

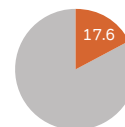
“Country recommendation

Hungary should take action to empower children and give them a voice.

Country Profile 2023



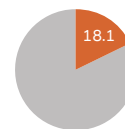
Hungary



Child Population:

1,707,018

17.6 % of total population



Child Poverty:

308,970

18.1 % (2022)

▼ -5.1 % compared to 2021

RESPONDENT ORGANISATION(S):

[Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation \(HCR\)](#)

Children's Rights in Hungary

At national level, the Ministry of Culture and Innovation (MoCI) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) are responsible for children's rights in Hungary.

As reflected in Hinalovon Child Rights Foundation (HCR)'s, [Annual Child Rights Report](#) the competencies and tasks of these ministries are split according to the key policies on children's rights in Hungary. The MoI responsibilities include social inclusion, health, child and youth protection, public education, and social policy. The MoCI is responsible for family policy, vocational training, children and youth policy.

Experts, working on the *Annual Child Rights Report* identified several key areas related to children's rights, namely child participation, child safety online, children impacted by war and conflict as well as children in migration and refugees, discrimination against vulnerable

groups, and sexual violence against children.

Child participation

When it comes to child participation, a new norm entered into force in 2022 concerning children's right to participate and express their views on the settlement of parental custody and third-party placement proceedings. Besides this positive change, [nationwide protests](#) throughout the year related to issues in the public education system have raised the issue of children's participation in public affairs. The *Annual Child Rights Report for 2022* describes that while students joined the civil disobedience wave in spring mainly as participants, in autumn, they also took an active part in the events as organisers and initiators.

Child protection systems

The comprehensive [Review of the Digital Child Protection System](#) produced by the Ombudsman, highlights that the functioning of

the online child protection system poses obstacles for parents and children to identify the corresponding responsible body to report violations of children's rights in the online space and the most effective route to getting an outcome.

There is a need for action on the labour shortage of child protection workers. HCR recommend taking steps to ensure financial and professional recognition of this crucial line of work, which would ensure the stability children in the protection system need. What is more, child protection experts identify a gap in legislation on institutional safeguarding for children.

Children in migration and refugees

These children face challenges when receiving approval for entry into Hungary. The procedure of submitting a 'Letter of Intent' does not provide an effective and accessible opportunity for vulnerable asylum seekers to receive protection. In addition, the

number of refugee children from Ukraine, who have been granted protection and starting school in 2022 is significantly lower than the number of children applying for asylum status. According to HCR's *Annual Child Rights Report 2022*, in cooperation with the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Hungary has made significant progress in protecting children from becoming victims of trafficking.

An [Action Plan](#) has been adopted to support the implementation of Hungary's [National Strategy 2020-2023 to Combat Trafficking of Human Beings](#). This decision also includes commitments to ensure the human, material, professional and organisational conditions are in place to reinforce the fight against human trafficking. To this end, the Child Protection Act created a legal basis for a pilot programme that would place children, victims of trafficking, in temporary homes for at least 6 months and would provide special therapeutic care.

Children's mental health

In several areas concerning children, there is no official data available. Children's mental health, for instance, relies on statistical data from previous years that raises awareness of deviancies such as alcohol consumption, risky sexual behaviour, teenage pregnancy, and suicide attempts; however, there is no official data from 2022 concerning children's mental health. Our member in Hungary urges for the recognition of the problem by the state, which they consider a great step forward. In addition, HCR sees the need for accessible information regarding sexuality and contraception, which currently is a task left to schools only as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are excluded from educational institutions.

Additional concerns for children's rights

In terms of climate change and its impact on children, there is a lack of strategic thinking in viewing climate change as a significant national problem. HCR has continuously underlined various groups of vulnerable children who face discrimination – Roma children, children with disabilities, and children in low-income families. Additional state programmes and support are needed to bring more visibility to the needs of those children.

Poverty and Social Exclusion – Experiences of children, families, and communities

Child poverty in Hungary

Hungary has a total child population of 1.7 million, 18.1% of which live at risk of poverty and social exclusion as of 2022. That amounts to an estimated 308,970

children in need in Hungary. The rate of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion decreased by more than five percentage points since 2021.¹ Although in 2023 the Hungarian Central Statistical Authority measured an improvement in the overall indicators for poverty and social exclusion, the data shows that the groups of children most in need, and according to Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation (HCR), often forgotten in policy responses, are children with a single-parent, children of unemployed parents, and Roma children.

To help tackle child poverty and social exclusion, the Hungarian government should prioritise introducing adequate measures to tackle child poverty in the National Action Plan, including a mapping of NGOs working on the topic. This would be the first step to opening the discussion to professionals from the non-governmental sphere and allowing their participation in implementation.

In addition, more robust data on the current situation is required to provide further visibility of this issue.

HCR quotes the [Hungarian Maltese Charity School Foundation's initiative](#) as a recent promising good example of an intervention that has helped children in need. The development aims to support children living in disadvantaged settlements providing pedagogical help beyond the traditional tasks.

The European Child Guarantee

Hungary's National Action Plan

2023 marked the third year of the European Child Guarantee's implementation, and two years since Member States were requested to submit their National Action Plans (NAPs) to outline how they would address child poverty at national level.

¹ According to [Eurostat data](#), poverty among children below 18 was 23.3 % in 2021.

The National Action Plan of Hungary was published on 26 May 2023.² It rightfully identifies the children most in need in the country, namely children living in poverty, children experiencing mental health challenges, children in institutional and alternative care, children with disabilities, children from third countries, and children with special educational needs and complex developmental disorders.

Nevertheless, the NAP does not foresee external monitoring practices, nor robust indicators to assess the implementation of the Plan. Eurochild member Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation (HCR) expresses concerns that the plan is more report-oriented, reflecting on past events, rather than laying out strategic steps for implementation. Additionally, HCR anticipates that due to fragmentation of the cross-sectoral working in Hungary, collaboration between the four

ministries involved with the work on the NAP will be complicated and challenging.

A consultation with a few civil society organisations took place in 2021 in the preparation phase of the NAP, however HCR did not have information related to the event. Similarly, Eurochild member in Hungary lacks information on available funding or funding sources linked to actions related the Child Guarantee's implementation.

Despite not being involved in supporting Hungary's implementation of the Child Guarantee in Hungary, HCR identified the following gaps in the NAP and has forwarded these observations and recommendations to the relevant ministry's secretariat:

- Available and accessible child-related data that follows a clear formatting logic. Additionally, to put in place secure data collection and storage guidelines. The reporting

process of data must also be standardised and feedback mechanisms put in place.

- A revision of the Civil and Penal codes should be carried out to smoothen the discrepancies when it comes to levels of accountability of children of the same age.
- Capacity building and training for professionals working with children is essential, particularly those working in child-protection, dealing with children with specific educational needs and complex development disorders. In addition, HCR urges for adequate steps to address the situation of children struggling with complex trauma due to abuse and adverse childhood experience.
- Equal distribution of child addiction treatment services - action is necessary to increase the availability of child psychiatric facilities. Additionally, improved maintenance and overall quality of child-specialised care

facilities are needed, as well as crisis centres and institutions to provide temporary support for families.

- Revision of the healthcare provision and educational integration of Ukrainian refugee children staying within the territory of Hungary for more than 30 days.
- Revision of the apparatus of provision of meals for children in state care.

European Semester 2023 – Country reports and recommendations

Overview of the Country Report: identification of the children in need

This year's European Semester Country Report for Hungary outlines vulnerable groups of children that should be targeted by national policymakers, namely children facing poverty and social exclusion, and children who drop out of school early. On the

² The lists of Child Guarantee National Coordinators and National Action Plans, where published, are available at the bottom of [this page](#).

former, the material and social deprivation rate is specifically high for Roma children.

To promote social inclusion, the [Catching up municipalities initiative](#) aims to improve access to social services, healthcare, employment, and housing across 300 of the poorest municipalities in Hungary. In addition, the report reflects that further efforts are required to support children with a disadvantaged background (including Roma children and children who live in rural areas) that continue to face challenges in terms of accessing inclusive and quality education.

The report fails to include several important areas of children's rights. For instance, there is no relevant information about children in alternative care or the current situation of deinstitutionalisation, no information on children's right to be heard, children with migration background, nor children impacted by the pandemic, nor children's right in the digital environment. Due to the lack of

official data on children's mental health, which Hintonalovon Child Rights Foundation considers a reflection of the low prioritisation of the topic in Hungary, the report does not mention this subject.

The HCR and their counterparts in Civil Child Rights Coalition were not involved in the Semester Process 2023. In their view, civil society organisations can be involved through holding consultations with the existing working groups.

However, HCR found that the report highlighted well the structural challenges, namely the sustainability of project-based funded initiatives.

Needs analysis: alignment at country-level

HRC pointed out that the Country specific recommendations indirectly made respect to children's rights, as they address structural reforms required to support children and their

families. However, there is no explicit mention of children in the Country Specific Recommendation for Hungary.



Eurochild advocates for children's rights and well-being to be at the heart of policymaking. We are a network of organisations working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of all our work.



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