period of the moratorium. In the case of the Baby Expecting Subsidy and the housing support (CSOK), in case the parent lost their job, the duration of the social security coverage was not interrupted during the state of danger or for the following 60 days, if the claimant was re-employed by the end of this period.

### **Improving childcare services**

Women with small children could find themselves in an extremely difficult situation due to the pandemic, either because of working from home and taking care of their children at the same time, or in case they needed to be present at the workplace, while the daily care of their children would need to be solved as well. The Hungarian Government provided support to these women with on-call service of child-care, the introduction of workplace childcare services as well as the organization of daycare and summer camps.

As a result of the epidemic, extraordinary breaks were ordered in many kindergartens and nurseries. It was mandatory for the mayors of the settlements and the capital districts to **provide a free on-call service of childcare** (5 children/group) for children whose placement could not be solved in any other way. Child catering had to be provided for the entire duration of the on-call service. From 25 May 2020, nurseries and kindergartens were reopened in the countryside, and from 2 June, children were received in the ones in the capital as well.

The so-called **workplace childcare services could be established by any employer** who needed to solve the daily care of the children of their employees, **not only for the period of the “state of danger”, but until 31 August 2020**. There was no operating licence needed for the establishment of workplace child-care services; it was enough to inform the competent local authority/capital district authority and receive permission for operation from the public health institution. Workplace childcare services were available for children from 20 weeks until 14 years of age without infectious disease. Services could be ensured for the required period from 6 am until 6 pm, in small groups (maximum 5 children/group). The state provided **tax- and contribution allowance** for companies, firms and budgetary entities for the operation of childcare services between April and June 2020. The employer was eligible for tax allowance for the employee at the workplace childcare services. Only 4% of the health insurance contribution, but a maximum of HUF 7710 (USD 25) needed to be paid, without any social contribution tax or vocational training levy payable.

In addition, according to the decision of the Government, **daycare and summer camps could be organized** from 16 June, in compliance with the epidemiological regulations in effect.

Hungary considers it important to help working mothers integrate into the labour market not only during the epidemic, but more generally as well. There are currently more than 51,000 nursery places, making care available to 18% of children under 3 years of age. In 2019, about 67% of children enrolled in the nurseries and so called mini-nurseries received **free institutional child's catering**, the Hungarian Government taking its costs off the shoulders of families. With the opening of nurseries, the number of locally provided services are also expected to increase, which would significantly **contribute to the increase of employment of women**, new jobs, and disadvantaged children will have access to quality care as soon as possible.

### **Supporting NGOs**

NGOs representing rural women, elderly women, large families and single parent families play a decisive role in supporting women in vulnerable situations. They continued to receive support from the Hungarian Government during the “state of danger” as well.

### **Supporting the victims of domestic violence**

Beside the numerous family support measures, the Government also reconsidered the necessary measures and changes in the **service scheme for victims of domestic violence**. In Hungary, the operation of the service scheme for victims of domestic violence was ensured during the “state of danger” with some changes. The Crisis Centres and Secret Shelters were open for victims in crisis situations, and the National Crisis Management and Information Telephone Service continued to be available 24/7, free of charge. Ambulances dealing with less severe cases of domestic violence had turned to operate online during the “state of danger”. An online leaflet has been launched to help victims in identifying the problems and provides information on the available protection and professional support in the different phases of domestic violence.

### **Women in decision-making**

It is important to note that in Hungary, women participate in decision-making processes in the COVID-19 crisis responses. The Chief Medical Officer of Hungary, Dr. Cecília Müller, has had a particularly important role in decision-making in the state of danger due to COVID-19.

### **Rewarding the persistence of women during the crisis**

The “Women for Hungary Club”, a philanthropic organisation of women in leading positions across the public and private sectors, decided to grant awards to women who distinguished themselves in coping with the difficulties of COVID-19 crisis with their outstanding performance and persistence. The main prize is in the amount of HUF 5 million (USD 16,600), and the work of women is acknowledged in four categories: health, social care, education and ‘other’ category. Anybody can be nominated for the prize. The award ceremony will be held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Besides the prize, companies can make offers for holidays, cultural or sport programmes for women.

The founding member of the Women for Hungary Club, is Minister of State Mrs. Katalin Novák herself has an important role in decision-making regarding the measures aimed at mitigating the effects of the crisis on the lives of families and women.

### **Supporting female-dominant sectors**

In the framework of the **Economy Protection Action Plan**, among other crucial steps, the following measures were introduced that **affect female-dominant sectors and jobs**.

Sectors most affected by the virus and industries with extensive traditions in Hungary received extra funding. **Tourism, the creative industry, health industry and food industry had access to development grants and tax cuts**, in addition to the availability of preferential loans and capital programmes.

In these sectors, between March and June 2020, **employers were exempt from public dues payable after the wage of employees** and only in-kind health insurance contribution needed to be paid from the contributions payable after the wage of employees. These measures aimed at preserving jobs in these sectors.

Due to the pandemic, tasks in the **healthcare sector** have been performed under special circumstances, as those healthcare workers who take care of patients infected by the virus are exposed to increased risk of infection, risking their own health for the interest of performing a public task. The Government considers the recognition of the extremely hard work of healthcare personnel absolutely necessary; therefore, around 160,000 employees, both men and women, received a bonus allowance of HUF 500,000 (USD 1660) as a sign of appreciation.

It is well-known that healthcare is a female-dominated sector. In view of the fact that in many cases these employees are mothers, who needed to take care of their children because of the closure of schools, legislation provided an opportunity for employers to take individual decisions and measures regarding the working time, leave entitlements, arrangements for working from home, etc. These individual measures could provide solutions to challenges faced by employees, for example for mothers staying at home with their children because of distance-learning.

Moreover, the Hungarian Government provided protective equipment for health and social care institutions. To support the protection measures against COVID-19 in establishments of social services (retirement homes, care institutions for persons with disabilities, child protection institutions, homeless shelters), as well as to show appreciation for their work, health screening as well as professional support (in education as well in the case of child protection institutions) have also been provided to employees.