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“Promoting women’s economic empowerment through policy formulation and implementation”

Formulation and implementation of public policies and reforms to ensure equal opportunities and economic participation of women

The Government of Hungary is dedicated to empower women, which is impossible without a balance of career and family life. Since 2010 several measures were introduced by the Government contributing to the growth of the women’s employment and to the return of women with small children to the labour market.

Pointing out the latest improvements, there are currently more than 53000 nursery places available for children under 3 (which is a 67% increase since 2010) and nursery development is continuously going on. **A crucial step of the Hungarian women’s policy is that the rate of the infant care allowance (allowance for mothers until 168 days after birth) will increase from 70% to 100% from 1 July 2021.**

More over owing to the **Childcare Fee Extra** programme, mothers can return to the job market from the 6th month of their child’s age, while continuing to receive benefits. Both parents are granted **extra days-off** due to children and each parent can qualify for **child nursing fee** individually, thus eventually doubling the number of childcare days available in case of children between the ages of 3 and 12.

In order to facilitate the return of women to the job market, employees receive **contribution allowances for employing women with small children**, who may also choose to work 20 hours a week until the fourth year. Thanks to the **Women 40** programme, women who have fulfilled at least 40 years of eligibility period (employment, child raising periods) become eligible for a pension, regardless of their age. From 2020, all women with at least four children are completely **exempt from personal income tax** (15% currently) until retirement.

From 2018 **Family and Career Points** support the return of women to the labour market as well as their work-life balance with training, counselling, mentoring. By this time the results of the latest measures of the Government are clearly evidenced by statistical data. **The employment rate of women aged 20-64 was 67 % in 2020.**

The greatest increase in women's employment is detectable in the group of women raising small children. According to recent data available, the **unemployment rate of women has decreased to 3.5% in 2019** while in 2010 it was 10.7%.¹

Gender pay gap in Hungary shows a clear decrease. While in 2010 the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees was 17.6%, it was 14.2% in 2018.²

The Government of Hungary has adopted the Empowering Women in the Family and Society Action Plan in 2020 which brings in several measures supporting the employment of women. The Action Plan was developed by a multidisciplinary working group involving experts from different ministries. Furthermore, several NGOs attended the meeting of the Working Group. The Action Plan aims to further support the reconciliation of family life and work as well as the economic empowerment of women, which is proposed to be achieved by and through concrete measures such as:

- Promoting the division of labor between women and men;
- Increasing the recognition of women's "invisible", "unpaid" work through awareness raising campaign;
- Increasing the number of workplace nurseries and kindergartens, taking into account the capacity of kindergartens already in operation;
- Creating a family and child-friendly environment by introducing added tenders and awards;
- Facilitating the participation of women in areas where these levels are currently low.
- Promoting women's participation in decision-making, in terms of the political sphere by training and mentoring;
- Promoting women 's leadership within the business sector;
- Breaking down invisible barriers to women in science;
- Supporting the orientation of girls and women towards STEM (mathematics, science, engineering, IT) careers.

The Hungarian Government has taken the appropriate steps in order to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the current financial situation as well as the everyday lives of women. Women with small children could find themselves in an especially problematic situation due to the effects of COVID-19. These women are supported by the Hungarian Government by and through the following measures.

During the state of emergency, the conditions for receiving benefits for families raising children were facilitated by the Government so that no one, including parents raising their children alone, would be deprived of these benefits as a result of the new circumstances that have arisen as a result of the coronavirus. This way, the disbursement of **family benefits was automatically prolonged.** With these measures the **preservation of jobs of women** was supported as well, because during the difficult economic situation in the period of state of

¹ Source: Eurostat TESEM120 (date of download: 19/05/2021)

² Source: Eurostat TESEM180 (date of download: 19/05/2021)

emergency they were allowed to stay on unpaid leave in case they received child care fee or child care allowance.

As a result of the epidemic, extraordinary breaks were ordered in many kindergartens and nurseries **during the first wave of COVID-19**. It was mandatory for the mayors of the settlements and capital districts to **provide on-call service of childcare** free of charge for children (with child catering) whose placement could not be solved otherwise. **During the second and third wave of COVID-19 nursery care was continuously provided**, only some institutions or groups were closed, because of the low level of infectedness in the nursery system.

Workplace childcare service could be established by any employer who needs to solve the daily care of the children of their employees. There is no operating licence needed for the establishment of the service, it is enough to report it to the given local authority/capital district authority and have permission for operation from the public health institution.

The **Women for Hungary Club** gave awards to women who were coping with the **difficulties of the COVID-19 crisis** with their outstanding performance, endurance and courage in areas where it was essential to slow down the spread of the epidemic, to prevent and treat the disease, to reduce its negative effects or to ensure living conditions. The main prize was gross HUF 5 million (USD 16,394) and the work of women was acknowledged in four categories: health, social care, education and an 'other' category. In each category five remarkable women were rewarded.

Within the framework of the Economy Protection Action Plan among other crucial sectors most affected by COVID-19 and industries with extensive traditions in Hungary received extra funding, tax cuts and wage subsidies such as **tourism, creative industry, health industry and food industry**.