Employment developments in childcare services for school-age children

Hungary

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Introduction

In recent years, more emphasis has been placed on high quality childcare in Europe, both with respect to the sector’s workforce and the changing needs of children and parents. There is a great need for measures to be introduced that support sustainable and formal job creation in care services for school-age children.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions has commissioned ECOTEC Research and Consulting to carry out a study on sustainable childcare services currently available for school-age children in the 25 Member States of the European Union (EU25). The study aims to: support the debate on modernisation of care systems in Europe; to review existing information on childcare services and pinpoint gaps in the level of service in the enlarged EU; and to identify measures at national, regional and local levels to create sustainable childcare services for school-age children.

This report is one of six in-depth country studies that have been conducted in order to complement the more general review of childcare systems in the EU25. It contains three examples of best practice identified from current childcare initiatives in Hungary:

- public–private provision of childcare services at a district cultural centre, Budapest;
- after-school activities at the József Attila Primary School, Budapest;
- learning and leisure activities for Roma children at Józsefvárosi Tanoda, Budapest.

Information was gathered through a combination of research and 14 stakeholder interviews.

The report addresses the following topics:

1 - Policy background: This section examines the historic background to childcare policy, instigators for change, policy on childcare for school-age children, demographic trends and childcare statistics.

2 - Childcare provision: This section looks at national, regional and local responsibilities for childcare. It also examines the various types of provision including private and public sector services.

3 - Childcare workers: This section examines childcare occupations, working hours, salaries, job creation initiatives, images, training and qualifications.

4 - Future employment in childcare: This section looks at how to create a sustainable standard of employment in childcare provision and at employment gaps and shortages in the sector.

5 - Creating sustainable childcare: This section examines how to create affordable childcare provision and looks at current and future needs for affordable and high quality childcare.

6 - Case studies: Best practice studies will be introduced.

   Case study 1: Zeg-Zug Children’s House, Budapest
   Case study 2: József Attila Primary School, Budapest
   Case study 3: ‘Józsefvárosi Tanoda’ Foundation, Budapest

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Historical overview

In 1989–1990, after four decades of socialism, a multi-party democracy emerged in Hungary and a democratically elected government took office. This was not only a period of political change for the country, but also the beginning of the transition from a planned economy to a market economy. The process resulted in the dismantling of state property and the modernisation of the structure of the economy, accompanied by an upsurge in the number of private enterprises. The changes in company ownership have brought about changes in the structure of employment. Such changes have resulted in different work structures and working hours, different demands on the part of employers, and different needs in terms of services for families, such as childcare.

The changes in the political system and the economy have impacted on the population, especially on families with children. There was a decline in gross domestic product (GDP), consumer prices rose, subsidies were reduced, and the majority of people became worse off. Unemployment emerged, along with a high inflation rate (up to 15% in the mid 1990s).

The socialist political system after World War II was characterised by the dominance of a so-called ‘caring state’. Salaries did not correspond to the full value of people’s work, but to only a fraction of it. This was justified by the provision of state support for health care, education, leisure time activities, childcare and social welfare. However, funds were increasingly drawn away from workers and spent on financing a deficit-making economy, with the result that less was being spent on the ‘non-productive’ sector – health and social services, education and culture. Nevertheless, a wide range of social benefits were established by the end of the 1980s (see section on ‘Benefit system for families with children’ below).

Services for children and families – including those for elderly and special needs people – were quite uniform and did not take varying needs into account. Childcare centres, kindergartens, after-school care facilities, children’s homes and homes for the elderly were organised in a similar way and provided more or less similar services throughout the country. When school lessons ended, children either stayed in school for after-school care or were cared for by a family member. There were no private or public organisations providing childcare for school-age children.

The origins of childcare started in the 19th century: connected to a new recognition of the period of childhood and spurred by the incorporation of women in industry, Hungary began to develop a system of childcare centres, mainly in the larger cities and towns. The first Hungarian childcare centre opened in Budapest in 1852 to provide support for working mothers. From the beginning, a strong emphasis on the health of young children was evident.

After World War II, increasing numbers of women entered the labour market. During this period, the only form of available childcare was the childcare centre. Informal or other forms of childcare were practically non-existent. This situation began to change slowly in the 1990s with the introduction of a small number of family childcare homes and home centres, particularly in smaller towns. At present, informal childcare still plays a small part in the provision of childcare services in Hungary; however, other forms of childcare are becoming more common, such as playgroups, toy lending/rental libraries, short-term supervision, and mother–baby groups. Often these provisions are available in conjunction with a childcare centre in an entrepreneurial fashion. The majority of these services are for small children under school age, but some services for children aged between six and 14 years have also been set up. Due to restructuring of the state system of art education, rural schools were also affected and extracurricular activities such as music, ballet, drama, and arts and crafts classes are now available to a much wider group of children.

Children with disabilities and other special needs have traditionally been supported either in families or through segregated facilities, often residential in nature. A number of central institutions emerged that catered for children with
specific conditions such as visual or hearing impairment, cerebral palsy or a learning disability. These were treated primarily as medical conditions, with health experts determining the placement of children in the system.

**Instigators for change**

One of the greatest challenges for the Hungarian public education system is the permanent and large-scale decrease in the number of births, which has been a noticeable factor since the late 1990s. This has led to the deterioration of the optimal use of school space, causing problems of size efficiency and inevitably forcing school maintainers, such as local governments, to introduce measures of rationalisation. School maintainers are forced to find quick solutions to all these problems, since the increase in education costs – due to pay rises, and the need to improve infrastructural conditions – leads to the significant decrease in the cost efficiency of education (including after-school care).

**Current policy on childcare for school-age children**

Childcare is currently under the auspices of the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, together with child welfare, child protection and social welfare services. Since 1997, it has also been part of the child protection system, as described by Act XXXI of 1997 on the protection of children and the administration of guardianship. As stated in the Education Act of 1993, education is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, but since a large proportion of children stay in school after compulsory classes for after-school care (napközi), the ministry is also involved in childcare for school-age children. Thus the responsibilities are shared between two ministries: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The unfortunate result of this system is that in Hungary childcare policy for mainstream school-age children is not given priority at governmental or local levels. From background information and interviews with ministry employees it became clear that childcare for mainstream school-age children is not a priority in either of the ministries. The fact that responsibilities are not clearly defined is a restraining factor, and both of the two ministries have other priorities: the Ministry of Education concentrates on education matters, while the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities focuses on the protection of children at risk. As a result, childcare for mainstream school-age children is neglected in both ministries. In contrast with school-age childcare, the system of early childcare is well maintained and researched: the provision of childcare centres (bölcsőde) for children from birth to three years old and kindergartens (óvoda) for children aged three to six/seven years is advanced and widely available throughout Hungary. Childcare for school-age children is a somewhat neglected area in terms of legislation, data collection, research and assessment of needs. At present, there is no legislation in place that directly refers to childcare for older children, but the acts mentioned below impact on childcare or child welfare issues.

Although the 1997/31 Childcare Act mainly focuses on the care of children ‘at risk’, it also sets out a variety of additional childcare initiatives including commitments to provide all children with equal opportunities for development, and to improve the professional status of all childcare workers. The National Family Policy Principle (2000) aims to enhance the standard of living for families and the consolidation of the security of family life, and to encourage population growth. The introduction of the scheme ensures that the right to family allowances does not depend on the income of the family, but is a social right that supports the rearing of children. The new government formed after the last national elections (2002) introduced changes with the intention that well-off people should not be given social benefits for bringing up children, and that benefits should only be given to families below a certain income level.

Families are considered responsible for bringing up their children and it is acknowledged by the government that sometimes they may need assistance. The policies of democratically-elected governments since the change in the political system in 1990 have reflected this attitude. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was signed quite soon after it was issued in 1989. At present, the legislative framework is in place in Hungary.
The Education Act of 1993, Act XXXI of 1997 on the protection of children, and their associated regulations governing the system of administration and inspection, define the minimum criteria of, educational content of, quality standards of and access to kindergartens, after-school care, childcare, respite care and long-term care services.

The Education Act addresses kindergarten education and care with great detail, but for school-age children the emphasis is on education. After-school care is infrequently referred to in the act. It recognises the working hours of afternoon care teachers (23 hours per week); it also recognises that:

- pupils have a right to take part in after-school care;
- after-school care is carried out by qualified teachers;
- schools must provide after-school care in case it is requested by parents.

Act XXXI of 1997 on the protection of children and its associated regulations outline the duties of different authorities in identifying children at risk, providing help for their families, taking children into care and looking after children in care. It relates to children from birth up to the age of 14 years.

The government programme for 2004–2006, ‘New dynamism for Hungary’, aims to extend the system of day-care institutions and financial incentives for employers who recruit mothers returning to work after childcare leave. The goal of the government is to expand the Safe Start Programme, with the purpose of conveying the importance of health care, childcare and educational services to those families living in the poorest conditions, and also to continue the School of the 21st Century Programme by improving schools’ infrastructure and, among other things, making them more suitable for after-school care activities.

Issues relating to equal opportunities in education and care have been the subject of much debate in recent months by both the public and the media in Hungary. Several daily and weekly newspapers have cited studies and conducted interviews with sociologists about the highly selective features of the Hungarian education system.

In Hungary, student performance is strongly influenced by the family’s cultural capital. In the selective Hungarian education system, social inequalities are reflected in the path of progression as well as in access to the different levels and programmes of education. The range of local educational institutions accurately mirrors the social structure of communities. According to various research studies, if there are sizeable differences in educational attainment and income in the local community, the range of local institutions tends to be characterised by selectivity, the frequent use of entrance exams, and by various forms of segregation. Such differences are noticeable in the access to different educational programmes, and in the access to high quality educational services (including after-school care).
Demographic trends and childcare statistics

In the 1990s and in the past few years, the number of pupils entering kindergarten and primary education has declined in line with demographic trends. Overall population decline is caused by mortality rates above the EU average and a substantial reduction in birth rates over the last 25 years (the current fertility rate of 1.3 children per woman is well below the 2.1 average required to maintain the population). Due to the steady decrease in the number of pupils entering first grade schooling there were less than 888,000 students in the 2004–2005 school year, a mere 76% of the number of students during the 1990–1991 school year.

Table 1: Number of students in full-time education (thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education institution</th>
<th>1990/91</th>
<th>1995/96</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>391.9</td>
<td>400.5</td>
<td>327.5</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>1166.1</td>
<td>987.6</td>
<td>909.8</td>
<td>887.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hungarian Ministry of Education

Table 2: Number of educational institutions and teachers by maintenance, 2004–2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Local government of settlement</th>
<th>Local government of county</th>
<th>Central budgetary institution</th>
<th>Church</th>
<th>Foundation, natural person</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of kindergartens</td>
<td>4,063</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of primary schools</td>
<td>3,151</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of kindergarten teachers</td>
<td>27,560</td>
<td>1,001</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>30,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of primary school teachers</td>
<td>74,194</td>
<td>5,073</td>
<td>2,022</td>
<td>4,225</td>
<td>1,162</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>87,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students in kindergartens</td>
<td>296,308</td>
<td>9,413</td>
<td>4,763</td>
<td>7,992</td>
<td>5,716</td>
<td>1,801</td>
<td>325,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students in primary schools</td>
<td>776,684</td>
<td>38,394</td>
<td>20,189</td>
<td>39,811</td>
<td>8,694</td>
<td>4,013</td>
<td>887,785</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hungarian Ministry of Education

The majority of kindergartens and primary schools are maintained by local governments. If a local authority cannot afford to maintain such an institution, it can be handed over to the county authorities. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a minor but slowly increasing share of responsibility in maintaining primary schools and kindergartens.

Table 3: Education at kindergartens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990/91</th>
<th>1995/96</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of kindergartens</td>
<td>4,718</td>
<td>4,720</td>
<td>4,611</td>
<td>4,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>33,635</td>
<td>32,320</td>
<td>31,392</td>
<td>30,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children</td>
<td>391,950</td>
<td>400,527</td>
<td>327,508</td>
<td>325,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(of which in special education)</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>1,489</td>
<td>1,429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hungarian Ministry of Education
Alongside the declining number of births, the number of kindergartens and kindergarten teachers is also decreasing. However, the proportion of children receiving special education is increasing. This trend is partly due to the fact that more special needs children are entering institutional care (instead of being cared for by their mothers on a full-time basis) and also partly because of the increasing number of children born with special needs. Several interviewees stated that an increasing number of special needs children, with learning and behavioural difficulties, enter the education system every year and more special needs teachers are needed both for morning lessons and after-school care.

Table 4: *Education at primary schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990/91</th>
<th>1995/96</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of primary schools</td>
<td>3,723</td>
<td>4,006</td>
<td>3,748</td>
<td>3,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of teachers</td>
<td>96,791</td>
<td>93,035</td>
<td>89,784</td>
<td>87,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children</td>
<td>1,116,076</td>
<td>987,561</td>
<td>909,769</td>
<td>887,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(of which in special education)</td>
<td>35,420</td>
<td>36,074</td>
<td>35,471</td>
<td>32,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children receiving afternoon care %</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>40.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children receiving meals %</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>61.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hungarian Ministry of Education

As shown in Table 4 above, the number of children receiving special education was higher in 1995 than five years previously, but after the academic year 1995–1996 this number started to decline. The high proportion of Roma children in special education classes prompted the Ministry of Education to draw up a new system to support and properly educate these children. The system which provided extra per capita support for children in special education resulted in many children without special needs, mostly Roma children, being placed in such classes without any justification. After research carried out by NGOs revealed that children with normal mental skills, but from poor and/or ethnic backgrounds were being placed by schools into special education classes, the ministry stopped providing extra per capita support. The new system adopted by the ministry resulted in a decline in the number of pupils in special education.

**Government responsibilities for childcare**

**National responsibilities**

Since the political changes in 1989–1990, key issues have evolved concerning the role of the state in social welfare services, including childcare. Compared to the communist years, when all childcare services were financed from a central budget, the government today has no more than a regulatory function. With the emergence of the local government system in 1990, the responsibility for the provision of services was placed with county and local authorities within a three-tier (national, county, and local) government system.

There has been a substantial change in the role of the national government since the end of the 1980s. In the years of state socialism, all childcare provisions were financed from the central budget; however, during the transition years, the tendency has been for the state to withdraw from direct involvement, to decentralise and to pass on many of its previous responsibilities to local governments. Its regulatory function has been retained, but the aim of the government has been to grant more independence, the right to make choices within the given framework, and to give more flexibility to local governments and different agencies that provide care services. Currently, the major role of national government is to

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1 Including data on students at all-day schools (*egész napos iskola*)
2 The Roma people are an ethnic minority group in Hungary.
provide the legal framework, to secure allocated (normative) funding for care services, to ensure the necessary education for staff who work with children, and to introduce a framework for supervision and quality assurance of childcare services.

Consequently, the financial difficulties of local governments have led to the closure of many childcare centres, kindergartens and schools. The participation of the non-governmental sector varies; it has not become strongly involved in the majority of provisions to date.

At present, in Hungary, the responsibility for providing childcare is shared between families and friends (informal care) and other agents such as the national government, local government, the church, and the voluntary sector (formal care). During the state socialist years, the responsibility for formal care lay almost entirely with the state. From 1990 onwards, both education and social welfare became highly decentralised in Hungary, with effective autonomy being granted to local governments.

Responsibility for children is now shared between four administrative levels: the ministerial level; the region or county level; local municipal or ethnic government; and schools. Successive pieces of legislation have transferred the ownership of previously state-owned schools and kindergartens to local governments, and removed tight state control over budgets, employment, programmes and curricula. The advantage of the new system is that there is greater freedom for both local governments and schools to be innovative, and to respond better to the needs of parents and children.

However, challenges have also arisen from the modernisation of the administrative structures: there is insufficient authority at ministerial and county level to substitute for local authorities or even to guide childcare policies in these constituencies.

**Regional responsibilities**

At present, there are no regional authorities governing childcare for mainstream school-age children in Hungary. The professional regional and county-level authorities set up by the two ministries mentioned above are responsible for education in general, and for the childcare of families at risk, but childcare for mainstream school-age children is not currently on their agenda.

**Local responsibilities**

As outlined above, the relevant ministries are rarely in a position to issue executive orders to the local governments. Sectoral responsibility is exercised ‘via indirect means’, for example the determination of the basic curricula and other standards. Although there is legislation in place to ensure that the system of childcare services is available to all those children whose families request it (including after-school care), local governments in some underdeveloped rural areas are not able to provide the required services.

Serious challenges arise from this problem. A major challenge, it would seem, is the weakness of many of the smaller decentralised local government units, of which Hungary has over 3,000. A country such as Sweden, with a similar population, has currently 289 municipalities. It is generally recognised that the capacity for local public administration (and within it, the administration of childcare and kindergartens) is greatly determined by the size and economic status of the locality. Over 17% of the Hungarian population lives in autonomous settlements of less than 2,000 people. Many of these settlements (and even larger ones) lack the capacity to finance – as the law encourages – a quality kindergarten, childcare or after-school care services. The situation is further aggravated in villages where a large proportion of the population are Roma, most of whom are extremely poor and lack trained human resources. Fundamentally, this is an equity issue that would seem to require urgent intervention from central government.
Another issue that has been emphasised in the OECD report, *Early childhood education and care services* (OECD, 2002), was the divergence of interests between central and local governments, not least on important equity issues for Hungarian society as a whole. The rationale for social inclusion and investment in services for disadvantaged or Roma children is far more compelling for central government than for local governments. Conformity with European human rights instruments, the integration of Roma children into mainstream education and care, their future employment and contribution to the public good through taxes, and less dependency on social services are all recognised by central government as important goals, but for local authorities this is often not the case. In addition, many of the local authorities are not – in terms of financial and human resources – in a position to provide the leadership, employment opportunities and communication flows necessary to resolve the multi-dimensional challenge of social inclusion.

**Types of provision**

The main characteristics of the current Hungarian care system are:

- normative support (allocated funding) from the central budget, which is match-funded from local authorities which provide financial and in-kind support to maintain services;
- relatively low (government-regulated) fees for services offered by local authorities;
- the possibility for local authorities to contract private and voluntary sector providers to ensure basic services for the population in the area;
- a relatively low participation of the private and voluntary sector in the provision of services (due to the discrepancy between the cost of delivering services and the average income level in Hungary, which makes it impossible for most families to cover the full cost of care).

It is commonly acknowledged that the desired objective is to provide a variety of services to match needs better. There have been initiatives to set up new forms of childcare services, and attempts have been made to specialise and integrate the delivery of services. However, there has been no research carried out to date to reveal the real need for childcare services for children aged between six and 14 years. Needs can be estimated only on the basis of information on the use of services.

**Public provision**

According to the current Education Law, children in Hungary begin primary school if they turn age six before 1 June of the year of enrolment.

School lessons start at 08.00 and end at 12.00–13.00 each day. Children staying on for after-school care remain at school until 16.00–18.00. The school year in Hungary starts on the first Monday of September and lasts until mid June. In addition to the 10 weeks of summer holidays, the academic year is divided by three school breaks: a one-week autumn break in November, a two-week winter break over the Christmas and New Year period, and a one-week spring break around Easter.

**Benefit system for families with children**

State childcare services are complemented by a family benefit system. Family benefits include family allowance (*családi pótlék*), child-raising support (*gyermeknevelési támogatás*), and paid leave to care for sick children (*táppénz*). Depending on the family income, parents can also receive supplemental child protection allowance (*rendzeres gyermekvédelmi támogatás*) and occasional child protection allowance (*rendkívüli gyermekvédelmi támogatás*). The elements of the family benefit system listed above are given to families with school-age or younger children. The system includes further
Childcare provision

elements exclusively for families with children under school age. These benefits are not tied to any condition: the parents can spend the allowances on whatever they prefer (food, clothes, etc), including childcare.

- Since 1 January 2005, the amount of family allowance per month is HUF 5,100\(^3\) (€20) for families with one child, HUF 6,200 (€25) per child for families with two children, HUF 7,800 (€31) per child for families with three or more children, and HUF 6,000, 7,200, and 8,400 per child for single-parent families respectively.

- Child-raising support (GYET), introduced in 1993, was designed to serve the interests of families with three or more children in their own households, as long as the youngest child is aged three to eight years. The monthly amount of benefit, irrespective of the number of children raised, is equal to the minimum pension. Parents receiving child-raising support can work part time. Full-time employment is allowed if the parent works at home.

- Paid leave to care for sick children (táppénz), available until the child’s 12th birthday: the amount is 70% of the average daily wage of the parent staying at home with the sick child.

- Supplemental child protection allowance (HUF 5,400 (€21) per child in 2005) can be given if the income per person in a family per month does not exceed the minimum old-age pension level, presently HUF 30,000 (€120).

- Occasional child protection allowance is given by local governments to families in temporary financial difficulty (due to sustained illness or unemployment of a parent, etc). Both the amount and the regularity of payment depend on the financial situation of the local government.

The family allowance is currently a universal benefit paid for children until the age of six years. After that age, eligibility for family allowance expires and is replaced by the schooling allowance. This is also universal (payable until the age of 16 years, or 20 years of age for those studying full time). It is supplemented by the child protection benefit in the case of low-income families (families with a net per capita monthly income below the minimum old-age pension). In addition, child-raising is supported through the personal income tax system. A tax credit for children was reintroduced in 1999 (the tax credit was in place in 1993–1994 and phased out as of 1995). In 2000, the level of the tax credit was raised by 30% and access to this scheme became easier. This means that if the recipient parent (either the mother or father) does not have enough income to use the full tax credit, the other parent can deduct the difference from his/her income. This measure was brought in partly to compensate families for the real decline in the value of the family allowance.

**After-school care**

Elementary schools for children aged six to 14 years are required by law to organise after-school care services for their pupils should parents request it. These services are available for all pupils, in the morning before teaching begins, and in the afternoon after teaching is over. After-school care is provided by teachers (qualified general teachers and subject specialist teachers) who work at the school and also teach regular classes in the morning, or who exclusively work during afternoon care. Children are split into groups of 15–30 pupils with the same after-school teacher (napközis tanár), and they have a choice of after-school ‘club’ activities (szakkör). The clubs are organised either by a teacher of the school or an outside adult (e.g. sport trainer, fine artist, drama teacher, etc, depending on the type of activity), or by a public organisation. At present, about 40% of primary school pupils attend after-school care, a slight increase from 1990 (see Table 4 above). Club activities are open to all school pupils, not only those in afternoon care, and fees vary from HUF 0–1000 (€0–4) per hour depending on the financial situation of the body maintaining the school.

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\(^3\) HUF 1 = €0.004, €1 = HUF 250, as at October 2005.
The social function of schools – including after-school care – is essential in compensating for children from disadvantaged families. After-school care represents a possibility (or rather an obligation) to get homework done under qualified supervision, and it thereby plays an essential role in narrowing the gap between socially disadvantaged and well-off children.

Primary education transmits primary knowledge and culture as accepted by society, and after the family it is the second most important arena of socialisation for school-age children. These functions are fulfilled not only in the morning classes, but also during a number of other activities: afternoon care, club activities, preparation for competitions, extra afternoon classes for children lagging behind, provision of meals, and so on. These services are also of great assistance for families where both parents are working. In Hungary, 65% of mothers in rural areas are employed on a full-time basis, and more than 80% of these jobs are located in urban areas.

Family day care
Family day care (családi napközi) is a relatively new service in Hungary, with the Ministry of Welfare passing the relevant regulations in 1993.

Family day care can provide care for children from birth up to 14 years of age, in the home of the care provider or in another home-like environment. The maximum number of children per provider is five, if she/he is alone; this increases to seven children, if there is an assistant present. However, it is quite common to find family day-care sites, where two licensed providers work together and the number of children thus goes up to 10–14 children. The children in family day-care homes do not attend childcare centres, kindergartens or after-school care.

In most cases day-care providers are self-employed, although it is also possible for local authorities to employ them. Although this type of childcare is not widespread enough, it would probably serve an unmet need among parents, especially in Hungary’s rural areas. According to 2003 data from the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, only 1,093 children attended this kind of service throughout the entire country (unfortunately the data does not reveal the ages of children served by this type of provision). There is no normative state support available for them, which is the main reason for their small numbers. Local authorities can support them if they choose to, but most of the time it is the parents who have to cover the full cost of care. Needless to say, the income of most families in Hungary today is not enough to pay the amount needed for childcare.

Home childcare service
Home childcare (házi gyermekfelügyelet) is provided for children from birth up to the age of 14 years during a period of time when parents need help in looking after the child and care for the child cannot be provided in other institutions such as a childcare centre for up to three year olds, kindergarten or primary school (e.g. if the child is sick). This service is available for the period of the parents’ working hours. Lone parents, parents with twins or triplets, or parents doing shift work are given priority. Usually, local authority institutes (such as childcare centres or child welfare services) offer this type of service.

Home childcare is one of the basic services offered as part of a local authority’s duty to provide childcare for the population in its area. Childcare workers are employed in such services, or staff members from childcare centres go to the child’s home if this service is requested. According to the Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities statistics available for 2003, some 38 home childcare services operated in the entire country. There is no data available for the workforce.
Childcare provision

Summer camps
Summer camps (napközis tábor) can be organised by schools with access to a recreation site (sometimes in the same town, sometimes elsewhere in the country). These sites are usually owned by the local authority where the school is located. A group of children can attend such camps for different periods of time, usually for periods of one to two weeks. The camps provide day-care and various leisure activities for children. The activities sometimes include or focus on school-related programmes such as mathematics. In these camps, it is usually the schoolteachers and/or parents who take turns and stay at the camps with the different groups of children. Summer camps are also organised by different voluntary and private sector organisations. These are not necessarily associated with schools. Due to the wide variety of organisers from different sectors (schools, business sector, public organisations), there are no comprehensive statistics available relating to summer camps. Further information on summer camps is provided in case studies 2 and 3 further below.

Elementary level art education institutions
The elementary art education system is part of Hungarian public education. Non-compulsory art classes are an option of childcare provision. The elementary level art education institutions (alapfokú művészetoktatási intézmény) are either normal elementary schools, with art departments that accept pupils from within or from outside the primary school, or independent art schools. The following art classes are offered within the state art education system: classical music, jazz, folk music, dance, fine arts, applied arts, dramatic art. The operation of the art schools or art departments within normal primary schools is regulated by the Education Act. During the academic year 2003–2004, there were a total of 10,750 registered art teachers.

At present, there are around 250,000 students enrolled in elementary art classes, and this number has been increasing over the last 10 to 15 years. Parents find art classes a useful activity for their children, for various reasons: arts contribute greatly to the development of children’s personalities and it is a useful and pleasant way of spending free time. Music lessons are the most popular activity, with about half of the children enrolled taking singing or instrumental lessons.

Children spend two to four hours a week in the art classes with qualified (college or university degree) art teachers. Tuition fees are determined by the local government, but since the range of fees is tied to a certain percentage of the teachers’ wages (and these wages are calculated according to a uniform national public employee wage chart), national differences never exceed 15–20%. Depending on the generosity of the local government as the body maintaining the institution, and the grades of the given pupil, tuition fees vary between HUF 6,000–10,000 (£24–40) per semester (better grades mean a lower fee, and vice versa). Since these fees are heavily subsidised, the state requires a higher fee if a pupil is enrolled in more than one type of art class. Parents pay HUF 26,000–40,000 (£104–160) per semester for each additional art class taken.

Sport activities
Many local governments maintain sports centres that can be used by schoolchildren for a very low fee. Children visit these sports centres either with their school (during after-school service) or as members of a sports club based in the centre. Private sports schools also exist, especially in urban areas. However, they charge much more than the state sports associations, and offer fashionable activities that are sought after by better-off parents for their children, like tennis or horse riding.

Cultural centres
Most local governments maintain cultural centres (muvelodási házak) where recreation organisers set up programmes for groups of all ages, including school-age children. The activities are partly similar to the after-school care activities: sport, dance, art classes, etc. The fee for the classes varies, depending on the financial situation of the local government: a wealthy local government might have the cultural centre charge smaller fees for children’s activities than a poorer
municipality. These activities typically take place in the afternoon and at weekends. Cultural centres also offer summer camps for children.

The Zeg-Zug cultural centre in Budapest (see case study 1 below) is a good practice example of how cultural centres should operate.

Private sector provision

The average Hungarian income level still does not reflect the full value of work (in spite of government efforts to increase salaries). As a result, some private providers charge high fees, various voluntary organisations offer childcare services, and the majority of the childcare services are maintained by local authorities.

It is difficult to obtain data about private sector childcare provision for school-age children. According to the Research Director of the National Family Policy Institute, Dr Marta Korintus, anyone can set up a business for this type of provision with a small entrepreneur’s licence; registration with the relevant authorities is not compulsory. Hence, there is no data collection in Hungary about private sector childcare. In general, private provisions exist mainly in urban areas, where there is a demand for services from more affluent families.

Private sector provision is more limited than in western countries, but is becoming more widespread, especially in Budapest and other cities. There are several private after-school services in Budapest, offering homework study, foreign language classes, sports activities, etc. Fees vary between HUF 1,000–4,000 (€4–16) per hour. The owner and director of Budai Kreatív Tanoda, a private afternoon, weekend and summer childcare service for school-age children, stated that all employees are part-time workers whose main job is teaching, and that she has no knowledge of any similar business that employs people on a full-time basis.

A wide range of activities is offered every year in thematic summer camps run by the private sector – sports (tennis, horse riding, football, etc), music, arts and crafts, etc – with prices varying between HUF 35,000–150,000 (€140–600) per week, and often organised by teachers setting up small businesses specifically for this reason.

Community/voluntary sector provision

The role of the community/voluntary sector in childcare for school-age children is minor. There are initiatives to help families, but those initiatives almost exclusively target families with small children. The most well-known foundation is the ‘Segítünk Alapítvány’ (Foundation for Help) that helps families with at least one child under the age of six years with their everyday chores through the work of volunteers.

The Hungarian non-profit sector has been developing dynamically since 1989 when it became legally possible to establish foundations and associations. Many such organisations have been set up in order to meet unsatisfied needs or at least to ease the shortage of services that resulted from over centralised state provision. However, according to Central Statistical Office data, the proportion of voluntary organisations in health, education and social services is relatively low compared to other more developed countries. The reason behind this is the state monopoly on education, childcare and health care that existed under state socialism. Although this monopoly was broken by the change of regime in 1990, non-profit service provision was unable to develop rapidly because of the lack of capital needed for investment. The role of the voluntary sector is even less significant in services aimed at children and families.
Childcare provision

Operation of provision

Fees and funding
In Hungary, the majority of the institutions providing childcare are maintained by local authorities, which is why they are mainly financed by tax revenue. One part of operating costs is received by the local authorities responsible from the central budget in the form of normative support or allocated funding, another part of the costs is financed from the revenues of local authorities, and a contribution from the beneficiaries themselves completes the total costs (e.g. meal costs are paid by parents). The contributions are fixed sums, but they cannot exceed a stated percentage of the recipient’s monthly income. The ratio of the three sources can be different, depending on the type of the benefits and on the financial situation of the local authority in question. Private insurance schemes are not involved in the financing system.

There is a difference between the level of users’ fees in the governmental and in the non-governmental sectors. As described above, the cost of childcare is financed mainly from three major sources: normative support (allocated funding) from central government, local authority funding and users’ fees.

- The government sets the normative support in the annual budget for each type of service in any given year. It is provided to fund the services (such as after-school care) and not the tasks themselves (such as childcare). There are services (such as family day care) for which there is no normative support.

- Local authority funding usually completes the financing. The level of the local authority contribution depends on the amount needed for different services and on the decision of the local authority council.

Some improvements have occurred in educational funding since 1998: the minimal normative support to local governments was increased, more funding was provided to weaker local governments maintaining schools, and there was a marked increase in central funds allocated for particular government objectives, e.g. for quality improvement or to enhance the enrolment of disadvantaged groups.

In the childcare sector, however, central government grants underwrite only 25–30% of operational costs, with local government taking charge of 55–65% and parents contributing approximately 20%. Since teachers’ wages are paid by local governments, the situation has been further exacerbated by the 50% public employee pay rise of 2002, which increased the expenses of local governments by almost 30%.

The normative grant for after-school care is currently HUF 20,000 (€80) per child per academic year. There are no sources stating the overall costs of after-school care, as this service is an integrated part of the elementary school system. However, there is a study by Daniel Horn entitled How much a child costs? that attempts to calculate the actual costs of primary school services. According to the study, actual costs of after-school care were HUF 43,000 (€172) per child per month in 2001, more than twice as much as the normative grant for after-school care which amounted to HUF 15,000 (€60). Horn states that, due to the complexity of primary school education and care, the actual level of cost is probably not exact and should be treated only as a guide (Horn, 2004).

The most important financial source is the budget of the local authorities, but the local authorities of many small settlements are in a relatively poor financial situation. Due to higher unemployment, the proportion of working women in rural areas is lower than the national average, and hence the need for after-school care is also lower. As extended family members tend to live closer to each other in rural than in urban areas, family ties are consequently stronger and informal family care is more widespread in villages than in large towns. At present, there is no data collection about the need for after-school care in Hungary, but according to those interviewed for this report, supply generally matches demand.
The majority of the population in Hungary would not be in a financial position to cover the full cost of childcare services without state support. Salaries are still quite low compared to standard salaries in western EU Member States. Families with children and pensioners are among the poorest in Hungarian society. Income per head in families with children is 66% of that in working families without children.

**Content and hours of provision**

Childcare services are offered by kindergartens for children between the ages of three and six/seven years. The mandatory school age in Hungary is six years, and kindergarten is compulsory for five-year olds as preparation for school.

After-school care (*iskolai napközi*) is usually offered by elementary schools. Teachers stay with the children and organise leisure and sports activities for the afternoons. The after-school care providers are qualified general teachers and subject specialist teachers. Some of these teachers work exclusively for the after-school care service, but some of them also teach regular morning classes. In the academic year 2003–2004, of the 3,748 primary schools in Hungary, some 3,329 offered after-school service for children aged six to 10 years (88.8%), 1,365 schools offered service for children aged 11-14 years (36.4%), and the rest of the schools did not provide any after-school service for their pupils. A lack of data collection prevents a determination of whether there was no demand for after-school care in the schools where it was not offered, or whether local governments could not afford this type of service despite demands from parents.

School lessons start at 08.00, but the schools usually open at 07.00, so that parents starting work early can leave their child at school before lessons begin. The last lesson ends between 12.00 and 13.00, after which the children are looked after by the after-school care teachers, who take them to the dining hall and care for those staying at school in the afternoon. After-school care includes lunch, outside play on the school grounds, homework and various activities (arts and crafts, singing, dancing, etc).

After-school care is offered throughout the academic year, from the first Monday of September to mid June. During the school breaks there are generally no provisions for childcare as the schools are closed. However, in Budapest and in large towns, some schools (in Budapest one school in every district) remain open for those families that cannot arrange for childcare during the school holidays. Parents only have to pay for meals, with the rest of the cost being covered by a state normative grant and the local government that maintains the school.

During the summer, day-care camps (*napközis tábort*) are organised in most schools. Financially well-off local governments finance a greater number of summer camps, while those with a restricted budget offer fewer camps or simply none at all.
Occupations in childcare

After-school care teacher
The after-school care teacher generally works after school hours and looks after children whose parents work at these times. Their job is not to teach, but to help children in preparing homework, to play with them and to take them to eat in the school’s dining hall. Therefore, their task is more care work with a greater emphasis on activity aspects. Otherwise, these teachers are elementary schoolteachers with the same qualification (college level) and basic salaries as regular teachers. This system has its advantages and its drawbacks. It is a great achievement and uncommon in OECD countries that after-school care is provided by such highly qualified teachers. At the same time, as these teachers often combine afternoon care with regular morning teaching, they can be tired by the afternoon and not very inventive with regard to children’s activities.

The role of the after-school care teacher is not a separate profession. Elementary schoolteachers acquire a college degree after four years of education in teacher training colleges. They work in an elementary school after-school care service (általános iskolai napköz).

Recreation organiser
The role of the recreation organiser (szabadidő szervező) is to organise children’s leisure time after and outside of school hours. They do not look after the children but organise different programmes (such as trips, visits to museums, etc) and activities in which groups of children can participate with their day-care teacher. They are required to have a recreation organiser degree (four or five years of education) from teacher training colleges or universities and their role is considered a profession. Recreation organisers generally work in an elementary school after-school care service. Act 1997/79 requires local governments to employ recreation organisers in the schools that they maintain if more than 300 children are enrolled at the school. Recreation organisers may also work in summer camps organised by schools or in cultural centres maintained by local governments.

Art teacher in elementary art education institution
It is the job of an art teacher (művész pedagógus) working in elementary art education institutions to give art lessons (music, dance, fine and applied arts, drama) to a child or group of children enrolled in these institutions. They are required to have a university or college degree in art education.

Family day-care provider
The family day-care provider (családi napközi ellátást nyújtó személy) offers day care for children from birth up to 14 years of age in the provider’s own home or in a suitable home-like environment. No formal qualifications are required to perform this job. In general, the provider has to be a suitable person; as a minimum requirement, they must have children of their own and should have a clean police and health record. Attendance of a 40-hour course (covering issues of safety, good quality environment, child development, running a small business, etc) is required to obtain the necessary licence to provide such a service.

Special needs educator
The special needs educator (gyógypedagógus) works in institutes where special needs children are cared for. Their job is to make sure these children participate in the kind of activities required for their development. The tasks are to work with the children directly, either individually or in small groups, and also to work with the staff who provide care for the children. Most of the time the special needs educator plans the intervention, and the teacher or care provider puts this into practice on a daily basis. These educators must have a four-year college degree to find work among the institutions involved in care for children. The following employ special needs educators most frequently: respite homes for children (gyermekek átmeneti otthona), respite homes for families (családok átmeneti otthona), children’s homes.
Family care worker
The family care worker (családgondozó) does not provide personal care, but works as an organiser, provides information, and refers families to institutions or professionals for help.

They are required to have a university or college degree in social education, in special needs education, psychopedagogy, psychology, kindergarten teaching, teaching, theology, medicine, or mental health. They can work in a respite home for families, in foster care (neveloszüloi ellátás), a children’s home, a child welfare service, or a child protection service.

Childminders
Most interviewees could give an example of childminding (collecting children from school, taking them to afternoon sport, music, activities, etc, or looking after them in the parents’ home) among friends and relatives, but no one could point to a database on or to statistics about this type of service. Some childminders continue to work in the black/grey economy: they have not registered with the relevant authorities, they do not issue bills for their services, and they do not pay taxes on their income. It would be important in Hungary to assess the demand for childminders for school-age children, and to create the necessary legislative and professional environment for this service.

Working hours
After-school care teachers are employed full time; their weekly working time amounts to 23 hours. Recreation organisers are also employed full time; their weekly working time amounts to 38 hours. Art teachers in elementary level art institutions are employed full time; their weekly working time amounts to 20 hours (Act 79 of 1993, appendix I, part 3).

Salaries of childcare workers
Changes in society and the ongoing developments in the structure of services within the last 10 years have raised questions concerning the scaling up of services, quality and quality assurance, development and inspection, the status and quality of the workforce, and user participation. Regulations issued during the 1990s concerning childcare, child protection and social welfare also address most of these issues.

What is still very problematic is the status and salaries of the workforce, especially in the area of care. Childcare has always been considered a low-level, poorly-paid job in Hungary. The professionalisation of care work has started with new forms of education which provide the new and modern knowledge necessary for childcare work. However, better salaries are a goal or condition that cannot be attained easily, and as long as young people are able to earn three or four times more in other sectors, it will be difficult to raise the status of care work in general, including childcare. People working in institutions providing care maintained by county/local authorities are public employees, whose legal status is regulated by the Public Employees Act. Those workers employed in education and the health system are also public employees.

Since the non-profit and private sectors are not well represented in the area of care, an overwhelming majority of workers in all occupational groups are public employees. The salary of these employees is based on the public employees’ wage chart, in which their wage is differentiated in accordance with their qualification and the time they have spent working in the public sector. These workers usually hold permanent contracts. However, salaries of public employees are very low. Low wages are quite damaging to the prestige of the sector and its ability to attract a good quality labour force.
When asked about compensation levels, interviewees uniformly responded that for childcare workers they are inadequate. In the case of teachers it transpires that every third year when teachers’ wages jump into a higher category, the wage gap between junior teachers and national average wages is wider than that between senior teachers and national average salaries.

Pay levels are too low within the childcare sector to compete with other services in the private sector, and consequently many people with good skills leave for other sectors. As a result of a reform in September 2002, schoolteachers and kindergarten teachers received a 50% salary increase, but the salaries of childcare workers are still lower than that of the private sector. As a result, the childcare workforce is ageing, which is not desirable in a profession dealing with children.

In addition, the status of childcare workers is quite low in Hungary. Kindergarten teachers are trained at college level. Yet, although they work significantly longer hours, their salaries are lower. According to the Hungarian Background Report (OECD, 2002), ‘kindergarten teachers, as the lowest link in the institutional system of public education, have the lowest rank both in terms of salaries and professional recognition’. This may imply that the foundation-level education – a key level of education for disadvantaged groups – is still underestimated in Hungary. In these circumstances, it is not unreasonable to foresee future recruitment problems or the transfer of currently practising teachers into more remunerative activities. On the other hand, salary pressures may lead to reluctance among controlling institutions to expand kindergarten and after-school service access, and may even trigger a further wave of ‘rationalisations’, such as stopping services.

Successive governments have all declared that re-establishing the status of childcare workers is an important goal, but that it can only be achieved with consistent, long-term measures. The present Hungarian government has also declared its commitment to recognising and supporting the important role of teachers and other educational professionals in society. This commitment was solidified with the September 2002 legislation that included a 50% wage increase for teachers, i.e. HUF 100,000 (€400) a month and minimum wage for those holding a university or college degree.

Further support planned includes a net increase in the wages of instructors and financial support for training scholarships to foster innovation and research.

**Job creation initiatives**

Since the supply of teachers in Hungary is greater than the demand for them, the relevant ministries do not see a need for job creation initiatives in this field. Afternoon care teachers are regarded by colleagues, parents, and in many cases even by themselves as ‘lower-rank’ teachers, but despite this there is no shortage of applicants for these types of jobs. The number of students entering higher education, including teacher training colleges, has been increasing steadily over the last 15 years. The majority of students with a teacher’s degree find jobs in other sectors of the economy, but there are still a large number who wish or do not have a choice other than to stay in primary school education (including after-school care). Similarly, there is also a surplus of recreation organisers in Hungary.

**Recruitment of childcare workers**

The sharp decline in the economy in the early 1990s took its toll on the quality of childcare and education staff in Hungary. In particular, the low pay of workers in the childcare sector (kindergarten and primary school teachers, recreation organisers) appears to be having a major impact on current recruitment. In the first decade after transition this was not an issue. The drastic decline in the number of children and thus in employment opportunities meant that trained childcare workers were in competition for jobs and could easily be recruited. There are still a large number of applicants whenever there is an employment opportunity for an after-school care provider or recreation organiser, but the professional quality of applicants is often far from satisfactory. During the three-month trial period (compulsory before signing a permanent employment contract) the applicants often prove to be short of the skills required for the job and the vacancy has to be readvertised.
Teachers interviewed complained that career possibilities are very limited in the childcare sector. Management positions are very scarce compared with the number of teaching posts, and teaching in a teacher training institution is only available to those with a research background and publications to their name. In Budapest and a few larger towns, there is demand from more affluent families for afternoon classes (foreign languages, sport) and summer camps and teachers can set up their own businesses to supplement low wages. But many teachers feel this is forced upon them in order to provide for their families and would prefer to have a single full-time job with an adequate salary and an improved social status.

Qualifications required for childcare workers

A few decades ago teachers without qualifications were employed in Hungarian public education in relatively high numbers, due to two demographic waves created by generations born in the mid 1950s and the mid 1970s. As the number of children decreased from the second half of the 1970s, teachers without qualifications gradually dropped out of the system. Today, only 1.2% of the teachers in public education are employed without qualifications, mainly in underdeveloped rural settlements where suitably qualified teachers cannot be found.

Table 5: Types of childcare workers and qualifications required

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Childcare workers</th>
<th>Required qualification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After-school care teacher</td>
<td>College degree after four years of education at teacher training colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation organiser</td>
<td>College degree (four years of education) in colleges offering a specialisation in recreation organising. A university-level recreation organiser degree can also be obtained in Hungary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family day-care provider</td>
<td>No qualification is required. In general, the provider has to be a suitable person (as described in the legislation). As a minimum, she/he has to have children of her/his own and should have a clean police and health record. Attendance of a 40-hour course (covering issues of safety, good quality environment, child development, running a small business, etc) is required to obtain the necessary licence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs educator</td>
<td>College degree in a college for special needs education (four-year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family care worker</td>
<td>University or college degree in social education, in special needs education, psychopedagogy, psychology, kindergarten teaching, teaching, theology, medicine, or mental health, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childminder</td>
<td>No qualification required for childminders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hungarian Ministry of Education

Training and qualifications for after-school care teachers

To become an after-school care teacher, four years of mostly academic and some practical training in a teacher training college is required. When applying to the college, students either specialise in lower primary school teaching or choose two speciality subjects if they intend to teach in upper primary school. Apart from the extensive study of these two subjects, students also follow courses in psychology, pedagogy, methodology, history of education, new information and communication techniques, school administration and management, dealing with children with learning and/or behavioural difficulties, new forms of teacher-parent communication, and dealing with ethnic minorities (such as Roma children). Practical training consists of summer camps, visiting and reporting on primary school classes in the first two years, three weeks teaching practice in the third year, and six weeks teaching practice in the final year.
There are 16 colleges in Hungary for training kindergarten teachers and/or teachers for lower secondary school education (children aged six to 10 years). Out of the 65 higher education institutions in Hungary, 33 offered some kind of teacher training in 2002–2003. According to government decree 277/1997 of 22 December 1997, all teachers (including after-school care teachers) employed in public education must fulfil 120 hours of training every seven years. Accredited training courses are offered by regional methodological centres, higher education institutions, public education institutions, private businesses and non-profit associations and are paid for by the employers. The list of training courses that can be chosen by teachers includes courses on after-school care. Apart from passing necessary regulations and developing a financial scheme, an institution responsible for providing professional support was established (Methodology and Information Centre for In-Service Teacher Training – PTMIK), along with a professional body responsible for quality assurance (Accreditation Board of In-Service Training). The educational administration became responsible for the continuous monitoring of the system of in-service teacher training required by law. The introduction of the new in-service training system created a supply market. Higher education institutions and educational service-providers offer almost 60% of all properly licensed and accredited in-service training programmes.
Demand for childcare

To date, no surveys have been carried out relating to the provision needed for school-age children. According to the Head of Department of Statistics at the Ministry of Education, Judit Kozma, there is no data collection about additional needs for after-school care. There is also no data collection relating to the demand for childminders or family day-care providers. As a result, no one is completely aware of the exact needs for childcare for school-age children in Hungary. The situation most likely varies between Budapest and the provinces, and between towns and rural settlements. There is a greater childcare need in urban areas where more women tend to work than in villages, whereas in rural areas extended families live closer to each other and childcare is often provided by family members (grandparents, aunts, etc).

Provision for after-school care

Interviews with stakeholders revealed that there is a large demand from schools for special needs educators, psychologists, recreation organisers and assistant teachers. Lack of financial means prevents local governments from employing such professionals. Several interviewees also revealed a need for more cooperation between kindergartens and primary schools, to be able to give more help to ‘problem children’. Group sizes in after-school care are often larger than in regular school classes (up to 30 children), which makes the job of the afternoon care teacher even more difficult. Smaller group sizes with more teachers would lead to less-stressed teachers and a better environment for more creative activities. Several interviewees suggested that recreation organisers should share the task of after-school care with teachers and that the training for the two professions should converge. Creating the necessary legislative and professional environment for childminders would most likely increase the demand for their services and their numbers.

Tackling employment gaps in the childcare sector

While there have been encouraging, although slight, increases in overall labour force participation and employment rates in recent years, levels remain well below the leading EU countries in this regard. The Hungarian government intends to encourage the creation and filling of jobs with skill requirements appropriate for the inactive population. Appropriate measures could see more women being employed in the childcare sector. The government could also increase incentives for childminders to take up official employment, so as to reduce grey economy activities and widen the tax base. Recently introduced measures focus on reducing the substantial employer contributions for low-paid workers in order to boost demand. In particular, the fixed component of employers’ healthcare contributions adds excessively to labour costs at the lower end of the job market and has contributed to the poor development of part-time work. The authorities have decided to make certain groups exempt from paying this contribution, including certain categories of part-time workers, and they aim to phase out this fixed contribution from 2006.

Employment shortages in childcare

In general there are no shortages in the Hungarian childcare sector, and jobs are relatively easy to fill. The only shortage that should be highlighted is that of after-school care teachers in some rural areas of the country. This shortage could be eliminated by creating attractive working conditions for teachers working in rural areas (e.g. higher wages, housing subsidies).

Teachers’ unemployment is relatively low in Hungary (2%) compared to the 6.8% national unemployment rate, and has been decreasing since 2000. The rate of unemployment among teachers is highest among upper-level primary school teachers (teaching grades five to eight), but is also above average for kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers at lower grades. Secondary school teachers have a below-average unemployment rate compared to other teachers.
Care for Roma and minority children

The number of Roma people in Hungary is about 600,000 (6% of the total population), and they are mainly concentrated along a southwest–northeast zone of the country, including Budapest and the underdeveloped southwestern and northeastern rural regions. As mentioned previously, much debate has recently centred around education and care equity issues with the media drawing attention to the highly selective features of the Hungarian education system. The differentiation of institutions and programmes is already noticeable in lower cycles of education. This does not really broaden the available range of programmes, but rather increases the selectivity of the system (starting at kindergarten). In general, the institutional programmes do not follow a modular structure: therefore, low-achievers may drop out of the system without getting a proper education or a professional qualification to assist them in entering the labour market.

In Hungary, student performance is strongly influenced by the cultural capital of families. In Hungary’s selective education system, social inequalities are reflected in the path of progression as well as in access to the different levels and programmes of education. The range of local educational institutions accurately mirrors the social structure of the communities. According to various studies, if there are sizeable differences in educational attainment and income in the local community, the range of local institutions tends to be characterised by selectivity, the frequent use of entrance exams, and by various forms of segregation. Such differences are noticeable in the access to different educational programmes, and in the access to high quality educational and afternoon care services.

It is the responsibility of central government to achieve fair outcomes for Roma and other vulnerable children. Today, the government is providing both leadership and funding to meet this goal. However, the implementation of social inclusion and antidiscrimination policy is still the responsibility of local governments. Regrettably, many local governments, for electoral and practical reasons, do not make social inclusion a priority issue. An underlying reason may be that the rationale for investment in Roma children is more persuasive for central government than for local authorities as mentioned above. In addition, many of the local authorities are not in a position — with respect to human resources — to provide the leadership, employment opportunities and communication flows that are necessary to resolve this challenge. In addition, there is no effective sanction to oblige local governments to do more than just observe the minimum legal requirements.

In Hungary, minority groups are well protected in principle; the Minorities Law of 1993 is considered to be one of Europe’s most comprehensive charters of individual and collective minority rights. Through this law, Hungarian minorities have, and implement, rights to self-government in settlements and districts (including in the large cities) where they are gathered in significant numbers. Likewise, minority children are given priority status in the law and thus many advantages. Centres with minority children can claim special normative grants for language or, in the case the Roma minority, for the transmission of Roma culture, the fostering of traditions, or compensatory Hungarian language activities. Such centres are also in receipt of normative grants for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and can now claim grants for integrated education.

Several governmental committees and institutions exist with a focus on minority issues, a State Secretary for Roma-specific issues sits in the Prime Minister’s cabinet and, within the Ministry of Education, a Commissioner for Disadvantaged and Roma children has been appointed from the Roma community. Among the special measures introduced in recent years to allow better access for Roma children to kindergarten and primary schools are the following:

- an additional normative grant from central government to school maintainers who develop a plan for children needing special educational support or special teaching procedures was terminated in 2003. Since then the additional normative grant is allocated to kindergartens and schools, which develop a programme supporting inclusive education;
- an extra grant for kindergartens that transmit Roma culture, foster Roma traditions or propose compensatory classes in Hungarian;
Employment developments in childcare services for school-age children: Hungary

- a free meal policy for all disadvantaged children from 2003;
- various initiatives funded through the EU Phare programme, such as kindergarten assistant training and Roma cultural training;
- from 2003, the phasing out of compensation classes in which Roma children predominate (700 elementary schools currently run such classes and receive special funding). In addition, in the newly envisaged integrated school, the mainstream children must learn about the culture of the local minority.

Recent studies have revealed real improvements in Roma kindergarten enrolment. However, there are serious barriers to overcome – linked to history, employment and socioeconomic status – both from within the Roma community itself and from the community as a whole.

Serious barriers still exist, which prevent access for vulnerable children to appropriate childcare services:

- the low socioeconomic status of Roma families, and their predominant location either in poor city districts or in underdeveloped rural settlements;
- the administrative gap that exists between central government equity aims and the capacity and interest of local governments to implement them;
- the high proportion of children from a Roma or otherwise disadvantaged background who are directed into special education unnecessarily;
- the large number of Roma and disadvantaged children in segregated ‘catch-up’ programmes in primary schools;
- the relatively late entry of Roma children into kindergarten at the age of five years and their retention there until the age of seven years.

The Józsefvárosi Tanoda Foundation provides learning and leisure activities for Roma children (see case study 3 below). The foundation has created activities specially designed to address the specific challenges that Roma children may encounter and to provide educational activities to meet their needs. It is a good practice example of how childcare programmes can be adapted to cater for special needs pupils.

In 1999, the Budapest Public Foundation for the Development of Public Education launched the Mentor Programme for the progress of Roma students. The programme’s aim was to help Roma students in grades seven and eight continue their studies in secondary school. In achieving this goal, the individual mentors provide after-school lessons to a maximum of five students. As a reward, teachers receive a monthly grant for each of their students. The Budapest Public Foundation gives financial support according to the number of students taking part in extracurricular activities; these funds may be put to best use at the discretion of the teachers.

The aim of the Roma Integration Programme of the Ec-Pec Foundation is to help disadvantaged Roma students achieve reasonable results in school. To achieve this goal, they have devised a special development programme, allowing students who are lagging behind in their studies due to their socioeconomic disadvantages to perform better in normal schooling conditions, regardless of whether they study in special school types or in the small-sized remedial education groups of normal school programmes. Roma teaching assistants support the work of teachers in the schools participating in the programme. The two-year pilot phase of the programme has proved that at least half of all Roma students attending special schools are able to meet normal curricular requirements if they are given appropriate development and care opportunities.

More information on the Phare programme is available at http://ec.europa.eu/comm/enlargement/pas/phare/
Defining affordable childcare

Educational policy in Hungary (including after-school care policy) must deal with cost-effectiveness within the overall dimensions of quality, efficiency and equity. This complex approach is reflected by the priorities of the Ministry of Education. The priorities of the ministry’s mid-term strategy for developing public education (including after-school care) are as follows:

- laying down the foundations for lifelong learning by developing key competencies;
- reducing the inequalities in education;
- developing the quality of education;
- supporting the development of the teaching profession;
- promoting the use of information and communications technology (ICT);
- enhancing the physical conditions of education;
- improving the cost-efficiency and management of public education.

Due to the wide range of income levels, regional inequalities, and needs, it is a difficult task to define affordable childcare. Interviewees uniformly declared, however, that the desired quality and quantity of childcare is not affordable for the majority of families. Children and parents welcome more lower-priced or free after-school club activity (many such activities have been cancelled due to a lack of funds at the Dr Földi János Primary School and Elementary Art Education Institution, Hajdúhadház), while others would like a comprehensive database of childminders who are available during the daytime and evenings.

Interviewees listed the following features of good quality childcare: the carer or teacher takes into account the particular requirements of each age-group cared for; they take into account the range of interests of the children; there is a high-quality infrastructure (buildings, materials); the well-balanced and loving personality of the carer; small groups of children (ideally not more than 10 children per carer at the same time).

Requirements for affordable and high quality childcare

The creation of affordable and high quality childcare services in Hungary faces several key challenges:

- to expand access to childcare for Roma children, children from disadvantaged backgrounds, children from rural areas and special needs children;
- to improve pre-service training, and provide adequate salaries and career prospects so as to retain qualified staff and maintain quality in the system;
- to maintain and improve after-school care facilities and staffing levels;
- to create a comprehensive database with detailed and aggregated data and indicators accessible by the public and in particular by the actors in public education and the care sector (government, local governments, institutions, researchers, experts);
- to make data automatically and easily accessible to the public. At present, some of the education and care data from the Ministry of Education and Central Statistical Office presented in this report are not public.

All these items, except the last one, would require substantial investment in the system.
Poverty is a multi-dimensional problem, and its reduction requires multi-dimensional solutions. To break the poverty cycle endemic in Roma communities, attention should be paid to wider issues, such as regional development, community resources, employment opportunities, primary health care, social support, income transfers and housing policies. To achieve this, more coordination between government departments is necessary, perhaps guided by a strong, permanent agency, to ensure that early-learning programmes and childcare for Roma children – not least in the Roma settlements – take place within a general framework of anti-poverty, primary health and community development policies. Experience also shows that community development is most successful when controlled by community members. Therefore, it has proven to be vital to consult Roma personnel and employ them at all levels of management and service delivery.

Teachers and local government employees stated in interviews that the ‘short-sightedness’ of national politics prevents new programmes from being finished and makes the system very unstable. None of the democratically-elected governments have been re-elected by voters since the first democratic elections in 1990. A new government often means the cancellation of programmes started by the previous one and changes of public employees at all levels. The latest parliamentary elections in Hungary took place in May 2006. Some of the childcare stakeholders are afraid of the large changes that will surely be forthcoming in the event of a new government being elected next spring.

Communication and cooperation should be improved between different levels of institutions; during the interviews, representatives of every level complained about the levels above and below them. For example, a common complaint from local governments is that central government assigns tasks but does not provide the necessary funding to carry them out. Another criticism from lower levels is that the central government does not take their opinions and suggestions into account during the enactment process and that it is often impossible to observe legislation.

The ‘After-School Care Section’ of the Hungarian Pedagogical Society compiled a feasibility study in December 2002 entitled Development of after-school care for a fair chance. The Ministry of Education did not follow its recommendations for financial reasons. The section would find the following plans beneficial for the after-school care of school-age children:

- establishing close cooperation between kindergartens and after-school care services;
- compiling a reference list of publications concerning after-school care;
- developing pre-service and in-service training for after-school care teachers;
- improving financial, infrastructural and personnel conditions of after-school care;
- introducing a minimum of 30 minutes for obligatory daily sport and play activities in after-school care, preferably in cooperation with local sports clubs and parents;
- promoting equal opportunities for ‘problem children’ through after-school care;
- decreasing the fluctuation among and improving the status of after-school care teachers;
- initiating research activity on after-school care at the National Public Education Institute (the institute has yet to carry out any research on this topic);
- adding foreign language learning opportunities to after-school care programmes.
Case studies

Case study 1: Zeg-Zug Children's House

Organisational background
The Zeg-Zug Children's House is a state-maintained centre offering leisure activities for children of all ages. It is a public-private childcare provision operating in the 14th cultural district of Budapest. In total, there are seven employees in the children's house: five women and two men. Of the seven employees, two of them (one male and one female) deal with the organisation of clubs and programmes, there is a director, a financial manager, an information manager, and two cleaners.

Description of the initiative
The majority of local governments in Hungary maintain cultural centres for the benefit of the public. The system is similar throughout the country, but regional differences (i.e. financial resources) are evident in the range of programmes offered and prices among cultural centres. The local government of the 14th district of Budapest (population of the district: 120,000 people) maintains two cultural centres, one of which offers mainly adult programmes, while the other, the Zeg-Zug Children's House, offers activities for children. About three quarters of the programmes offered target children, mainly those of school age, and there are also a few activities for children from birth to six years old. The centre is situated in a middle-class neighbourhood and families living nearby can afford and look for quality children's programmes. The Zeg-Zug House offers a wide variety of after-school and weekend activities for school-age children.

The operational costs are mainly covered by the local government (75%), and the remaining 25% comes from the revenues of the house in the form of club fees. Leaders of the children's clubs are small entrepreneurs who sign a contract with the house for a period of a few months to run the club activities, with the revenues (club fees paid by parents) split equally between the house and the entrepreneur. The community and voluntary sector does not play any role in financing the house; on the contrary, the house occasionally provides space for public organisations without charging a fee for using the facility.
Good practice
Children’s club membership fees (to be paid by parents) are shown in the following table:

Table 6: Children’s membership fees for Zeg-Zug Children’s House

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration (minutes)</th>
<th>Number of events per week</th>
<th>Price/Event Hungarian Forint</th>
<th>Price/Minute Hungarian Forint/Euro</th>
<th>Price/Month Hungarian Forint/Euro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classical ballet</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>13/0.05</td>
<td>4,800/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acrobatic rock &amp; roll</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>8.3/0.03</td>
<td>4,000/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting for beginners</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>8.75/0.035</td>
<td>4,200/16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting – advanced</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>8.75/0.035</td>
<td>4,200/16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karate</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>8.3/0.03</td>
<td>4,000/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>5/0.02</td>
<td>4,800/19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and crafts</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>8.3/0.03</td>
<td>4,000/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz dance</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>16.7/0.06</td>
<td>3,000/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids’ aerobics</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>16.7/0.06</td>
<td>3,000/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballroom dancing for beginners</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>12.5/0.05</td>
<td>6,000/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballroom dancing – advanced</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>12.5/0.05</td>
<td>6,000/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving writing and spelling skills (for 8 –10 year olds)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>12.5/0.05</td>
<td>6,000/24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga for kids</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>12.5/0.05</td>
<td>3,000/12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hungarian Ministry of Education

According to the programme organiser interviewed, professional control is theoretically exercised by the local government, but in practice complete freedom is given to the house in designing and running its programmes. The reason for this is that the local government’s Education and Culture Department concentrates mainly on education matters, and control over cultural centres is not a priority concern for the department.

The house continuously monitors the demand for its programmes and the range of activities offered is altered if there is a change in demand, provided the necessary infrastructural and financial assets necessary are available. The activities are adapted for children of different ages and abilities. The house cooperates closely with the Association of Visually Impaired People and, at present, there is an acting group for blind people operating in the house.

The employees of the house are public sector employees paid by the local government; wages are determined according to the public servants’ salary chart, and they receive a small additional income from the revenues of the house.

While there would be demand for more groups in certain activities (e.g. dance classes), and also for new types of activities, unfortunately the house cannot always meet such new demands, for two reasons: first, there is no option to extend the house due to the proximity of buildings on adjacent plots; second, the ideal solution would be to open a third cultural centre within the district, but the local government has other priorities for its budget.
Case studies

Further information
Contact: Mr János Kiss, Programme organiser; Ms Hella Hegedüs, Director; Dr Ildikó Varjúné Fekete, Deputy head of department, Department of Education and Culture, 14th district local government
Email: zegzughaz@freemail.hu; hivatal@zuglo.hu
Website: http://zeg-zug.uw.hu
Address: Hermina út 3, 1146 Budapest
Sources: Interviews with János Kiss, Programme organiser and Dr Ildikó Varjúné Fekete

Case study 2: József Attila Primary School

Organisational background
After-school care is such an integral part of primary education in Hungary that it is treated by the relevant authorities more as education than care. The József Attila Primary School is an eight-grade primary school where pupils are admitted to grade one at age six/seven years. Junior grades are grades one to four for pupils aged six to 10 years, and senior grades are grades five to eight for pupils aged 11 to 14 years. The number of pupils at the József Attila Primary School is 235 children (aged six to 14 years). There are 41 staff members, all of whom are employed full time (31 teachers, and 10 other staff – administration, cleaning, porter, janitor, etc). The work of the school principal is assisted by two deputy principals, one for management affairs and one for educational affairs – a common distribution of leadership tasks in Hungarian schools. School classes start at 08.00, but the school opens for the arrival of children at 07.00.

Description of the initiative
The school offers a wide range of activities to its pupils. The relatively good financial situation of the local government that maintains the school enables it to provide many activities for free. In many schools, after-school care and club activities are scarce, and in some cases (rural areas) no afternoon activities are on offer.

Good practice
More than 90% of the pupils have lunch at school. Pupils from families with three or more children or from families where the parents’ income is below a certain level have free lunch financed by the state. The number of pupils attending after-school service is considerably higher than the national average, with 50% of those in years one to four (national average in 2003–2004 academic year was 34%) and 25% in years five to eight (national average in 2003–2004 academic year was 4%).

The after-school care teacher takes over the children directly after their last school lesson. After-school care includes lunch, outside play on the school grounds, homework and a variety of activities (arts and crafts, singing, dancing). Activities end at 16.00, but pupils who are not picked up by parents at 16.00 stay with a teacher and play until 17.00 and with a teaching assistant until 18.00.

After lunch there is playtime for the children, then the groups sit down to do their homework. Each child works on their homework independently, with help from the teacher if necessary. The teacher checks the written homework of each child. After the homework is done it is time for group activities. On Fridays, no homework is done during after-school care as the groups go to theatre or cinema instead.

One Friday afternoon of every month is ‘open day’: the library, computer room and gymnasium are open to all enrolled...
Children and their parents.

The school offers the following after-class club activities to its pupils:

- ballet;
- karate;
- basketball;
- football;
- school choir;
- media club;
- trekking club;
- chemistry club;
- drama group (four groups operate for the different ages of children, organised by an external foundation);
- music therapy for children with behavioural and learning difficulties (organised by a Protestant church association).

All activities, except the first two, are free for the children. The ballet and karate lessons are held by outside trainers who charge HUF 400 (€1.60) per lesson for karate and HUF 500 (€2) per lesson for ballet.

According to written sources and interviews, the range of activities offered at the József Attila Primary School, and especially the fact that most of them are free, is far ahead of the national average. Most local governments, being responsible for primary schools, cannot afford or are unwilling to pay schoolteachers for their afternoon work, and consequently many schools, especially in the provinces, do not offer afternoon club activities to children. Even in the József Attila Primary School children and parents would welcome further types of afternoon sports activities, but the local government cannot afford to pay more for sports personnel.

After-school care teachers work 23 hours per week, and have 46 days of holidays per year. The salary is the same as that of normal schoolteachers, according to the public employees’ salary chart: teachers with a college degree receive HUF 100,000 (€400) per month before tax in the first year of employment, HUF 142,000 (€570) per month before tax in the tenth year of employment, and HUF 202,000 (€800) per month before tax in the twentieth year of employment (HUF 107,000, HUF 165,000 and HUF 232,000 (€428, €660, €928) respectively with a university degree). The deputy director and the after-school care teacher interviewed expressed their opinion that smaller groups in after-school care would be more efficient (current group sizes are 25–30 children) and if the local government could spend more on wages, more pupils would attend sports activities.

In terms of after-class activities, the local government of the 14th district is quite generous with the primary schools in the area: the local government distributed 700 season-tickets for the zoo among primary schools, so teachers can take the children to Budapest’s zoo for free. The local government owns a sport and recreation centre where during the day for a small fee, local children are taught swimming and how to play tennis and during the evenings and weekends the tennis courts, swimming pool and gymnasium at the centre are open to the public for a normal fee.

The 14th district municipality also owns two properties that are made available for various activities for children of school age. In Soltvadkert (about 80 kilometres south of Budapest) and Békásmegyer (in the northern part of Budapest...
along the Danube) the buildings and surrounding gardens owned are suitable for summer day camps (children return home at night). The only fee children need to pay is for meals, as is the case for after-school care. These camps are very popular among parents since they represent an affordable and quality childcare solution for the summer weeks when they have to work and cannot look after their children.

Further information
Email: alt.iskola@jozsefattila.zuglo.net
Telephone: (36) 1 467 09 13
Sources: Interviews with Ms Mária Csermendyné Rapatyi, Deputy Director for education issues (including after-school care services) and Ms Gáborné Márton, after-school care teacher

Case study 3: ‘Józsefvárosi Tanoda’ Foundation – Learning and leisure activities for Roma children

Organisational background
The name ‘tanoda’ means ‘a place for learning’. Józsefváros is one of the 23 districts of Budapest with a high proportion of Roma people (30%) out of a total population of 120,000 people. The foundation operates in a large rented private apartment (180 square metres). It was founded in 1997 by a small group who dedicated themselves to the successful integration of Roma children into mainstream society while keeping their Roma identity at the same time. The founders’ aim was to address the present and future educational needs of the Roma population of the 8th district of Budapest.

By mapping the requirements of the local Roma population, the founders realised that:

- Roma parents do not wish to enrol their children in Roma-only schools; they want them to take part in mainstream education;
- programmes are needed to help Roma children to perform better at school.

Roma children in the 8th district (as well as elsewhere in Hungary) are underrepresented in secondary schools. There have been significant improvements in primary school graduation rates among Roma children in recent years, but this was not the case for secondary level. Enrolment numbers have improved, but drop-out and failure rates were relatively high in the first year of secondary education: for example, 123 local Roma children started secondary school in September 1997, but only 41 children (27%) completed the first year successfully. The low school performance was caused by several factors:

- the challenging situation of Roma as a minority group;
- the problematic relations between the Roma people and the majority of the population;
- multiple social problems.

Description of the initiative
The need for a programme to help Roma children to successfully complete secondary school is underlined by the high unemployment rate among Roma. The foundation offers afternoon and weekend activities for its pupils. A stimulating environment for learning is created for children who lack such an environment in their home. The programmes include development activities in different areas (mathematics, literature, history, foreign languages, computer literacy, etc) and aim to draw the children’s attention to the knowledge sources around them. The programmes also include familiarisation with the universal and Hungarian Roma culture.
In addition to the aims to be fulfilled by primary school education (skills development, learning methods, enhancing leisure time), the foundation’s programme attempts to create an environment similar to that of a professional middle class family: an available, wide range of books, museum and theatre visits, weekend trips, board games, discussions on films and television programmes, etc. Such an environment is missing in most of the local Roma families.

Two age groups attend the foundation – upper primary school children (aged 11–14 years) and secondary school children (aged 15–18 years). Children attend on the basis that, although they have strong abilities, they would not be able to complete secondary school without help outside of their family. The number of children attending the foundation varies between 70 and 80 children in a given academic year.

The interested applicants and their parents are invited each year in early September to take part in an ‘admission interview’. In addition, the applicants have to write a short composition on their goals, undertakings and requirements. Based on the interview and on the composition, the board of the foundation chooses the pupils to be admitted for the particular academic year.

The students can choose from the services offered by the foundation, and in some cases the teachers can also be chosen. The requirements of the students are assessed in the first week of the academic year, and each student is given their own timetable. After a month, the timetable is altered if needed, and finalised for the academic year.

Each student is paired with a tutor, who monitors the student and keeps contact with the school and the parents. The programmes cover two main areas – learning assistance and leisure activities. Learning assistance includes the following elements:

- skills development – in the premises of the foundation or at the child’s home;
- project programmes – a film, a periodical or an exhibition about a chosen theme;
- ‘a question for each day’ programme – children are given questions to explore in areas in which they are lagging behind, e.g. vocabulary, grammar, mathematics;
- competitions are organised in a wide range of areas (mathematics, physics, grammar, history, literature, reciting poetry, poem and short story writing, artworks, etc). Individual prizes and collective prizes (summer camp) are given to the best performers.

**Good practice**

The programme is a representation of good practice simply because it addresses the need for services for the Roma population. It offers an important range of services to address the unique needs of the population. In addition to education activities, the foundation finds it equally important to organise cultural (both Roma culture and general culture) programmes internally and externally. The aim is to create a community where knowledge is considered valuable and the members retain their Roma identity.

The weekend activities include literature and art club, theatre attendance, periodical creation, and Roma language classes.
The foundation is open from 15 August to 20 June and during two weeks of summer camp. The daily opening hours are as follows:

- Monday to Thursday: 14.30–19.00;
- Friday: 15.30–18.00;
- Saturday: 14.00–17.00.

The personnel are mostly primary and secondary school teachers, language instructors, and information technology (IT) instructors.

An important consideration in choosing the personnel is that the applicant has to be familiar both with mainstream and Roma culture, as well as open-minded, creative, and tolerant. The director is a full-time employee controlling and managing the implementation of the strategy of the foundation.

One part-time employee is responsible for the project programme (six hours per week). One part-time employee is responsible for administrative and financial issues (six hours per day, five days a week). A part-time teaching assistant provides access to the library and computers (six hours per day, five days a week). Part-time teachers from primary and secondary schools teach different subjects to the children attending the foundation.

The foundation does not collect fees from students for its services. Funding is provided by donations and tenders. The Soros Foundation financed the operation of the Józsefvárosi Tanoda in the first three years of its existence.

Further information
Contact: Dr Szőke Judit, Director
Website: [http://www.romacentrum.hu/modell/oktatas/jozsefvarosi/tanoda.html](http://www.romacentrum.hu/modell/oktatas/jozsefvarosi/tanoda.html)
Telephone/fax: (36) 1 333 01 53
Address: Józsefvárosi Tanoda Alapítvány, Budapest, VIII. ker. József krt. 50. III/13
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References


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and title</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Márta Korintus, Research Director</td>
<td>National Institute for Family and Social Policy</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:marta.korintus@ncsszi.hu">marta.korintus@ncsszi.hu</a>; Website: <a href="http://www.ncsszi.hu">http://www.ncsszi.hu</a>; Tel.: (36-1) 465 50 00/ext 145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Károly Gáspár, Head of Department</td>
<td>Department of Child and Youth Protection Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:gyifi@icsszem.hu">gyifi@icsszem.hu</a>; Website: <a href="http://www.icsszem.hu">http://www.icsszem.hu</a>; Tel.: (36-1) 475 57 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>István Simonyi and Gyöngyi Szakácsné Nemere, desk officers</td>
<td>Department of Public Education Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:istvan.simonyi@om.hu">istvan.simonyi@om.hu</a> or <a href="mailto:gyongyi.nemere@om.hu">gyongyi.nemere@om.hu</a>; Website: <a href="http://www.om.hu">http://www.om.hu</a>; Tel.: (36-1) 473 70 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Ildikó Varjúné Fekete and István Zsoldos, coordinators</td>
<td>Department of Education and Culture Local government of 14th district, Budapest</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:hivatal@zuglo.hu">hivatal@zuglo.hu</a> or <a href="mailto:zsoldos.istvanne@zuglo.hu">zsoldos.istvanne@zuglo.hu</a>; Website: <a href="http://www.zuglo.hu">http://www.zuglo.hu</a>; Tel.: (36-1) 467 92 07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Szilvia Harta, Director</td>
<td>Budai Kreatív Tanoda</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:harta.szili@hu.inter.net">harta.szili@hu.inter.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoltán Zubornyák, Director</td>
<td>Ferencváros Cultural Centre, Budapest</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:titkarsag@ferencvosrosimuvkpu.hu">titkarsag@ferencvosrosimuvkpu.hu</a>; Website: <a href="http://www.fmkportal.hu">http://www.fmkportal.hu</a>; Tel.: (36-1) 216 1300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>János Kiss, recreation organiser</td>
<td>Zeg-Zug Children’s House, Budapest</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:zegzug@freemail.hu">zegzug@freemail.hu</a>; Website: <a href="http://zeg-zug.hu/">http://zeg-zug.hu</a>; Tel.: (36-1) 220 67 77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mária Rapatyiné Csermendy, Deputy Director</td>
<td>József Attila Primary School, Budapest</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:alt.iskola@jozsefatilla.zuglo.net">alt.iskola@jozsefatilla.zuglo.net</a>; Tel.: (36-1) 467 09 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gáborné Márton, After-school care teacher</td>
<td>József Attila Primary School, Budapest</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:alt.iskola@jozsefatilla.zuglo.net">alt.iskola@jozsefatilla.zuglo.net</a>; Tel.: (36-1) 467 09 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zsolt Nagy, teacher and recreation organiser</td>
<td>Dr Földi János Primary School and Elementary Art Education Institution, Hajdúhadház</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:zsola67@freemail.hu">zsola67@freemail.hu</a>; Tel.: (36-52) 44 33 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoltán Gilicze, Head of ‘After-School Care Section’</td>
<td>Hungarian Pedagogical Society</td>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:gilicze2@freemail.hu">gilicze2@freemail.hu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zsuzsanna Kovács, piano teacher</td>
<td>13th district Music School, Budapest</td>
<td>Tel: (36-1) 359 59 63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>