Universal Periodic Review

The rights of children in Hungary

UPR Pre-session
August 2026

Antónia Mészáros, Executive Director
UNICEF Hungary

UNICEF HUNGARY, CONTEXT AND OPPORTUNITY

1975	UNICEF has been represented in Hungary since 1975, advancing the rights of every child, particularly those in the most vulnerable situations.
NOV 2021	Hungary's previous UPR review took place in November 2021.
2010-2026	Civil society and professional dialogue operated in an increasingly restrictive and polarised environment, while child rights were often subordinated to political narratives.
2024–26	Two years of public debate over serious child-protection scandals, institutional failures and abuse significantly shaped the political transition following the April 2026 elections.
NOW	Child protection remains a government priority—creating a rare opportunity for measurable, rights-based and lasting reform.

FAMILY SEPARATION AND THE CHILD PROTECTION CRISIS

AVAILABLE DATA

- 17.4% of children live in relative income poverty. An estimated 7,000 of the 21,212 children in alternative care were separated primarily because of poverty or inadequate local services.

- In April 2026, 256 of the 325 babies and young children living in hospitals had no medical reason to remain there. Meanwhile, 1,364 children in unsafe family environments and 1,207 children already in care were waiting for an appropriate placement.

- An official survey found that 3,381 of 15,807 children in alternative care - more than one in five - had experienced abuse; 38% of guardians knew of at least one child sexually abused in care.

Sources: UNICEF Innocenti, Report Card 20 (2026); AJB-2026/2017; KSH and NNGYK data (2024-2025); Ministry of Social and Family Affairs and National Child Protection Service data (2026).

FAMILY SEPARATION AND THE CHILD PROTECTION CRISIS

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adequately fund preventive services, housing support and intensive family assistance so that no child is separated because of poverty or lack of services.
- Urgently ensure family-based placements for children stranded in hospitals or waiting in unsafe conditions, and expand professional foster and specialised care.
- Establish independent monitoring, confidential child-friendly complaint mechanisms, effective investigations, accountability, and trauma-informed support and remedy.

Sources: Hungarian Child Rights NGO Coalition recommendations (2025-2026); UNICEF Hungary submissions and analysis.

INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION

AVAILABLE DATA

- Hungary ranked 13th of 41 countries in UNICEF Innocenti Report Card 19, but the national average masks severe educational inequalities.

- More than 115,000 students have special educational needs, including 69,000 primary pupils - almost one in ten. Inclusion is hindered by staff shortages and the lack of enforceable minimum standards.

- Roma children with SEN were 2.5 times more likely to be diagnosed with mild intellectual disability. 62% attend predominantly Roma schools, while only 43% complete upper-secondary education, compared with 87% nationally.

Sources: UNICEF Innocenti, Report Card 19 (2025); KSH, Education Data 2025/2026; FRA, Roma Survey 2024 - Hungary (2025); Heves County government data (2021), cited by RPF.

INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE EDUCATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adopt a time-bound national desegregation strategy with measurable targets and independent monitoring.
- Guarantee quality inclusive education through enforceable standards, adequate funding and sufficient specialist staff.
- Ensure culturally fair, independent SEN assessments, nationwide monitoring and effective appeal mechanisms.

Sources: RPF/ERRC and PAE/RPF submissions; Hungarian Child Rights NGO Coalition recommendations (2026).

MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

AVAILABLE DATA

- More than half of school-aged children report multiple weekly psychosomatic symptoms, rising to 77% of 15-year-old girls and 49% of boys.

- Among school psychologists, 92% regularly encounter anxiety, 61% depression and 51% self-harm. Child-helpline contacts concerning self-harm rose from 301 in 2020 to 1,866 in 2025; suicide was discussed in 2,469 contacts in 2025.

- In 2024, 20,375 children were treated in only 16 psychiatric outpatient institutions, while inpatient care was available in only 8 of Hungary's 19 counties and Budapest.

Sources: HBSC Hungary (2022); UNICEF Hungary-supported survey of school and kindergarten psychologists (2025/2026); KSH and NNGYK data (2024); Kék Vonal Annual Report (2025).

MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adopt and fund a cross-sectoral national strategy focused on prevention, early intervention and measurable outcomes.
- Increase mental-health funding from an estimated 3-4% of the health budget towards the EU benchmark of 6%.
- Expand school psychology, mental-health education and child psychiatric and community services, with national monitoring and meaningful child participation.

Sources: OECD (2026); UNICEF Hungary-supported survey (2025/2026); Hungarian Child Rights NGO Coalition recommendations (2026).

unicef
minden gyerekért

Thank you for your attention!

Antónia Mészáros, Executive Director |
UNICEF Hungary