

Hungary in the Sustainable Social Europe

Резюме. У цьому дослідженні автор аналізує динаміку новітніх змін у світовому масштабі (напр. епідемія коронавірусу) та їх соціальний вплив. Показано чого досягла за цей період Угорщина у сфері соціального розвитку, як вона відреагувала на цю ситуацію, зображено криву запланованого розвитку та його роль у стійкому соціальному розвитку. Автор наголошує, що у випадку змін, пов'язаних з ситуаціями соціальної кризи необхідно звертати більше уваги на контроль бідності, соціальної ізоляції та зміцнення соціальної мережі. З цією метою необхідно цільове використання фондів ЄС для зміцнення й більш ефективної готовності до майбутніх ситуацій. Дослідження надає практичні вказівки щодо соціального розвитку.
Ключові слова: Динаміка змін, новітні виклики, притаманні змінам можливості, розробка рішень, соціальний розвиток в Угорщині, можливості розвитку в Європейському Союзі, практичні вказівки щодо соціального розвитку

Rezümé. A jelen tanulmányban a szerző a világban tapasztalható újszerű változások (pl.: a koronavírus-járvány) dinamikáját és azok társadalomra gyakorolt hatásait vizsgálja. Betekintést nyertünk, hogy Magyarország merre tart a kutatott időszakban a társadalmi fejlesztések terén, hogyan fogadta az ország a helyzetet, valamint megismerkedhetünk a tervezett fejlesztésekkel és azok társadalmi fenntarthatóságban betöltött szerepével. A szerző kiemeli, hogy a társadalmi krízishelyzetekkel járó változások esetén még inkább oda kell figyelni a szegénység, a társadalmi kirekesztettség kezelésére és a szociális háló erősítésére. Az európai uniós források célirányos felhasználására van szükség, hogy a jövőbeli helyzetekre való felkészültség még hatékonyabbá váljon. A munka bemutatja a társadalmi fejlesztések jó gyakorlatait.
Kulcsszavak: változások dinamikája, újszerű kihívások, a változásban rejlő lehetőségek, a megoldások keresése, társadalmi fejlesztések Magyarországon, fejlesztési lehetőségek az EU-ban, jó gyakorlatok a társadalmi fenntarthatóságért

Abstract. In this study, the author reviews the dynamics of novel changes in the world (e.g., the coronavirus epidemic) and their social impact. It shows where Hungary has come with social developments in this period, how it has received the situation, and also draws the curve of the planned developments and their role in social sustainability. The author emphasizes that in the case of changes associated with social crisis situations, it is even more necessary to pay attention to the management of poverty, social exclusion and the strengthening of the social network. To this end, targeted use of EU funds is needed to strengthen even more effective preparedness for future situations. It presents good practices from social developments.
Keywords: Dynamics of change, novel challenges, opportunities inherent in change, development towards solutions, social developments in Hungary, development opportunities in the European Union, good practices for social sustainability

Introduction

The world is facing a new challenge, the coronavirus, which has suddenly changed almost everything in the long run. The situation sheds some light on how humankind (does not) interact with nature; it shows how people interact with each other, with the Sciences, and with the economy. The challenges have kept coming; in recent years we witnessed the Australian bushfire, the melting of the Arctic ice, the economic crisis, and the European migration crisis. If countries

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were even able to solve these crises, their response has shown that they needed to react by using their resources and capacities in extensive cooperation; moreover, they needed to redesign their strategies for the future. Meanwhile many areas of social life went through considerable changes such as resource management, the labour market and its technologies, economic actors, the structure of society, the importance of EU and networking cooperation, and the role of nation-states, to name just a few. Only those countries managed to respond adequately to the challenges rooted in the process of change which recognized the opportunities the challenges brought about, kept track of development and used the available funding instruments well in the EU-28.

The effort to study the dynamics of modernity, the new social order, and changes origin from one of the first thinkers of sociology, Auguste Comte, who characterised society as a system in his essay ‘Sommaire appréciation de l'ensemble du passé modern’ Comte believed that sociology can anticipate the changes that will necessarily occur and its job is to move forward the changes and make them easier.¹

Comte argues that the social system is built on two pillars: stability and dynamics. Stability brings order; dynamics bring change. In his opinion, stability requires the maintenance of discipline, and the functioning of society and individuals in society are essential. He claimed that dynamics provide a basis for development that will inevitably change the social system. Comte’s ‘social physics’ was to teach people to discover patterns and laws, and he formulated theories of human actions, explaining the new social phenomena. As he summarized in ‘A General View of Positivism’:² ‘In Sociology the correlation assumes this form: Order is the condition of all Progress; Progress is always the object of Order. Or, to penetrate the question still more deeply, Progress may be regarded simply as the development of Order; for the order of nature necessarily contains within itself the germ of all possible progress. The rational view of human affairs is to look at all their changes, not as new Creations, but as new Evolutions. And we find this principle fully borne out in history. Every social innovation has its roots in the past.’³

In light of the above findings as well, we examine the direction of Hungary’s achievements. In other words, amid constant changes, how Hungary addresses societal challenges, and how it develops its social system (those have been achieved by a large extent of European Union funding instruments in the recent decades)? Where did we start, where are we going? What should we prepare for the upcoming years; given the 2021–27 EU programming period, and considering the COVID-19 consequences? We might say it in another way; where has stability and dynamism led in the social system, and what other potentials it has?

¹ AUGUSTE COMTE (1865): *A General View of Positivism*. London.

² COMTE 1865

³ JONES, H. STUART (ed., 1998): *Comte: Early Political Writings*. Cambridge.

1. Challenges of a coronavirus epidemic

Oxfam has stressed that the number of people in need could increase by half a billion globally due to the changes brought by the coronavirus pandemic.⁴ It explains why the leaders of the world (e.g. IMF, G20) have been called out to create an economic rescue package to keep developing countries and their communities on the surface. Oxfam also reported that **the poverty ratio could raise 6–8% higher than it was in 2018** due to the economic measures surrounding the coronavirus epidemic. **This outcome could force the fight against poverty back the way we were decades ago; regions like Black-Africa, the Middle East and North Africa could fall back as much as 30 years.** If incomes fall by 20% due to the economic downturn due to the pandemic, an additional 548 million people could earn below \$5.5 (HUF1.815).

According to Raghuram G. Rajan, an economist from Chicago and former IMF chief economist, the negative outcomes of the virus can be only successfully solved with international cooperation and certainly not by confinement⁵. He believes that more attention should be given to the less fortunate in society, including the ones who do not have the right degree or qualification to find a new job in this situation. He continues by stating that the only good in this pandemic could be the strong pressure of global cooperation. The importance of expert leadership and experience has also been proven.

Greg Mankiw, professor of economics at Harvard University, shares that the coronavirus epidemic brings challenges concerning social aspects in priority in the area of economic policies. That means people must be provided with adequate incomes. However, it might not be as easy as it seems. On one hand, if everyone gets a monthly check from the government, it will be very costly to the state, and some people would also receive who do not really need it. On the other hand, targeting the package would be extremely time-consuming, and time is not given now, moreover, the neediest of it could be left out... We should not anticipate at what extent people may need help, we must act retrospectively.⁶

The European Union's response to the damages caused by the coronavirus was late and inadequate; therefore, it created uncertainty about the future of the entity. The European Commission had adopted a €37 billion program as one of its first measures. It must be mentioned that it is not a new plan and fresh funds; it uses the Member States' committed or left behind development funds. The EU has also launched a €20 billion 'Europe Together' package that combines the Member States' and the EU's resources to help African countries, the neighbours

⁴ World Economy. The number of poor people could increase by half a billion due to the. (April 9, 2020)

⁵ Novekedés.hu. What kind of economic crisis are we facing? The former chief economist of the IMF spoke. (March 30, 2020)

⁶ Portfolio.hu, Slap offers a simple solution to the world-famous economist to overcome the coronavirus crisis. (April 3, 2020)

of the EU, moreover, it concerns Asia, the Pacific, Latin-America and the Caribbean. Again, these funds are not new; these are partly coming from existing programs, partly from payments from the Member States and financial institutions.⁷

The **SURE** (*Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency*) initiative was started by the Commission to ease the risks of unemployment by preserving jobs and protecting livelihoods of families. The Commission indicates the reallocation of all available structural funds to the coronavirus crisis management. Farmers and fishermen, people in need, will receive support also. The EU '**Solidarity for Health Initiative**' has a budget of € 3 billion to support Member States' health systems.⁸

The crisis will also show how productive the work of recent years has been. How good the health-, social-, employment-, and training-systems are? Are they prepared to deal with this type of change? The last economic crisis of 2008 proved that when a 'shock' occurs, the answer must provide significant financial support for investments and consumptions, and the downturn can be mitigated through **national interventions** as well. A lot is on the shoulders of the Member States in this situation, those are in a good situation that has reserves to spend further. The health and social sectors, employment and the SMEs must be kept alive with social funds. In such cases, those who lost their jobs should be provided with a basic income, but more importantly, **jobs should be saved and preserved**. If this cannot happen, after the crisis, the economy has to be restarted from a much lower level of employment and production capacity.

The social consequences of environmental and economic changes in the world are very significant (unemployment, a changing labour market, addressing the situation of the most deprived people, creating opportunities for future generations, etc.). Therefore, the Member States of the European Union wanted not only to maintain their position in the economic, social and technological competition, but they also wanted to increase and develop it. In this mind-set, Hungary also aims to be one of the fifth most liveable and competitive member states of the European Union by 2030, including excellent work and living opportunities. There are many aspects and influencing factors to challenges and success in achieving goals: the effectiveness of crisis management, in particular the present situation; the level of digitalisation; the effort we make to protect the environment; the employment opportunities we provide, and the modification of supply structure in the labour market; the situation of social inclusion, children's opportunities, poverty and, in particular, gender distribution. The European Union has helped to develop **more sustainable and adequate social systems**. The **Guidelines and social funds from EU** aim to strengthen social cohesion through cooperation; this is expected to be even **more essential in the future**.

⁷ European Parliament. News, May 2, 2020

⁸ European Commission website. Health (April 1, 2020)

It is not possible to face current challenges and long-term goals without considering sustainable development. **Sustainable development** ensures and maintains economic progress, preserves environmental conditions, and supports social advancement – including fair living conditions and social well-being. The goal of ensuring fair living conditions and good quality of life applies to everyone (even the future generation). In other words, sustainable development aims to ensure the equal rights of the passing generations; it has responsibilities associated with it.⁹

In the present crisis, it is even more needed to pay attention to the issues of poverty and social exclusion. It is part of the social dimension of sustainability and closely linked to the other two branches of sustainability: the economy and the environment. Poverty is the direct obstacle of any country's full economic potential, and it can be the base of pursuing nature-destroying activities.

In general, among the causes of poverty, education, employment, ethnicity, and health are usually emphasized. However, important factors are the size of the family, the number of earners and even the place of residence. In the less developed rural regions of Hungary, where urban centres are difficult to access, the ways of coping is different too. Mostly, reasons and causes are hard to differentiate: the chance for quality education is weaker for children of disadvantaged families,; therefore the admission to higher education becomes more difficult, consequently decent work is often unavailable and labour mobility restricting mechanism sets in. The pivotal element of development and social sustainability is the system of **social measures**: job creation, social inclusion, education and quality health care.

2. The European path of social policy

Measures are currently being shaped and planned. Yet, it still must be seen that Europe has a long history of developing its social dimension. Social Policy is interpreted broadly in the European Union. It includes labour law, employment policy, industrial relations, equal opportunities, and the fight against social exclusion, non-discrimination, healthy working environment and health protection at workplaces, and social protection... Given that the European Union is a key player in international cooperation, I would like to review the following questions:

How, / where, / to whom, / for what purposes this cooperation provides an opportunity in the social policy area?

There is still a long way to go regarding **the European path of social policy in Hungary**. We are moving forward within our own terms considering that the social policy is in the sovereign **authority of Member States**.

⁹ Website of the Hungarian UNESCO Committee. The Concept of Sustainable Development (2009).

2.1. Hungary's social development in the period of joining the European Union

Hungary joined the European Union in 2004; interestingly, halfway between the system change of 1989 in the country (*'rendszerváltás'*) and the Financial Crisis of 2007–2008. None of the economic low points had a good effect on the social system: the unemployment-, poverty-, social inequality-, poor education-distribution increased, and it negatively affected the social benefits, also.

In 2002, an averaged 28% of GDP was spent on social solidarity and social protection expenditure in the 15 Member States.¹⁰ The spectrum was 16–30%; 30% in Sweden, France, Denmark and Germany, and it was 16% in Ireland. In Hungary, the value of the indicator was around 20% at that time. Eurostat (n.d.) reports that the ratio was the highest in France with 34.3% in 2016; in Hungary, it was 28.2% then.¹¹

The 2004 enlargement process was the largest expansion in the history of the European Union (it welcomed 10 new Member States). Considering the economic and social circumstances of the joining countries, it had the greatest impact on the functioning of the European Union, especially in the cohesion policy area. At the time of the enlargement, the Treaty of Rome was expanded with additional points of **economic and social cohesion**. The joining states' **needs for catching-up and development** required large amounts of funds, and it fundamentally changed the budget and cohesion policies of the EU. **The pre-accession financial assistances** were significant and these were called: *the Phare* (10.9 billion euros), *the SAPARD* (3.6 billion euros) and *ISPA* (7.3 billion euros).¹²

Agenda 2000 was essential, defining document regarding the 2000–2006 period, as it covered the pre- and post-accession expenditures and base of the cohesion policy. One of its main objectives was to support the modernization of education, training and employment system.

The financial fund for this purpose is the **European Social Fund (ESF)**. The ESF, created within the Treaty of Rome, **focused on improving employment opportunities**; the obstacles brought by the consequence of the change of system and modernization were also balanced by the short term retraining and support for worker-mobility in it. By this reason, inter alia, the issues of rising youth unemployment (under the age of 25), and then the women's situation and the low-skilled workers were prioritized. Due to the 1988 reforms, solidarity and the promotion of social cohesion were strengthened in the operation of the fund.

The aim of the **European Employment Strategy (EES, 1997)** was to create jobs and improve the quality of employment. It was followed by the **Lisbon Strategy** (2000); it acknowledged the need to create a modern, knowledge- and

¹⁰ Central Statistical Office (KSH), Hungary 2004, (2005)

¹¹ Central Statistical Office (KSH), Hungary 2004, (2005)

¹² European Commission Annual Report (2001)

skill-based economy in the European Union by 2010. These efforts aimed at a more global and competitive European Union. Moreover, it laid the foundation of sustainable economic growth with better and more jobs, and it aimed to bond society and emphasise on environmental protection.¹³

The European Social Fund is directly connected in the implementation of the European Employment Strategy. In Hungary, the HRDOP ('Human Resources Development Operational Program') provided a development opportunity to achieve these ambitious European goals. A generous amount, approximately HUF 196,069,464,843 was also paid.

- *HRDOP-1*: supports the Active Labour Market Policies,
- *HRDOP-2*: focuses on the fight against social exclusion,
- *HRDOP-3*: supports lifelong learning and adaptability,
- *HRDOP-4*: focuses on development of educational, social and health infrastructure,
- *HRDOP-5*: Supports technical assistance.¹⁴

Sustainable development has emerged as a global, general goal during the enlargement of the European Union in 2004. Sustainable development, as a term, first appeared in Lester R. Brown: '*Building a Sustainable Society*'¹⁵ book in 1981. He does not limit the concept of development to the economic sphere, therefore, it is considered as a homogenous economic, social and environmental factor. When the programs are elaborated, the mentioned factors must be examined together, considering their interactions, and measuring different development strategies. Moreover, it must be seen how they work in specific actions.

'**System thinking**' was not a common feature of civilized society after World War II. The system-level approach first developed in Adam Smith's 'The Wealth of Nations'¹⁶ (published in 1776). The term "general systems theory" originates from Bertalanffy's general '**systems theory**'¹⁷ (von Bertalanffy, Boulding, 1968). He and Kenneth Boulding argued that 'systems theory' is an inevitable component of everyday life.

Sustainability can also be understood with the particularities of 'system theories' and interventions can also be developed based on it. Here, I indicate that cooperation with science, society, politics and the economy can help to address the challenges. It is also the task of *the development policy* to plan and implement the necessary measures taking these into account, examining the effects, needs and interactions.

¹³ Service of the European Commission (SEC) (2010) Final Commission Staff Working Document, Lisbon Strategy Scoreboard (CSE)

¹⁴ *Humánfejlesztés-politika Magyarországon*. Szerk. Balás, Gábor – Koltai, Luca. Budapest, 2018

¹⁵ LESTER R. BROWN (1981): *Building a Sustainable Society*. New York.

¹⁶ ADAM SMITH (1992): *Wealth of Nations*. Publisher of Economics and Law

¹⁷ LUDWIG VON BERTALANFFY (1968): *General System Theory*. New York.

2.2. 2007–2013 programming period

The main priorities for the development period are technological research and development, the promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship, the information society, transport, energy and the environment. Moreover, investments in **human capital were included also**; inasmuch as it concerned areas of **employment policy and increased adaptability of entrepreneurs and employees**.

Two important EU-level developments should be named during this programming period because they affected the preparation of 2007–2013 periods and 2014–2020 periods; the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) and the EU2020 Strategy (2010).

The purpose of the **Treaty of Lisbon** is to strengthen the Union's effectiveness and democratic legitimacy, and also it improves the unity. The **Europe 2020 Strategy** was designed as a European exit strategy from the global *economic and financial crisis*¹⁸ (rapid and significant decline in economic performance, protracted recovery, rising unemployment, especially among young people...), and the long-term, *global challenges* (saturated competition, population ageing, and exploitation of natural resources...) made it clear that the *solution needs a collective response* from the European Union. The ten-year strategy (*EU2020*) for growth and jobs has defined the European Union in the changed environment. It defined the shared European vision, the priority areas for the long-term development of the Union and the tools that were necessary to achieve these goals. If Europe wants to emerge stronger as an entity from the crisis, we need a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy with rapid employment and productivity, and strong social cohesion. In other words, the Europe 2020 Strategy is the vision of the **European Social Market Economy for The 21st Century**.¹⁹

The goals, which were set, could only be achieved from **the 2014–2020 programming period funds**, and according to those user regulations since we were already in the middle of the financial cycle. The Europe 2020 Strategy goals are monitored by nine indicators. Those results are up on the Eurostat website.

The 2007–2013 programming period can be divided into two parts for Hungary due to the 2010 government change. In the primary strategic document, the **New Hungary Development Plan** (*Új Magyarország Fejlesztési Terv*) was the main agenda to **increase employment figures in a growing, sustainable method**. The 2007–2013 programming period had multiple action plans, which were made by the government. The last 2011–2013 action plan – due to the new government change – differed. The program was called '**New Széchenyi Plan**' and it had seven breaking out points.

- I. Health industry,
- II. Green farming development,

¹⁸ Europe-2020-a-promising-strategy (2010).

¹⁹ Europe 2020 Strategy.

- III. Acquisition of homes,
- IV. Business development,
- V. Transportation development,
- VI. Science-innovation,
- VII. Employment.

During this period, ESF funds were used within the framework of the *Social Renewal Operational Programme* (SROP) and the *State Reform Operational Programme*. **SROP supported social challenges and institutional development within the framework of six priorities.** Moreover, it emphasised on the objectives of employment expansion and economic growth. The strategy pursued to increase employment through the development of employability, the creation of better jobs and matching supply to demand. More than 18 thousand proposals were accepted within the framework of SROP, meaning, it granted 1179 billion Forints. The ESF provided 85% of the funds, and the Hungarian state provided 15%.²⁰

During this development period, the ‘Nemzeti Társadalmi Felzárkózási Stratégia’ (translated by the author: *National Social Development Strategy*; 2011–2020) was developed; it is Hungary’s medium-term catch-up strategy, in line with the strategy of common EU framework for the Member States. The focus of the strategy was on the problem of the population of the lagging regions, child poverty and the situation of Romas. At the same time, measures, responsibilities and resources have been allocated to the objectives of the strategy, mainly in the areas of childcare, education, **employment**, health, housing and fight against discrimination. The backgrounds of the *National Social Development Strategy* are the National Roma Inclusion strategy and the National Strategy 2007–2032 called ‘**Making Things Better for our Children**’. The NTFS was updated in 2014.

Under Law III of 1993, **the administration of the social security system and the benefits** was adopted, which regulates the various forms and organization of social benefits, the related rights and the guarantees of their enforcement. The social benefits based on social solidarity are the following:

- Employment replacement allowance,
- Health impairment allowance,
- Childcare allowance,
- Nursing fee,
- Old-age allowance,
- Normative public health care,
- Health care services and various forms of care for persons with disabilities...

It is important to emphasise **the program that was developed for the 33 most disadvantaged micro-regions of Hungary**; the budget was **HUF 96.9 billion** in 2008–2013. The aim was that those micro-regions should be helped to the

²⁰ BALÁS–KOLTAI 2018.

path of sustainable development, the lagging trend of the region should be reversed and the long-term catching-up should be pushed forward. In the micro-regions, the support per capita in the period of 2004–2006 was approx. 20% higher, while in the programming period of 2007–2013, it was approx. 10% higher than the national average. However, there was a huge difference between the development of different micro-regions (around times 20), within the micro-regions, basically, the relatively more developed settlements and social groups received resources, while the poorest micro-regions could hardly or could not meet the necessary conditions.²¹

2.3. The 2014–20 programming period

In the beginning of the **2014–20 programming period**, the UN adopted the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)**, which contained 17 goals, including 169 sub-goals and almost 230 indicators. These all aim to assess and continuously monitor several aspects of sustainable development until 2030. It includes goals such as **‘the global community’s commitments to poverty eradication’** and **‘reducing inequality’**.²² The sub-goals contain aims to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, which means living on less than \$1.25 a day. In addition, we implement social security systems and measures that consider the unique features of nations, including the minimal social protection, and by 2030 we will achieve that it encompasses a significant proportion of the poor and vulnerable social groups.

There is an organic connection not only between the three components of sustainability, but also between the more specific goals based on them. It is particularly important that social impacts do not only target to the average social well-being, as dictated by general economic policy considerations, but also **to shape the circumstances of individual and different social groups to be fairer and more expedient**.²³ Thus, multiple sustainability goals can be linked to several other goals; e.g. gender equality meets the goal of fair employment, and uncorrupted work with economic growth, or the protection of terrestrial ecosystems. In this understanding, different development goals shall be linked within the development policy, including the interventions by the Operational Programs – a significant increase in impact should be observed.

The European strategic objectives for the **2014–2020 programming period** are based on the **Europe 2020 Strategy**; this replaced the Lisbon Strategy (from 2001 to 2010). The Hungarian implementation of the strategy is the **Széchenyi 2020** program package, which includes Hungary’s development-needs of EU funds until 2020. The most important domestic strategic document of the Széchenyi

²¹ BALÁS-KOLTAI 2018.

²² United Nations, Sustainable development.

²³ Measurability of a good state III., Edited by Tamás Kaiser, Dialóg Campus Publishing Budapest, 2019 - Our sustainable vision Mónika Besenyi – László Földi – Zsolt Hetesi – Ágnes Zsóka.

2020 program is the **Partnership Agreement**²⁴, and it promotes national priorities within the objectives of **sustainable and quality employment growth** based on the EU2020 Strategy. The document sets out five main national priorities²⁵ related to the priorities set out in the **National Development and Territorial Development Concept** (*Országos Fejlesztési és Területfejlesztési Konceptió*):

1. Improving the competitiveness and global performance of the business sector
2. **Promoting employment** through economic development, employment, education and social inclusion policies, taking account territorial disparities
3. Enhancing energy and resource efficiency
4. **Tackling social inclusion and demographic challenges**
5. Implementation of local and territorial development aimed at promoting economic growth.

The Union's 11 thematic objectives are based on the above mentioned priorities and, concerning only the human field, these should be highlighted:

- Promoting **sustainable and quality employment** and supporting **labour mobility**; the main goal is to promote employment primarily through the use of active labour market measures. The objective also supports rural job creation in agricultural and rural development.
- **Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination**; the main goal in this area is fighting successfully against poverty, with a strong territorial focus on the most disadvantaged regions.
- **Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning**; the main goal here is to improve the quality of public education including the improvement its ability to compensate for disadvantaged.

10 operational programs are running in the 2014–2020 programming period, which are financed by five different European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs). Some national operation programs including **EFOP** (Emberi Erőforrás Fejlesztési Operatív Program, translated by the author: *Human Resources Development Operational Programme*) GINOP (Gazdaságfejlesztési és Innovációs Operatív Program, translated by the author: *Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme*) and KÖFOP (Közigazgatás– és Közszolgáltatás Fejlesztési Operatív Program, translated by the author: *Public Administration and Civil Service Development OP*) are implemented partly from ESF sources. The EFOP used HUF 1.7 billion of ESF resources. From the point of view of social sustainability, there are two priority operational programs (OPs):

²⁴ Partnership Agreement Hungary (2014)

²⁵ Szecsenyi–2020 Programme

- **Human Resources Development Operational Programme (EFOP):** the essential social policy toolkit towards human capacity building and the improvement of the social environment.
- **The FEAD operational programme:** aims to support the most deprived families with children, the homeless and lastly, socially deprived persons with a disability and elderly persons with an extremely low income.²⁶
- **Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme (TOP):** the main priority is economic development and job creation.
- **Competitive Central Hungary Operational Programme (VEKOP):** CCHOP seeks to answer the challenge of enhancing the development and the competitiveness of a relatively developed region that features large internal disparities. Though CH's economic and innovation potential is outstanding in comparison with other Hungarian regions, there are a large number of peripheral, lagging and poorly accessible sub-regions and settlements within the region. The performance indicators of these sub-regions are similar to those of Hungary's least developed regions.²⁷

Programs that primarily support the lives of disadvantaged people **had its positive effects on facilitating people's work experience, employment and housing; moreover, it improves the livelihoods and quality of life of families and community organizations.** By establishing and strengthening those programs, the retaining power of rural settlements can also be increased. The cooperation of state institutions, local governments, churches and non-governmental organizations shows that the regional livelihoods of those who are living in poverty, large families, small pensioners, people who are depending on social benefits and those who are living alone can be improved. Moreover, the cooperation makes it possible to provide services to those who had limited or no access before, and the housing access program that supports independent living can also be set up.

Nearing the end of the 2014–20 programming period, it can be stated **that the results of developments in the social field:**

With the support of people with disabilities, we managed to improve the employability tendency of the target group, their adaptability to the labour market and to increase the interest of employers. More than 13,000 people with disabilities participated in integration programs to the labour market, and more than half of them are expected to enter as a valuable workforce.

As the information and communication technology (ICT) was backed up, and target groups were mentored, **we have taken significant steps in the progress of ICT-based remote services** that help the development of software to facilitate accessibility; **it will help the everyday life of people with disabilities.** The develop-

²⁶ European Commission, Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, FEAD in your country – Hungary.

²⁷ European Commission, Competitive central Hungary Operational Programme.

ments were implemented by organizations for people with disabilities. One of the most challenges in the social sector is the **deinstitutionalization of institutions for people living with disabilities, a mental illness and addiction disorders with a capacity of more than 50 beds**. Ideally, they should be introduced to a **placement option in families where they are able to maintain an independent living form**. The development is an ongoing process, and it affects several settlements not just today, but in the future as well. It also requires the continuous cooperation of the actors involved in the development and the scheduled implementation of the tasks. Projects based on social inclusion include both the child and adult target groups. Due to the **deinstitutionalization processes for Children in Institutions** and these existing institutions' **modernization, and capacity expansion, significant infra-structural progress** in child protection can be detected. The infrastructural and professional development of the **Parental Networks** helped to keep children out of institutions, and it supported to keep families together.

With the measures in development implemented by the cooperation of local governments, churches and non-governmental organizations, **secure housing**, comprehensive **social assistance**, capacity and mental development programs were accessible under the social integration process for the people who are facing homelessness.

Among the developments affecting disadvantaged people – mainly Romas –, the following measures might stand out:

There is a program which provides training, employment and re-employment for **1,000 people**; mainly for Roma women. With the involvement of churches and non-governmental organizations, various co-operation aimed to firm **intercultural dialogue** to reduce discrimination, bias, and increase acceptance simultaneously. The improvements of housing conditions were implemented via various complex **settlement programs**, by local authorities with the help of mandatory consortium partners (e.g., other foundation, other association) in non-urban municipalities. **County governments**, with the involvement of a consortium partner, could apply for the establishment of consultation, cooperation and coordination arrangement at the county level in order to effectively implement catch-up policy cooperation.

Local governments have implemented a so-called '**konyhakerti és kisállattartási szociális földprogram**' (Translated by the author: *Kitchen Garden and Pet Social Soil Program*), which promotes the livelihood of households in need and the improvement of the quality of life, increasing the chances of the independent involvement of the households involved.

With the **Integrated Regional Children's Programs**, local governments can contribute in a consortium to the creation and expansion of developing networks and services for the children of disadvantaged families living in their settlement. A similar flourishing opportunity was the **Jó kis hely – Biztos Kezdet Gyerekházak és kistépülési komplex gyermekprogramok** (Translated by the

Author: **Good Little Place – Safe Start for Children's Homes and Small Towns – Complex Children's Programs**), it was operated by the cooperation of various churches and non-governmental organizations. The 'Biztos Kezdet Gyerekházak' (translated by the author: '**Safe Start Orphanages**') were established for children in the **age of 0–3**, and it is aimed to overcome social-cultural disadvantages (in settlements of 1000–4000 inhabitants). The above-detailed 'Good Little Place' program is functioning as a community place for youngsters in the **age of 0–25** (in settlements of 1000 inhabitants). These developments were also accompanied by key infrastructural developments: the creation of community spaces, the renovation of buildings, and the acquisition of equipment.

Increasing the chances of **Roma girls to continue their education** and reducing early school leaving, as well as increasing their chances of further education, could happen as a separate program for girls aged 10–18 with the participation of ethnic self-governments, churches and non-governmental organizations.

To 570 kindergartens, which are raising more than 10% disadvantaged children, were given professional and pedagogical support by different organizations and human resource developments. The **Development of Kindergarten and School Social Assistance Activities project** dealt with the strengthening of primary prevention, the improvement of the social well-being and quality of life of children in kindergartens and schools, including other young people as well.

The aim of the **Tanoda programs** (translated by the author: School Program) is to reduce early school leaving and increase the level of education through learning support activities outside school. **Scholarship and Mentoring Support for Disadvantaged Students – Útravaló Program** (Translated by the author: A Roadmap Scholarship Program) was set to improve school success for students from vulnerable social groups. The scholarship makes this happen through development and activities that directly compensate for the disadvantages. As a motivational tool, the programs provide **mentoring and scholarship support** to the students involved from **the 7th grade of elementary school to the 13th grade of high school**. With the support of Roma vocational colleges, disadvantaged students could be admitted to higher education institutions and they are provided with a **complex student service** that contributes to their successful completion of **higher education**.

Együtt, Testvéként (Translated by the author: Together, as brothers and sisters) is an inter-school attitude-forming program with the participation of two public educational institutions to develop students' competencies (social, lifestyle, communication, etc.) in a way of establishing **twinning school relations** within Hungary, the Carpathian Basin and the European Union.

Municipalities, non-governmental organizations and church organizations could also apply for the return of young people over the age of compulsory education to return to their studies. It would support them for obtaining a **high school diploma** and a **vocational qualification**, as well as **placing disadvantaged students to higher education institutions**.

The quantification of the present programming period is under revision; however, Hungary has proved to eligibility to the largest part of the available funding instruments for the 2014–2020 programming period. This places Hungary as the Number 1 among the V4 countries, and top 10 among the Member States. The use of cohesion funds has a positive impact not only on the competitiveness of the Member States benefiting from the framework, but also on the economic growth of other Member States.

2.4. Hungary's social policy vision for the 2021–2027 development period

The **2021–2027 programming period** requires innovative and constructive solutions to the ongoing problems. The committee worked on simplifying the admissibility conditions and requirements for funding. The **mutually beneficial effect of the various EU financial funds is considered important**, and certainly, the management of daily forces, the effects of the current pandemic, will also shape the planning process. It is necessary to provide **long-term answers to the new challenges**, so we must be prepared that automation, the spread of artificial intelligence, and Covid-19 will affect the labour market, the everyday lives of people in need, and accordingly, it will affect the direction of development also.

In 2019, Ursula von der Leyen was appointed as the next President of the European Commission, and she will be in charge until October 31, 2019. **According to her words, her political guidelines can be summarized as the following; ‘Europe must lead the transition to a healthy planet and a new digital world. But it can only do so by bringing people together and upgrading our unique social market economy to fit today’s new ambitions.’**²⁸

The six main objectives for ‘**A Union that strives for more**’ for the next five years, or ideally, for a much longer period, were:

1. A European Green Deal,
2. An economy that works for people,
3. A Europe fit for the digital age,
4. Protecting our European way of life,
5. A stronger Europe in the world,
6. A new push for European democracy.

Based on the political guidelines²⁹, the Commission wants to **strengthen the partnership** with the European Parliament and Council; moreover, **the quality of the legislation** will be centralized continuously. The Commission highlights that they have more ambitious targets for the upcoming period, and they will consider the **UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. The European Semester will be refocused into an instrument that integrates the United

²⁸ European Commission, Political guidelines next commission.

²⁹ European Commission Political guidelines next commission.

Nation's Sustainable Development Goals. The Commission has emphasized that the economy and Europe should work for the citizens, and the focus should be on the well-being of Europeans.

In the guideline, a paradigm shift can be observed. Although past challenges have been mentioned that (high levels of poverty in some countries, persistent inequalities), the Commission sees a solution in **uniting social equity, sustainability and economic growth**. Furthermore, it considers that a **combined** examination of social and market issues is more important than ever. The published guidelines confirm the first reflections on building **a strong social Europe for just transitions**, which was published on January 14, 2020. Accordingly, it recalls that the Commission launched **a public consultation to develop an action plan for the implementation of the social pillar**.

In the field of employment, the Commission proposed a legal instrument with social partners – businesses and trade unions – on the issue of **fair minimum wages** for workers in the EU. The Roadmap for a European Unemployment Benefit Scheme aims to support to the already employed, and proposed a shock-absorption mechanism to cope with asymmetrical, external shocks contributing to unemployment, mainly by giving funds for training and **retraining**. Besides, the Commission showed commitment to prioritise efforts for **European Child Guarantee** which can be **EU's answer to child poverty**. The Youth Guarantee got confirmed, also.

Employment has been at a record high in recent years, and unemployment was at its lowest level since the turn of the millennium. However, in some Member States the level of **unemployment and poverty has remained** way too high, and the current crisis can affect it further. Inequalities persist and regional disparities within countries have increased.

Europe has a unique social market economy, which can enable us to achieve social justice, sustainability and economic growth at the same time. It is more important than ever to harmonize social and market considerations. A **Strong Social Europe for Just Transitions** announcement by the Commission started a conversation for preparing an action plan for the implementation of **the Social European Pillar of Rights**.

The Commission wanted to propose a legal instrument on a fair minimum wage for workers in the EU. The proposal for a European unemployment benefit scheme – EUBS aims to support workers and protect those who have lost their jobs due to external factors, especially, by supporting their retraining process in some way.

Based on the above detailed, a clear intention can be clearly deduced for a possible future policy direction. It will probably seek to link the use of social policy, the European Pillar of **Social Rights, cohesion policy and cohesion money to the European Semester process better**. **These will aim to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights at the legislative level, despite the fact that its implementation is a purely Member State's sovereign right under the Treaties.**

Commission initiatives to strengthen Social Europe are **still being negotiated**; they are still trying to find out whether the Commission's measures planned for 2020–21 really concern the most important subjects, which policy areas and actions the Member States would like to see in the action plan for the implementation of the social pillars.

European Commission has adopted the **2020 country reports**, where the Commission checked the country-specific recommendations (CSRs) from last year, including the state of implementation by Hungary. In the social field, the Commission has pointed out the need to improve the social assistance system. It complained about the adequacy of job-search allowances. However, it should be kept in mind that Hungary aimed to expand employment, not to expand the system of subsidies. In connection with **the poverty-reducing target set within the framework of the Europe 2020 strategy**, Hungary's good performance is acknowledged, but growing income inequalities, persistent inequalities in access to public services and the fact that the proportion of people living in difficult circumstances is **highest** in the EU, and especially **among families with many children and Roma communities**, continue to be identified as challenges. It indicates that poverty and social exclusion are concentrated in certain areas, key elements of the social safety net have been weakened, and low and declining social housing supply also continues to be a challenge. Among the main findings of the Commission, it recognizes that **improvements have been made** in a number of areas and that **Hungary is performing relatively well** on some indicators of the Social Scoreboard³⁰, e.g. in terms of employment and unemployment rates. Still, many questions remain unanswered regarding the European Semester.

On 23 January 2020, the European Parliament's (EP) Committee of DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EMPL) debated the EU Disability Strategy post-2020. MEPs agreed that the strategy should be in line with the UN's **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, therefore, EU funds should be spent in harmony with the Convention. There are 80 million people with disabilities in Europe, together with 46 million women. But **there are also types of disabilities that do not allow one to live independently**; the goal in this situation must be to harmonize the family and the official institutional circle, and to support helpers. It is our job to ensure that no one is left out of this social network, and **the provision meets a high quality regarding the conditions**.

The **2021–2027 programming period** is expected to summarize in one operational program the developments of seven human fields (*health, public education, social inclusion, social, family and youth policy, culture and sport*) related to the objectives of 'a more social Europe' and a Union which closer to its citizens.

³⁰ European Commission, social scoreboard.

In the **social field**, the goal of development is to have basic and ‘specialized social care’, ‘basic child welfare care’ and ‘child protection specialist care’ available with a satisfactory capacity and quality level. We would further improve the infrastructural conditions of *correctional education for youth*, and we would support the availability of a stable, committed, sufficient number of specialists with modern professional competencies.

To meet our Member State commitments and professional development guidelines, it is necessary to continue the transformation of a large number of social housing institutions and children's homes into community-based services by focusing on individual needs and developing personalized forms of services.

Although after a number of effective measures, the proportion of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion was 18.9% (it means it decreased by 40% compared to 2010, when it was 31.5%), and the number of individuals in severe material deprivation also decreased by almost 63%³¹, it is still necessary to continue the initiated measures in order to reduce more the ratio of affected.

We want to increase the domestic employment level of people with special working needs (especially people with disabilities) through competence development programs, training, mobility support, wage support, workplace adaptation, attitude formation, provision of services, development of local and regional employment programs which are contributing to the placement of the target group and employers.

The **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)** suggest solutions to the biggest challenges at the global level; 197 countries would need to meet these standards by 2030. The goals are hard to compare and measure and countries do not have enough (domestic nor international) pressure to move forward. Unfortunately, **out of 17 goals, there is progress in perhaps two of them**; the under-5 mortality rate fell, also there is a development to reduce new-born mortality (*goal number 3*), and children may access better education globally (*goal number 4*).

Summary

Currently, the changes in the world are not ideal for SDG to be achieved, such as eradicating poverty, eradicating hunger, making a living from decent work and prosperity, and reducing inequalities.

Against all efforts to achieve the goals in the EU an unexpected situation suddenly created shock and development came to a halt. Primarily, it was up to the Member States how they reacted and made the first step. Yet, a cooperating

³¹ Text from KSH, A szegénységgel vagy társadalmi kirekesztődéssel kapcsolatos fontosabb indikátorok, referencia év szerint, 2010–2018.

world will be a need for future generation. In crisis management, united risk-taking/management measures need to be considered together with solidarity and social pillars in the field of employment and social policy.

Hungary, just as the other Member States of the European Union, will continue to look ahead, plan and build a new system by increasing its adaptability to emerging challenges. To succeed we need to recognize that economic, social and environmental factors are interconnected elements of the social system and only with the adaptation of complex perspective can social development remain sustainable. Corresponding decisions on sustainability issues require multidisciplinary approach. One of these high priority areas is the social development related considerations of the 2021–27 programming period; where interrelated, interconnected aspects can become emphasised.

Jared Diamond, an internationally recognized biologist, came to the conclusion in his work, *'Collapse'* (2007)³² that those great civilizations that collapsed and disappeared, had mistreated their environment, although they had realised it, they failed to stop the destructive behaviour. Now, the world has stopped, and we hope, stillness will bring awareness.

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³² JARED DIAMOND (2007): *Collapse – How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. London.

