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General Debate - Statement by Hungary

Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

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Intervention by

H.E. Ambassador Katalin Bogyay

Permanent Representative

Madame/Mr Chair, Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

I am honoured and pleased to address the Commission on behalf of the Government of Hungary. The provision of responsive and inclusive social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure are particularly important tools to ensure the full enjoyment of the human rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights of all women and girls, and for achieving gender equality and their empowerment.

Please allow me to give an insight on how Hungary brings systematic change in the lives of women and girls.

Women, and especially women with children are unequally affected by poverty, often due to a persistent gender pay gap, occupational segregation and a glass ceiling in the workplace, as well as a disproportionate amount of unpaid care and domestic work at home. In response, Hungary put in place supportive, stable, targeted and flexible social and family policies, doubling the budget for family policy in the last 8 years. Measures include paid childcare leave for three years, a generous family tax benefit, family allowances, housing subsidies and the progressive release of student loans of women with two or more children.

In order to make sure that women have equally beneficial options both if they choose to stay home with their children after childbirth or return to the labour market, responsive and tailored childcare and employment policies have been developed.

Concerning childcare, the Government increased the number of nursery places by 50% in the past 9 years, and introduced new, flexible and personalised forms of daycare. Local authorities are obliged to set up day-care in case the number of children of the settlement below the age of 3 exceeds 40, or at least 5 families express their need for children's daycare. Children of single-parent families enjoy priority at admission. Mothers and fathers in vulnerable situations are supported in parenthood by the so-called Sure Start Programme, which engage parents, parents-to-be, children, and professionals to promote children's physical, intellectual and social development.

Women's opportunities to excel in their career without compromising on their family and private life are promoted by comprehensive policies. Women are entitled to part-time employment until their child reaches 3 years of age; one parent remains eligible for child home care allowance even after re-taking their jobs, and companies are incentivised to hire women with young children with a contribution allowance. The Government-funded so-called "Family and Career Points" offer entrepreneurial and skills trainings to women. The Government introduced a programme to support Roma women in obtaining qualifications and finding employment in social and childcare institutions.

Ending all forms of violence and abuse against women and girls is a priority for Hungary. Domestic violence is a stand-alone criminal offence in the new Hungarian Criminal Code. The Government-established “Crisis Centres” offer accommodation as well as psychological and legal counselling for survivors of domestic violence and their children. “Secret Shelters” are open for those whose life is in imminent danger. “Halfway Houses” facilitate the reintegration of survivors with housing for 5 years as well as legal and psychological assistance. Victims of human trafficking can use a 24-hour hotline, and find protection and support services in “Transitional shelters”. And finally, “Crisis Ambulances” serve for prevention and the reinforcement of regional cooperation of institutions involved in combating domestic violence.

Concerning **access to health care and sustainable infrastructure in health care**, the “Healthy Hungary 2014–2020 Healthcare Sectoral Strategy”, together with several health policy programmes, aim to achieve the highest attainable standard of health for all. The Government recently launched the system-level transformation of obstetrics care to make high quality and family-friendly care available to all.

Thank you for your attention.