



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF BOYS



HUNGARY REPORT

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Cover illustrations:

The illustrations on the cover of this report depict environments and situations relevant to the sexual exploitation of boys in Hungary. From top to bottom:

Public transport hubs are often identified as locations where sexual exploitation of boys occurs; boys are trafficked along the Eastern Mediterranean migration route through Hungary; sexual exploitation has been known to occur in the context of institutional care settings.

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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Violence against children, including child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), is estimated to affect millions of children worldwide and no country or region is ‘immune’.¹ It has the potential to impact upon children in all socio-economic groups, of all educational levels, and across all ethnic and cultural groups.² While data about sexual exploitation of all children is generally lacking, this is even more so when looking at boys specifically. For example, in the rare cases that countries collect prevalence data on sexual exploitation and abuse of children, samples are often limited to adolescent girls, obscuring any understanding of the unique experiences and vulnerabilities of boys.³ In recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of the gap in the global understanding of how boys are impacted by sexual exploitation,⁴ and the limited evidence available suggests that in certain contexts, boys are just as heavily impacted as girls, and in some contexts, maybe even more.⁵

The significance and influence of gender norms around masculinity and femininity are important to consider in understanding child sexual exploitation and abuse, and we can observe that what is attributed to one gender, is often denied to others. These norms typically hold that males are strong and invulnerable, less likely to be victimised and seriously affected, and more resilient - while females are considered vulnerable, more often abused and exploited, or more affected by abuse and in need of support. Such beliefs often hamper equitable and necessary discourse on the sexual exploitation of children of all genders, but especially for boys where the development of policies, practices, advocacy, and research methodologies about

the sexual exploitation of children regularly underrepresented, or even completely exclude boys. “While many vulnerability factors for sexual exploitation and abuse are common to all genders, boys’ access to support is unquestioningly conditioned by gender norms, constraining their help-seeking behaviour and their ability to seek care.”⁶

While these circumstances should by no means detract attention from continued research, advocacy, and support for girls subjected to sexual exploitation, there is a clear need for greater advocacy, understanding and a higher quality evidence-based on the sexual exploitation of children of all genders, to better inform all work to prevent and respond appropriately to their needs.

A Global Boys’ Initiative

As the programmatic responses to identify and meet the needs of boys are scarce, ECPAT International launched the *Global Boys’ Initiative* to explore the sexual exploitation of boys, activating our worldwide network of member organisations in a range of research and response activities focused on boys. To meet the initial challenge of such limited data, in 2020-21, the Global Boys’ Initiative embarked on a series of research projects in ten countries around the world, to shed light on understanding sexual exploitation involving boys, what factors lead to their vulnerability and increased risk, and what their needs are in terms of prevention, protection and support services. Much of this initial research phase was generously funded

- 1 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on VAC. (2019, July). *Keeping the Promise: Ending Violence against Children by 2030*. New York: United Nations.
- 2 ECPAT International. (2020). *Summary paper: Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism*. ECPAT International: Bangkok.
- 3 The Economist Intelligence Unit. (2018). *Methodology paper Out of the Shadows: Shining light on the response to child sexual abuse and exploitation – a 40-country benchmarking index*, London: The Economist Intelligence Unit.
- 4 Josenhans, V., Kavenagh, M., Smith, S., & Wekerle, C. (2020). *Gender, rights, and responsibilities: the need for a global analysis of the sexual exploitation of boys*. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 110 (1).
- 5 Davis, J. and Miles, G. (2019). ‘They Shamed Me’: *An Exploratory Study on the Vulnerabilities of Street-Involved Boys to Sexual Exploitation in Manila, Philippines*.
- 6 Josenhans, V., Kavenagh, M., Smith, S., & Wekerle, C. (2020). *Gender, rights, and responsibilities: the need for a global analysis of the sexual exploitation of boys*. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 110 (1).

by SIDA, which allowed primary research to be conducted through partnerships between the ECPAT International secretariat and national ECPAT member organisations.

This report

The Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation⁷ has been working to raise awareness on children's rights and at the forefront of actions to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation of children in Hungary since 2015 and has been a member of the global ECPAT International network since March 2020. In partnership with the ECPAT International secretariat, they led this ground-breaking research project into the sexual exploitation of boys in Hungary during 2020-21, with results captured in this report.

The project in Hungary included the following activities:

- A survey of frontline social support workers from a range of services in Hungary, most likely to have contact with boys who have experienced sexual exploitation or abuse.
- 'Survivor Conversations' with young men who had experienced sexual exploitation - exploring their lived experiences and perspectives related to gender norms, seeking, and receiving support, the quality of services, and their recommendations for positive change.
- An analysis of Hungary's legal framework that protects children from sexual exploitation, with a focus on boys.

The findings captured in this report are intended to identify existing strengths, areas for improvement, and inform service improvements to ensure that they are gender-sensitive and accessible for children of all genders. It is hoped that the findings will also contribute significantly to breaking down the stigma and taboos surrounding boys' experiences of sexual exploitation and abuse in Hungary. Clear, actionable recommendations that are driven by the evidence, are also provided.

7 See: Hintalovon | Child Rights Foundation Website.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Hungary is situated in Central Europe with a population of almost 10 million people, 16% of which are children under the age of 18.⁸ While there is a scarcity of specific and wide-ranging research focusing on the sexual exploitation and abuse of boys, several factors have been identified as having influence. It is established that poverty increases vulnerability to sexual exploitation of children,⁹ and in 2019, 21.6% of Hungarian children aged 0-16 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion,¹⁰ with Roma children identified to be at higher risk than others. Research carried out in Hungary in 2015 also indicates that substance misuse by victims of sexual exploitation can both be the cause and the consequence of sexual exploitation.¹¹

Globally, institutional care facilities have been linked to the risk of trafficking and recruitment of male and female children for sexual exploitation.¹² In 2019, data indicated a high number of Hungarian children were institutionalised, with over 20,000 in residential centres in the country.¹³ Roma children are also overrepresented when it comes to interventions relating to social services, with disproportionate numbers taken from their families into government run care.¹⁴ One of the few studies of sexual exploitation in Hungary to include boys, indicated that some boys are exploited in prostitution, and noted instances of younger boys in institutional care settings being recruited by older peers.¹⁵ Child care institutions in Hungary operate in ways that

allow children to engage with the rest of the community with little supervision and monitoring, and while good intentioned, this 'open door' approach brings risks. Cases where residential facility staff members were involved in facilitating sexual exploitation have been documented.¹⁶ Ombudsman investigations in 2011¹⁷ and 2019¹⁸ highlighted these circumstances and led to some government responses - with specific legal regulation and educational programmes.

Data from the criminal justice sector in Hungary confirms that boys are being subjected to sexual crimes, although very low numbers. This should not necessarily be seen as low incidence – it could be a reflection of boys' reluctance to disclose or seek help. In 2020, 102 boys were registered as victims of different forms of sexual abuse and exploitation, and just six boys were registered in official crime statistics as victims of exploitation in prostitution,¹⁹ while data from Victim Support Services²⁰ in the same year indicates that only seven boys received financial or other forms of support from the Victim Support Services.²¹ Further, taking into consideration that a relatively low proportion of children affected by CSEA are believed to report to the authorities, the number of children who are victims of sexual exploitation is likely to be much higher than those reported in official crime statistics.

Boys' vulnerability to online forms of child sexual exploitation in Hungary was highlighted in a 2019

8 UNICEF. (2021). *The State of the World's Children 2021. On my Mind: Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health*. UNICEF, New York. 189.

9 ECPAT International. (2016). *Power, Impunity and Anonymity*. 43.

10 EUROSTAT. (2019). *People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex*.

11 Baracsi. K, Katona. N, Sebhelyi. V, & Vidra. Z. (2015). *Child Trafficking in Hungary: Sexual Exploitation, Forced Begging and Pickpocketing*. 176.

12 LUMOS Foundation. (2020). *Cracks in the system: Child trafficking in the context of institutional care in Europe*. Lumos Foundation.

13 According to the data of the [Hungarian Central Statistical Office](#), in 2019 the number of children living in special child protection care (in orphanages or at foster parents) was over 20,000, 10,802 boys, and 10,074 girls lived in special child protection care.

14 Kinga Júlia Király, Gábor Bernáth and Jenő Seté. (2021). *Roma in Hungary: The Challenges of Discrimination*. [Minority Rights Group Europe](#).

15 Baracsi. K, Katona. N, Sebhelyi. V, & Vidra. Z. (2015). *Child Trafficking in Hungary: Sexual Exploitation, Forced Begging and Pickpocketing*.

16 *Ibid.*, 69.

17 OCFR. (2011). *Report of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights in case No. AJB-2031/2011*.

18 OCFR. (2019). *Report of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights in case No. AJB-1485/2018*.

19 Unified Investigation and Prosecution Crime Statistics. (2020). 'Exploitation of child prostitution'.

20 Ministry of Justice. (2021). Public interest date request on the support provided to child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.

21 It should be noted that boys who have received financial or other forms of support from the Victim Support Services will not necessarily be included in official crime statistics as a conviction or judicial decision is not required for children to access these services. However, awareness of these services is so limited that children who could utilise these services often do not.

study, where for example it was found that boys responded more often than girls to requests for sexual photos in chat conversations.²² While only 24 Hungarian boy victims are noted in formal crime statistics for forms of online sexual exploitation in 2020,²³ global trends show that this context poses expanding risks to children.²⁴ COVID-19 movement restrictions - where school closures and confinement at home meant more time spent online - may have increased the exposure of children to online risks, and Hungary was no exception.²⁵

The Eastern Mediterranean migration route crosses through Hungary. It is estimated that one and a half million people from the Middle East, West and South Asia, and the Horn of Africa travelled this route since 2015 in order to enter the EU and apply for asylum, or remain without regular immigration status.²⁶ It has previously been noted that in the European migrant crisis, unaccompanied minors were almost exclusively boys, likely due to gendered beliefs that young men and boys can 'take care of themselves'.²⁷ While public data in Hungary on migrant children affected by sexual exploitation is not available, the increased vulnerability of unaccompanied boys means there is a significant chance they may have fallen victim to sexual exploitation to earn money either to survive, or to pay smugglers for their onward journeys.

Encouragingly, Hungarian legislation affords equal protection to boys and girls, and laws have been modified to ensure the wider protection of victims of sexual exploitation. However, challenges have been identified with legislation relating to the exploitation of children in prostitution and trafficking of children for sexual purposes. These challenges include distinguishing between offences of procuring a child for the purpose of prostitution, and the trafficking of a child for sexual purposes - and has led to

difficulties with prosecution efforts - an issue that is likely amplified when applied to boys, due to gendered perceptions that overlook boys' victimisation and views boys as more likely to be criminals and delinquents, than victims.²⁸

Several systemic challenges are evident within the current arrangements for addressing CSEA. Hungary's Child Protection Act outlines an 'alert or referral system' comprising health support workers, general practitioners, the police, educational institutions, child welfare institutions and the guardianship authority, who are all responsible for coordinating to identify and report child sexual exploitation crimes.²⁹ However, the alert system is far from successful due to a lack of information and inadequacies experienced by members, the high number of cases and the low number of professionals. The institutions also do not have the resources, the capacity or knowledge to prevent and recognise the trafficking of children for sexual or other purposes.³⁰ Therefore, many cases are not identified, and it remains difficult for stakeholders to provide the appropriate assistance to vulnerable children.³¹ The 2021 US Trafficking in Persons report also stated that services provided for survivors are scarce, uncoordinated, and inadequate.³²

The current political context in Hungary is unwelcoming to the diverse sexual orientation or gender identity, SOGIE community. In 2020, the Hungarian Constitution was modified to explicitly state that 'the mother of a child is a woman, and the father is a man'.³³ Hungary's Parliament also voted in June 2021 to adopt legislation that would increase sentences for sex crimes against children. A few days before the final vote, the governing party added provisions that prohibit discussing (or featuring in the media for children under 18) issues related to people of diverse sexual orientation or gender identity. Critics have

22 BeSocial. (2019). [Hungarian Teens on the Internet 2019](#).

23 Unified Investigation and Prosecution Crime Statistics. (2020). 'Child pornography'.

24 ECPAT International. (2020). [Summary Paper: Online Sexual Exploitation](#).

25 INTERPOL. (2020). [Threats and Trends: Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse - COVID-19 Impact](#).

26 Healy, C. (2019). [The Strength to Carry On: Resilience and Vulnerability to Trafficking and Other Abuses among People Travelling along Migration Routes to Europe - Briefing Paper](#). 30.

27 ECPAT International. (2020). [Summary Paper: Exploitation of Children in Prostitution](#). 8.

28 Josenhans, V; Kavenagh, M; Smith, S; Wekerle, C. (2020). [Gender, rights, and responsibilities: The need for a global analysis of the sexual exploitation of boys](#). 4.

29 Parliament of Hungary. (1997). [Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and the Guardianship Administration](#). Section 17.

30 Baracsi, K, Katona, N, Sebhelyi, V, & Vidra, Z. (2015). [Child Trafficking in Hungary: Sexual Exploitation, Forced Begging and Pickpocketing](#).

31 ECPAT International and Hıntalovon Child Rights Foundation. (2021). [ECPAT Country Overview: Hungary](#). Bangkok: ECPAT International.

32 US Department of State. (2021). [2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: Hungary](#).

33 Parliament of Hungary. (2011). [Fundamental Law of Hungary](#). Article L (1).

raised serious concerns that the legislation may be used to target the diverse SOGIE community, at the least because this inclusion to this law links people with diverse sexuality to sex crimes against children in the public discourse.³⁴ This environment is likely to emphasise barriers to disclosure encountered by boys subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse - especially when the offender involved is male - due to fears that the victims may be perceived as gay (regardless of their sexuality).

In addition, informants from previous research in Hungary revealed the harmful societal view that sexual exploitation of children (SEC) is considered an expression of boys' homosexuality and, therefore, it is not the responsibility of society to support victims

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEGAL COMMITMENTS

Hungary has demonstrated its commitment to the protection of children's rights through ratifying several international and regional instruments to protect children against sexual exploitation. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),³⁵ considered to be the main international instrument underpinning the protection and defence of children's rights, was ratified by Hungary in 1991. This convention is the primary international document that contains provisions to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

In 2000, in response to the rising concern of trafficking of children for sexual exploitation as well as other forms of sexual abuse and exploitation, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC)³⁶ was adopted. The OPSC

was ratified by Hungary in 2010, emphasising its continued engagement with the international response to the sexual exploitation of children.

Hungary last reported to the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the implementation of the CRC and OPSC at country level in 2020. Whilst the Committee did not include any recommendations specifically related to boys within its observations, it did call on Hungary to amend the Criminal Code in order to: extend the increased protection from sexual violence committed against children to all children under the age of 18 years, ensure the development of comprehensive strategies and coordination mechanisms to prevent and address sexual exploitation of children and conduct more research on the identification of child sexual exploitation and its handling in child protection.³⁷

Hungary has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, which specifically recognises that children have the right to appeal to international mechanisms specific to them, when national mechanisms fail to address violations effectively.³⁸ In 2019, as a response to a request by the Ombudsman, the Secretary of State for Family and Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Human Resources indicated that preparations for accession to the Protocol have begun.³⁹ At the time of the writing of this report the Protocol has still not been ratified and no further updates are available.

Beyond the CRC and its protocols, there are numerous instruments that have been adopted by the international community in its attempt to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse. The International Labour Organisation Convention No. 182 Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention No. 182)⁴⁰ was ratified by Hungary in 2000, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and

34 Human Rights Watch. (2021). [Political Homophobia Ramps Up](#).

35 United Nations. (1989). [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

36 UN General Assembly. (2000, May 25). [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#).

37 United Nations Committee on the Rights of Child. (2020). [Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Hungary, C RC/C/HUN/CO/6](#).

38 UN General Assembly. (2011). [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure](#). UN Doc. A/RES/66/138.

39 OCFR. (n.d.). [At the initiative of the Ombudsman, preparations began for the government's decision to accede to the Additional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

40 ILO. (1999). [Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. \(1999\). \(No. 182\)](#).

Children supplementing the UN convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UN Trafficking Protocol)⁴¹ in 2006. Through ratifying these instruments and agreeing to ensure their effective implementation and enforcement, Hungary has endeavoured to adopt legislative measures to effectively prohibit sexual exploitation of children.

As a member of the European Union since 2004, Hungary has also been active and engaged on a more regional level, ratifying a number of important instruments that form the backbone of the regional response to the sexual exploitation of children. This included the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings⁴² on 4th April 2013, signifying its intent to combat the trafficking of human beings

and to protect the human rights of, and guarantee protection and assistance to, all its victims. In addition, Hungary ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention)⁴³ on 4th December 2003. This Convention prescribes a number of offences relating to online child sexual exploitation and underlines Hungary's pledge to safeguard children from the online threats to which they may be vulnerable. Finally, the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) was ratified on 3 August 2015.⁴⁴ In doing so, Hungary recognised the need to focus on the preventive, protective and criminal law aspects of the fight against all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children.

41 UNHCR. (2000). [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.](#)

42 Council of Europe. (2005). [Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.](#)

43 Council of Europe. (2001). [Convention on Cybercrime.](#)

44 Council of Europe. (2007). [Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.](#)

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH METHODS

The main purpose of the research in Hungary was to build an empirical foundation for an increased understanding of the sexual exploitation of boys. To generate new primary data, the methodology included a frontline support workers survey with both quantitative and qualitative components, qualitative survivor conversations with young men affected by sexual exploitation and abuse, and documentary analysis of national legislation related to sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

Frontline support workers' survey

The frontline support workers' survey aims to measure the access to, and quality and effectiveness of support services regarding sexual exploitation and abuse that are available to boys in Hungary. The survey findings identify strengths and areas of improvement, and underpin recommendations for service improvements and skills and knowledge training.

Rationale

Workforce surveys have increasingly been used as a tool in research to gain an understanding of the effectiveness of social support systems. Most commonly these surveys are used by health⁴⁵ and social work professions⁴⁶ to measure service delivery effectiveness and to examine the efficiency of public spending.

Social support to children who are subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse is generally provided within the broader context of child protection. We therefore developed and delivered a survey for child protection workers, and those most likely to come into contact with children. The survey explored perceptions related to the

sexual exploitation of boys, factors related to boys' access to these services, perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of services in supporting boys, as well as details about the nature of their direct work with children.

Sample

Organisations in Hungary who provide child protection support services were identified by the Hıntalovon Child Rights Foundation. While the research focus was boys, very few services focus only on this cohort, therefore, the sample includes a range of support workers working on sexual exploitation of children in any form. Once identified, survey administrators from the Hıntalovon Child Rights Foundation contacted them to explain the survey and invite the participation of staff. Participants were included on the basis that they were over 18 years of age, had spent at least 12 months working in the field of social work, psychology, medicine or welfare, and had directly managed their own caseload –that included children. Their caseload in the last year must also have included some cases of sexual exploitation of children.

The sample was conveniently identified, and thus is not representative of the entire population of frontline support workers in Hungary. The sampled organisations were also mostly urban based, though such social support services do tend to be concentrated in more populated urban areas anyway. These potential geographical limitations to service accessibility are explored in the data. Further to this, different types of support services were included in the sample design.

A total of 33 frontline support workers from Hungary who currently provide services for child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse fully completed the survey. An additional three partial

45 Magadzire, P M et al. (2014, November). [Frontline health workers as brokers: provider perceptions, experiences and mitigating strategies to improve access to essential medicines in South Africa.](#)

46 Sadeghi, T and Fekjaer, S. (2018). [Frontline workers' competency in activation work.](#) *International Journal of Social Welfare.* 77-88; Netsayi, M. (2019). [Perceptions of frontline social workers on their contribution's agenda for social work and social development.](#)

responses were also included in the analysis for the completed items, as more than 80% of questions were answered.

The survey

Self-administered online tools alone (emailing a survey link) have notoriously low participation rates. Thus, the design opted for in-person administration, although using an online tool. Appointments were made with eligible staff for the survey administrators from Hıntalovon to contact them, explain the consent process and assist with administering the survey via an online link. COVID-19 restrictions limited the possibilities for face-to-face administration. Therefore, this stage was mainly completed by phone call or virtually while administrators remained on standby via chat apps and telephone to support and troubleshoot as the participant completed the survey. Data collection took place in April and May 2021.

The online survey consisted of 121 multiple choice and short open answer questions and was developed in English in consultation with the Global Boys Initiative Steering Committee. The draft tool was then translated to Hungarian, and in collaboration between ECPAT International and the Hıntalovon Child Rights Foundation, was checked and contextualised, and pilot-tested with a small number of local social support workers.

Analysis

Following data collection, data was cleaned, and open-ended responses were translated to English. Survey output was integrated into a custom analytical framework created using Google Sheets. Additional analysis was then conducted based upon critical themes and patterns that arose from the data. Qualitative analytical components were then added to the framework, and thematic analyses were conducted for each variable. Analysis and writing were completed by two international experts with specialisation in male vulnerability.

In the findings, quantitative and qualitative themes and patterns are explored, with direct (translated) quotes illustrating the dominant

narratives emerging from the quantitative data, along with occasional dissenting views (where available). Care was taken during analysis not to present any qualitative responses that may have identified participants. Once completed, the analysts consulted with Hıntalovon to explore for further insights and to validate the findings.

It should be noted that the data is not statistically representative of the experiences of all frontline support workers in Hungary, however, the estimates, perceptions and experiences reported here, offer valuable insight into an under-researched area, and shed light on the access and quality of social support for boys subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse in Hungary. Many participants shared additional observations and illustrative anecdotes for open response items throughout the survey that further named challenges and potential opportunities for action and progress in this area.

Survivor conversations

These conversations aimed to build on the limited understanding of the experiences male survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse, including their experiences of accessing support, and the ways that gender norms influence their lives and their experiences of seeking and receiving help. Additionally, the conversations aimed to measure their perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of existing services and gathered recommendations for improvements.

Rationale

ECPAT International recognises that engaging survivors of child sexual exploitation in research requires substantial care to accommodate a range of ethical considerations in any design,⁴⁷ and places significant value on survivors having the right to participate in discourse safely, actively, and meaningfully on issues that impact them so deeply. “Research involving children in these contexts can realise their right to participation by providing a way to amplify children’s voices, challenge the culture of silence in which abuse thrives – if it is done carefully to ensure that children don’t experience harm.”⁴⁸ This is an integral principle guiding this research activity –

47 ECPAT International. (2019). *Guidelines for Ethical Research on Sexual Exploitation Involving Children*. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

48 *Ibid.*

to centre survivors as having control over sharing their perspectives, on their terms.

To ensure that the voices of male survivors were meaningfully included in this research project, ECPAT International developed a comprehensive, participant-centred, ethically sound and trauma-informed approach with the help of internationally recognised experts who had extensive experience working with male survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation. The ‘conversations’ were designed to engage in dialogue with young male survivors on issues which mattered to them, and explore their lived experiences through a range of person-centered, ethical, respectful and psychologically-safe activities.

ECPAT International places great value on partnerships across the global network, and is also highly committed to supporting the development of expertise through collaborative and co-creative approaches. Therefore, after facilitating an assessment of learning needs - training and technical support was provided by the experts to the Hıntalovon team. A series of online meetings, with activities and exercises between them was completed over a number of months to help sensitise the team to key issues in working with male survivors. Together the experts and the Hungarian team jointly developed a range of tools and exercises to actively engage participants in the conversations.

Sample

Extensive efforts were made to identify up to 10 participants that met careful inclusion criteria such as being connected to psychosocial support services, and being assessed by their supporting professionals as in a psychologically safe position to engage. Adequate time since their abuse occurred needed also to have passed. However, identifying participants proved very difficult, further exacerbated by COVID-19 constraints.

The original intention was to engage with boys and young men aged between 18 and 24 years however this range was expanded as a result of sampling difficulties. Ultimately four men aged between 27 and 35 years of age who had

experienced sexual exploitation and abuse as children took part in 1-1 conversations in May and June of 2021.

An important learning that emerged during the sampling process, as well as during the conversations with the young men that took part, was that neither the term ‘survivor’ nor ‘victim’ suited well with the way that the young men understood or defined themselves. As noted in the Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: “just as people (including children) may reject the term ‘victim’ and see it as a label they do not identify with, the same could happen with the term ‘survivor.’”⁴⁹ As young men didn’t necessarily identify with these labels, they may not have felt comfortable to take part in research as we had characterised it. It is advised that more neutral terms (like ‘children subjected to sexual exploitation’) are instead used.

Conversations approach

The conversations were carefully designed to take place in an interactive style, rather than a traditional form of research interview. The advantages of this design is that it is attentive to the nature and sensitivities of the topic, and promotes choice and empowerment, placing high value on the fact that participants have, and perceive themselves to have, significant control over what they share with the research team. As such, participants are able to contribute verbally, but also through a range of specifically designed tools and activities, providing choice and a range of creative opportunities for expression that are appropriate to the Hungarian context.

A range of creative tools to facilitate the conversations were therefore specifically developed following training and co-creative activities facilitated by ECPAT International with the Hıntalovon Child Rights Foundation team. Specific details of the tools and how they were used is included in Appendix 1.

Analysis

The research did not seek to ask the participants about the specifics of the exploitation that they

49 Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2016, January 28). [Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#). Bangkok: ECPAT International. 80.

were subjected to. The conversations aimed to gain insight into the experiences around their exploitation in Hungary, and to support them to share their unique perspectives on how to improve the situation for others.

The conversations initially explored what it means to 'be a boy in Hungary', eliciting ideas about how they experience gender norms in their daily lives. This activity broke the ice while also creating a foundation for further understanding their lived experiences prior to their exploitation. Norms were also used to understand their experiences, 'world views' and behaviours before, during and after those events, including those related to help-seeking. The themes broadly explored were:

- Participants' experiences of seeking and receiving help and support (access barriers, quality of services);
- Needs and gaps in support;
- Recommendations for improvements.

Whilst participants may have received formal support, their responses were not restricted to speaking only of these. They were encouraged to share their ideas about informal sources of support in the widest sense, including family, friends and community members.

At the end of the conversations, the facilitators analysed the data and developed brief reports that was then made available to the participants for feedback and additional inputs. Data from that report is consolidated into this country report.

Legislative analysis

The documentary legislative analysis aimed to identify legal gaps, barriers and opportunities in addressing the sexual exploitation of children, with a focus on boys. It adopted a standardised review method. Specifically, a checklist including approximately 120 points and sub-points was created by ECPAT International to support the analysis for all countries in the Global Boys'

Initiative. Staff from Hıntalovon Child Rights Foundation explored the national legislation and completed the checklist, followed by research staff from ECPAT International using this information to inform further analysis, and compile a narrative. This draft was then validated and confirmed in collaboration between the two teams and makes up Chapter 6 of this report. The findings identify areas for advocacy to amend and improve legal responses.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given the inherent vulnerability of children, research on child sexual abuse and exploitation must be designed in ways that abide by strict ethical standards.⁵⁰ For this project, ECPAT International convened a panel of three global experts for an independent third-party review of our proposed methodology. A detailed research protocol that included mitigations for ethical risks, along with draft tools, was developed and shared with the panel. Detailed feedback from the panel was accommodated in two rounds of review before the project commenced.

As detailed above, the Hıntalovon team participated in extensive preparations together with the two experts prior to conducting the conversations. The team therefore learnt from each other in terms of methodology, and appropriateness for the Hungarian context to ensure the most ethical and appropriate conduct. Together, the team completed a 'risk and benefits' analysis, as described in ECPAT's comprehensive guidelines, during planning.⁵¹ The process for obtaining informed consent included a pre-meeting to discuss and plan the process with the boys and their parents before a second meeting took place for the conversations. See Appendix 1 for more details.

Informed consent was obtained as an integrated part of the online survey tool. To protect confidentiality, names were not requested at any stage of completing the survey.

50 ECPAT International. (2019). *Guidelines for Ethical Research on Sexual Exploitation Involving Children*. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

51 *Ibid.*

LIMITATIONS

For the frontline support workers' survey

A limitation occurred because of our inclusion criteria. During design, our intent was to include frontline support workers who had recent experience of supporting children directly. Thus, inclusion criteria included requirements of recent work with children “within the last 12 months”. As data collection occurred in the first half of 2021, the impacts of COVID-19 restricted some support workers from engaging in direct client work, so some of these exclusions may have been because of COVID-19 restrictions, rather than related to whether their role was frontline or not. Although 113 surveys were attempted, 40 were disqualified by hurdle questions.

Additionally, the sample did not include workers of the national Victim Support Service as permission for them to participate from the Ministry of Justice could not be obtained. However, some municipal government workers of the child welfare services were included in the sample.

For the survivor conversations

The COVID-19 pandemic created many logistical challenges to be negotiated – specifically limitations on face-to-face meetings and that children living in government facilities were not allowed to leave premises, excluding their possible participation. While it was considered, virtual interactions for these sensitive conversations was ruled out as the confidentiality and psychological safety of participants could not be guaranteed.

COVID-19 related concerns also influenced personal decisions to participate by children, caregivers and workers. (It should be noted that the safety of staff members and participants was also taken into consideration, with Hinalovon implementing its own COVID-19 safety measures for all in-person interactions).

Despite extensive efforts to recruit a group of boys and young men, the team was only able to recruit four participants. Given the unique circumstances at the time, while these four men did not meet the initial sampling criteria of 18-24 years of age, the value of proceeding with the conversations justified proceeding. Our sampling challenges demonstrate the need to invest time and effort in explaining research and addressing concerns of partner organisations likely having contact with male survivors.

FRONTLINE SUPPORT WORKERS

OVERVIEW OF SAMPLE

The 36 support workers are drawn from twelve different cities, with 16 participants (44%) from Budapest, five (14%) from Miskolc in the northeast of the country, and four (11%) from Győr in the northwest. Notably, all but six participants (83%) were female. All but six participants (83%) worked for municipal governments, four (11%) worked for non-government organisations, and one was from a faith-based organisation. As noted in the methods, no participants linked to bodies of the national government were able to participate.

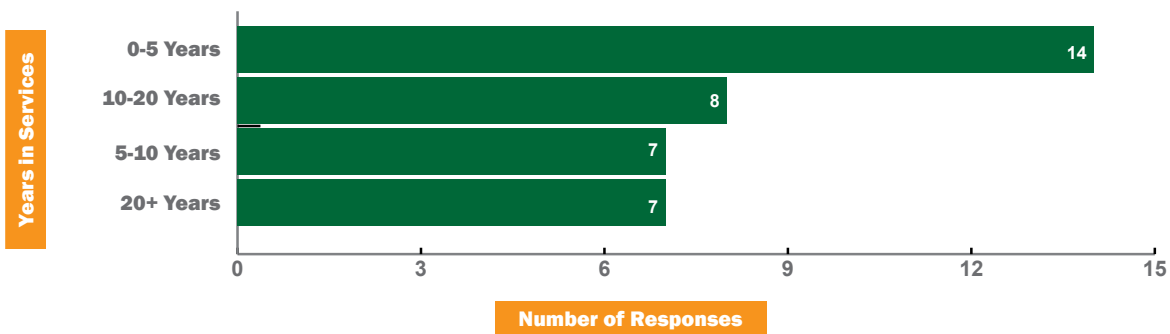
Eighty-one percent of participants described working in an urban setting and seven participants (19%) worked in a rural setting, among these, three said their work included both urban and rural settings. Among the seven support workers who worked in rural settings, two worked for municipal governments.

SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED

All participants provided some form of one-on-one counselling, and the majority provided some form of social economic support, including legal services or the provision of basic supplies (food, clothing, etc). Physical or mental health services were the most frequently noted. Counselling was further described in three ways:

- **“Social educators” or school counsellors (47%):** This included general counselling (n=8), community based support (n=4) and specific psychological or psychiatric services (n=3) within schools.
- **Social workers (22%):** This theme included complex and formal involvement with clients, their families, and their communities. These participants described a range of services including general counselling within communities, as well as focuses on targeted populations.

Figure 1. Years of experience supporting children (n=36).



Respondents were, overall, tertiary educated with 67% having a Bachelor’s degree, and a further 31% holding a Master’s degree or PhD. Just one respondent had no tertiary training. Well over half of participants had fewer than 10 years of experience, with the largest proportion (39%) having less than five years of experience. Nineteen percent (n=7) had more than 20 years of experience.

- **Psychological/therapeutic counselling (22%):** This included in clinical and institutional settings, and both general and specialist psychological services.

Other supports included physical and mental healthcare, sexual health services, group psychosocial support and support specific to diverse SOGIE young people.

Most participants (75%) also provided at least some form of socio-economic support. Most commonly 75% (n=27) provided legal support, 75% provided physical supplies, such as food or clothing. To a lesser extent six provided economic assistance like cash transfers and four provided reintegration support.⁵² Seventy-eight percent also described family support services.

Some organisations also provided various forms of access to formal and non-formal education, but this was less common, with 13 respondents coming from organisations that provide support for formal high school and six who provided support to access tertiary studies. Lastly, eight staff worked at organisations that provided non-formal education themselves.

Training or specialisation

Thirty-two respondents answered an open question about the types of training they had received about the sexual exploitation of children. Sixty-three percent replied they had none. The remaining 12 described:

- **General ‘issue-sensitivity’ training (n=6):** This included attending conferences or training in the line of work, as well as discussions on the topic in their university courses.
- **Specialist training (n=3):** This included training in sex-related trauma and sexual exploitation of children in prostitution.
- **Significant experience (n=2):** These participants described specialisation through professional experience.
- Lastly, one participant noted specialising in child-focused mental health services.

TOTAL CASELOADS

Participants were asked to describe their total caseloads over the past 12 months (including children who have and haven’t experienced sexual exploitation). Figure 2 shows that all but four respondents reported that their caseloads were between 1 and 30 children.

Respondents were asked to estimate approximately what percentage of their clients were girls and boys. Three organisations that participants came from only provided services to girls - two were female-only services, whereas participants from the third explained that they have no boy clients because “no boys seek help”. Six indicated the inclusion of ‘other’ genders or non-binary people in their programming. Only one organisation solely provided services to boys, although 13 participants described that more than half of their cases were boys.

Figure 2 shows differences were observed when comparing caseload sizes between the workers who focused more on boys or girls. Participants with fewer cases had a higher proportion of girls. The three respondents who described very high caseloads were more focused on community-based work than 1-1 engagements.

Figure 2. Average number of children supported by workers (n=36).

	n	girls	boys
0-10 children	10	67%	33%
10-20 children	12	48%	52%
20-30 children	10	49%	51%
30-40 children	1	30%	70%
More than 50	3	60%	40%

Cases involving boys

Within their total caseloads, participants were then asked to estimate the proportion of the boys that they support that they knew had experienced sexual exploitation. Among those who supported boys, respondents estimated that 13% of the boys under their care had experienced sexual exploitation, with responses from individuals ranging from 5% to 60% of their caseloads (median 25%). The rest of the analysis in this section focuses on the boys within caseloads that had been subjected to sexual exploitation.

52 Note that the sample excluded government staff. Government facilities provide most residential services for children.

Figure 3 shows that of the boys known to have been subjected to sexual exploitation, respondents estimated that an average of 58% experienced sexual exploitation between the ages of 11 and 15, and 41% experienced sexual exploitation between 6 and 10 years.

Figure 3. Most common age when boys experienced sexual exploitation.

	Average	Median
0-5 years	11%	5%
6-10 years	41%	25%
11-15 years	58%	50%
16-17 years	22%	23%

The most commonly reported exchange involved in their exploitation was goods (n=6), security (n=6) followed by shelter (n=4) or money (n=3). One respondent mentioned affection and emotional support used to manipulate children into sexual exploitation.

Cases involving girls

Participants were then asked to estimate the proportion of the girls that they support that they knew had experienced sexual exploitation. Respondents estimated that a higher proportion of their girl cases - 36% - had experienced sexual exploitation (median 25%). The rest of the analysis in this section focuses on the girls within caseloads that had been subjected to sexual exploitation.

Figure 4 shows that the age breakdown for girls was very similar. Participants estimated 58% experienced sexual exploitation between the ages of 11-15, and 29% between 6 and 10.

Figure 4. Most common age when girls experienced sexual exploitation.

	Average	Median
0-5 years	22%	10%
6-10 years	29%	20%
11-15 years	58%	50%
16-17 years	30%	27%

The most commonly reported exchange involved in girls' exploitation was again security (n=8) followed by goods (n=7), or money (n=5) or shelter (n=3).

GENDER OF OFFENDERS

Of those surveyed who had supported boys (33 of the 36 respondents) subjected to sexual exploitation, participants indicated approximately 81% of cases involved male offenders and 19% involved female offenders. Estimates from those who supported girls (all but one respondent supported girls) indicated that cases involving girls mostly involved male offenders (88%) with a small fraction involving female offenders (12%). Participants estimated no difference between boys and girls in terms of the origin of offenders, with an estimate of 84-88% being Hungarian and the rest foreigners.

Offenders in cases involving boys

Participants were asked to share the three most common types of relationships that were involved in boys' sexual exploitation, depicted in Figure 5 below. When cases involved male offenders, most common were parents/step-parents (44%) or other relatives over 18 (42%). Six workers described a 'person in authority over the child' as common. Just one respondent noted 'foreign strangers' (such as tourists) to be amongst the most common category of male offenders.

When cases involved female offenders, similar patterns were also seen, with parents/step-parents most common.

Figure 5. Common offender relationships in boys' sexual exploitation (n=33).

Male offenders		
Parent/Stepparent	16	44%
Other relative (over 18)	15	42%
Family friend	12	33%
Community member (over 18)	7	19%
Person in authority (e.g., teacher, religious leader)	6	17%

Female offenders		
Parent/Stepparent	11	31%
Family friend	9	25%
Other relative (over 18)	8	22%
Community member (over 18)	5	14%
Person in authority (e.g., teacher, religious leader)	3	8%

* Three responses per participant could be selected so percentages do not add to 100%.

Offenders in cases involving girls

Participants were then asked to share the common types of relationships that were involved in girls' sexual exploitation, depicted in Figure 6 below. Trends do not noticeably differ with parents/step-parents and other relatives over 18 as the most commonly noted types of offenders.

Figure 6. Common offender relationships in girls' sexual exploitation (n=35).

Male offenders		
Parent/Stepparent	20	56%
Other relative (over 18)	14	39%
Community member (over 18)	11	31%
Family friend	9	25%
Sibling (over 18)	7	19%

Female offenders		
Other relative (over 18)	6	25%
Parent/Stepparent	6	25%
Family friend	6	25%
Community member (over 18)	5	21%
Local Stranger (national citizen)	3	13%

* Participants selected their top three choices, thus percentages do not necessarily add up to 100%.

Victims of other gender identities

After discussing their experiences and understandings of male and female victims, participants were provided with space to discuss any details about their work (if any) with other-genders or non-binary children. Six people responded to this question but responses don't indicate such clients had been supported. Three simply stated that they did not have non-binary clients. One respondent asserted no differences in providing support to different gender identities noting, "I do not see any significant difference compared to binary children." (R141) Another commented: "the subject is still very foreign even to professionals, let alone to the children among whom a child is placed, in an institutional setting" (R43). Young people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity are vulnerable to a range of risks including to sexual exploitation.⁵³

TYPES OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OBSERVED

Participants were asked to think about the boys with whom they work, and then the girls with whom they work and indicate the various forms of abuse and exploitation with which they have had direct experience. They indicated significantly less experience in relation to boys.

53 United Nations Children's Fund. (2020). *Research on the Sexual Exploitation of Boys: Findings, ethical considerations and methodological challenges*. UNICEF, New York.

FOR GIRL CLIENTS:

- **50%** had direct experience with girls who had been groomed for sexual purposes.
- **39%** had direct experience with girls who had been involved in self-generated sexual content.
- **43%** had worked directly with girls who had been exploited in the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM).
- **18%** had direct experience with girls who had been trafficked for sexual purposes.
- **Two workers** had direct experience with girls who had been exploited through live-streaming sexual exploitation.

FOR BOY CLIENTS:

- **32%** had direct experience with boys who had been groomed for sexual purposes.
- **24%** had direct experience with boys who had been involved in self-created sexual content.
- **28%** had worked directly with boys who had been exploited in the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM).
- **8%** had direct experience with boys who had been trafficked for sexual purposes.
- **Two support workers** had direct experience with boys who had been exploited through live-streaming sexual exploitation.

Presenting factors for boys and girls

We know that young people who have been subjected to sexual exploitation don't always seek help by starting out with a disclosure – they may seek help for other reasons and then disclose once a trusting relationship with the helper is ensured. Thus, respondents were asked what issues boys and girls presented with when seeking help. While a significant portion of both groups describe trauma or other effects of abuse, some notable thematic differences are observed between girls and boys.

Twenty-six respondents (72%) answered the question about presenting issues for boys, and 14 described initial conversations being about general topics, such as life, school, and future plans. Five people (19%) described initial conversations being about the specific issues for which the boy was referred (such as abuse or

exploitation). Others described behavioural issues including truancy, bullying, and delinquency issues related to crime.

Twenty-nine respondents (81%) answered the question about presenting issues for girls. Eighteen similarly described initial conversations being about general topics. This is followed by five (17%) who described initial conversations about feelings or personal safety, including love interests, fears, or anxieties and four (14%) who describe conversations about the specific issues for which they were referred (such as abuse or exploitation). Lastly, two named school problems, including truancy.

Side-by-side comparisons of some participants' comments for boys and girls (presented to them in separate survey sections) demonstrate notable thematic differences in presenting factors for boys and girls.

PRESENTING FACTORS FOR BOYS:

- R46: ● "...Our first in-depth conversations are mostly about their setbacks, difficulties and opportunities, their vision and plans for the future."
- R43: ● "Pimping girls, sex, money, rap, burglary, theft, escape."
- R141: ● "Sexuality, bullying, abuse"
- R115: ● "They talk about general topics that affect their everyday lives: family, school, friends, but they quickly move on to sexual topics or make references to them during the conversation."

PRESENTING FACTORS FOR GIRLS:

- "Our introduction is the same as for boys. But our first conversations are more about boys, love and relationships."
- "Family, life goals, freedom."
- "Self-esteem, love, sexuality, anxiety"
- "On several occasions, I have noticed that girls who have been sexually exploited talk more than usual about certain topics, such as school, in more detail than usual, thus deliberately avoiding other topics. To me as a practitioner this behaviour is noticeable."

Victim identification challenges

Finally in this section, we asked respondents to note challenges they observed in establishing whether boys and girls are experiencing sexual exploitation. With boys, they tended to name difficulties in communication because boys might avoid discussing issues directly or deflect to other topics. Respondents noted that even in cases where they have a strong belief that some of the boys under their care were experiencing abuse or exploitation, they felt difficulty in broaching the topic which they attributed to a lack of trust from the boys, feelings of shame, or that their attempts were deflected:

“The child’s way of expression because he himself cannot formulate his problem. He (perhaps) feels that a certain behaviour is wrong, but it is also difficult for him to define who and what is ‘wrong’ in the act. In the case of sexual and other types of abuse, the most difficult thing is to establish whether it has actually happened, by whom, and against whom.” (R92)

The respondent also indicates additional barriers to disclosure that arise from the child protection system itself, noting that children often do not feel protected or that they will be afforded any solutions if they disclosed. The respondent continues,

“Unfortunately, the system is not very well structured, and minors find it difficult to open up because they do not feel protected or [that there is] a way out... They are also discouraged from coming forward by the guardianship procedure that follows their ‘confession’.⁵⁴ There are signs showing that abuse has taken place in the family, but these signs are not clear.” (R92)

Other support workers recalled instances in which some boys had seemed to want to disclose abuse or exploitation, but instead seemed to hint at it or project the issue onto a third party. One recalls,

“Among my own mentored people, there is only one young person with whom I could talk about this, although he was really just hinting, asking questions, not talking about his case specifically.” (R46)

Some support workers describe behaviours or activities that they believe *could* be a sign of sexual abuse or exploitation, but boys deflect, leaving the support worker unsure. Boys will *“make ambiguous references, and often joke about inappropriate things. That makes it hard to tell if they are testing my limits or if they really need help.”* (R40)

Overall, participants detailed various challenges in interpreting the language and communications of vulnerable boys and underscored their lack of training on the issue: *“It is the lack of specific knowledge in this area that makes it most difficult to determine this. So, the problem is the overall lack of training of professionals - mine included.”* (R70)

SCENARIOS

Support workers were given four hypothetical scenarios about sexual exploitation, which reflected unequal power relationships, gender norms and other intersectional vulnerabilities. Questions were interspersed as the scenario unfolded to unpack different attitudes and knowledge. Following each scenario, participants were asked to describe what practical steps they would take if they were supporting the children depicted.

“Ádám”

19-year-old Peti pays a 17-year-old cousin, Ádám, to undress while filming. Ádám agrees to do it without concerns.

In the first scenario, participants were given a vignette in which 19-year-old Peti pays a 17-year-old cousin, Ádám, to undress while filming and Ádám agrees to do it without concern. All but

54 This may lead to a child being removed from the family and placed in state care, which may exacerbate their feelings of loss of control, choice, and agency.

five of 36 support workers agreed that Ádám was sexually exploited, with one saying that Ádám is not a victim and another four who were uncertain.

“Peti later posts this video to his online social media accounts that are publicly visible (i.e., no payment is needed to access them).”

Given this information, all participants believed that Peti had committed sexual exploitation.

Zoli, who does not know Peti or Ádám, finds and watches the video online from home elsewhere in the country.

With this additional revelation, 51% of respondents assessed that Zoli watching the CSAM was sexual exploitation. Six people believed Zoli had not committed exploitation and 11 were uncertain.

The ‘practical steps’ or immediate responses suggested by support workers were largely focused on standard service provision responses for Ádám, including information gathering and the provision of counselling. A few suggest conducting a larger assessment of the child’s environment, as well as several technical responses such as finding and removing the video from the internet. One respondent, who was uncertain if Adam had been exploited explains,

“I would ask what happened, how it happened. I would coach him on what his rights are. I would help him find a platform in social media where he could report it. If he would like, I would help him to write to them and ask for their help in removing the video. I would tell him that it is not his fault, but also discuss with him what other considerations he should make.” (R40)

The support worker demonstrates a compassionate and rights-based response, however, still seems to convey slight ambiguity regarding Ádám’s victimisation, despite agreeing

that Peti was at fault. The response, typical of others, is practical in focus and does not indicate emotional support as part of the response to Ádám.

Other participants who indicate with certainty that Ádám was exploited and Zoli/Peti had committed sexual exploitation tended to focus on legal or authoritative responses. For example, one support worker who notes,

“[I would] contact the child’s parents [and] clarify that what is happening is punishable. [I would] report the incident to the police, if possible, with the consent of the child and parents (which can be achieved through supportive conversations). [I would] provide a child psychologist [and] mental help to the parents, if needed. (R98)

Finally, the respondent notes that they would contact Peti, in parallel and inform him that what he did was a criminal offence. After offering a psychologist the respondent notes they would report the offender to children’s services.

“Ábel”

Ábel is a 7-year-old boy whose mother struggles to make ends meet in their rural village. His uncle, Gergő, has a good government job and has always given money to help the family out. Recently, during a visit to Abel’s family home, Uncle Gergő asked Ábel to sit on his lap.

Given this limited information, participants were asked if they believe Ábel has experienced exploitation. Five people at this stage judged that Ábel had been exploited. 54% believed Abel had not been exploited and 11 were uncertain. At this stage sexual exploitation is not evident though participants may be proactively identifying grooming behaviour.

“While Ábel was sitting on Gergő’s lap, Gergő began to touch his private parts. Ábel’s mother then walked into the room and realised that something was happening. Gergő reminded her of how happy he was to be able to visit today and provided her with some money”.

Given this new information, participants were asked if they believe that Gergő has committed sexual exploitation. 89% now said that Gergő had exploited Ábel. The remaining four included two who felt he had not been exploited and another two who were uncertain.

“Ábel’s mother nodded, closed the door and went out of the house”

Ninety-one percent believed that Ábel’s mother had committed sexual exploitation, with one disagreeing. Two remained uncertain.

The ‘practical steps’ largely focused on interventions with the mother and son (n=12) including providing education or conducting further assessments of the family and environment, with some rather comprehensive responses:

“In Ábel’s case, the most important thing is to reduce the trauma he has experienced, perpetrated against him by people he knows and loves. I would definitely justify the involvement of a child psychologist. Considering that the incident occurred with the knowledge of the mother, who did not take any action to protect her child, I would suggest a temporary placement, preferably with a suitable relative, such as a grandparent.” (R115)

Other responses included 10 who suggested a variety of legal actions, including filing a police report, conducting a criminal investigation, and removal of the child from the home. Lastly, eight participants suggested referral to various forms of psychological help for the child.

“Dani”

“Dani is a 16-year-old boy who prides himself on being a hard worker. When his adult neighbour, Sándor, asked if he could help work on her farm for payment, he was happy to help. While Dani was working around the farm, Sándor invited Dani into the house for lunch. Sándor sat very close to Dani and touched his arm often while chatting. Dani felt very uncomfortable with this.”

Twenty-one percent indicated that this represented sexual exploitation, though 62% believed that Dani had not been exploited and six people were uncertain. These circumstances as described would not constitute sexual exploitation though there is a suggestion from the situation that Sándor is misusing her power. Respondents may be identifying this as grooming behaviour.

“The next time Dani helped at the farm; the same thing happened at lunch. This time, Sándor touched Dani’s thigh. This also made Dani very uncomfortable.”

With this new information, 50% of participants believed that Dani had been exploited with nine people believing that he hadn’t and eight who were uncertain.

Considering that not all workers assessed that Dani had been exploited (grooming is evident but abuse has not yet occurred), many of the practical responses to the scenario focus quite reasonably on educating Dani in setting boundaries and exploring the nature of his relationship with Sándor:

“As a social worker, I would use supportive conversation [and] explore the underlying reason why (seemingly without any ulterior motive) the touch made [Dani feel] uncomfortable. I would also refer Dani to a psychologist, if necessary.” (R92)

Another respondent who indicated that nothing in the scenario was yet exploitative noted:

“Dani needs to be talked to about his right to control his own body, to know that if any person approaches him in a way that makes him uncomfortable, he should signal that to the other person and he can say no. So far, nothing tangible has been done to find out whether Sándor’s approaches were really sexually charged, so there is nothing more to be done for the time being.” (R46)

“Jani”

Jani is 15 years old, although he looks older. He self-identifies as gay. On the weekends, Jani meets men, who he describes as his ‘boyfriends’. He has sex with them and accepts money and gifts. When asked about these encounters, Jani says that it is his choice, and that other people should mind their own business.

Seventy-four percent of participants correctly identified Jani as a victim of exploitation, but two indicated that Jani was not a victim, and seven were uncertain. While the majority (82%) correctly identified the men as offenders, one believed the men were not and five were uncertain.

Practical responses to this scenario largely focused on information gathering and the provision of counselling and support on the individual and family level, the majority of which included referral to a psychologist. More than half of the responses also included legal responses against ‘the men’:

“The men are definitely committing exploitation. What cannot be determined from these two questions [is regarding what] the situation is [and] what the men think about the age (e.g., fake ID). I consider the use of sexual services to be exploitation, but the criminal conviction depends on many things.” (R103)

The respondent noted that they would further investigate Jani’s life situation (his family, home life) to understand “how he sees and experiences his victimhood, what support he needs...”

Another respondent, who is uncertain if Jani has been exploited, or if ‘the men’ have committed exploitation, recommends harm reduction in relation to sexual health.

“Marci”

Marci is 17 years old and self-identifies as transgender. Marci used to live in the countryside but faced discrimination from family and neighbours. Marci moved to the city but could not find a place to stay. Marci has not been able to find work and is homeless. Marci needs to pay for food, so quite often meets men and sometimes women, and has sex with them for money. Marci accepts that this life is tough but only temporary.

The final scenario introduces Marci, who is a 17-year-old transgender person (whose assigned gender at birth is intentionally left ambiguous). All but seven correctly identified Marci as a victim of sexual exploitation, with four believing that they were not a victim, and three who were uncertain.

On one occasion, Marci was arrested for prostitution and intends to plead guilty.

In response to these details, participants were asked if they believed the men and women that Marci met for sex had exploited Marci. Ninety-one percent correctly indicated that the men and women had committed sexual exploitation, with one believing they have not exploited Marci, and two who were uncertain.

Practical responses to this case among those who see Marci as exploited and ‘the men and women’ as exploiters tended to include potential community and relational needs of the child. Most support workers did not specifically take into consideration Marci’s gender identity in their response, but rather focused on the provision of social assistance, such as residential

placement and livelihood support. Six participants considered Marci's gender identity in their response: "advising [Marci] on [their] difference and answering [their] questions." (R96) In one of the more supportive responses, a support worker comments:

"In Marci's case, it is very important that he is supported in his self-identity, but he also needs to be provided with housing and supervision, as he is a minor. I would definitely recommend a residential or foster care placement, as he would probably not move back in with parents. I would help with psychological and life skills advice. I would support and help the parents to accept their child, to help him in everyday life and not to discriminate against him in any way." (R115)

One respondent indicated psychotherapeutic intervention:

"...considering that Marci is transgender, probably several years of intensive psychotherapy could bring real help to Marci's life." (R70)

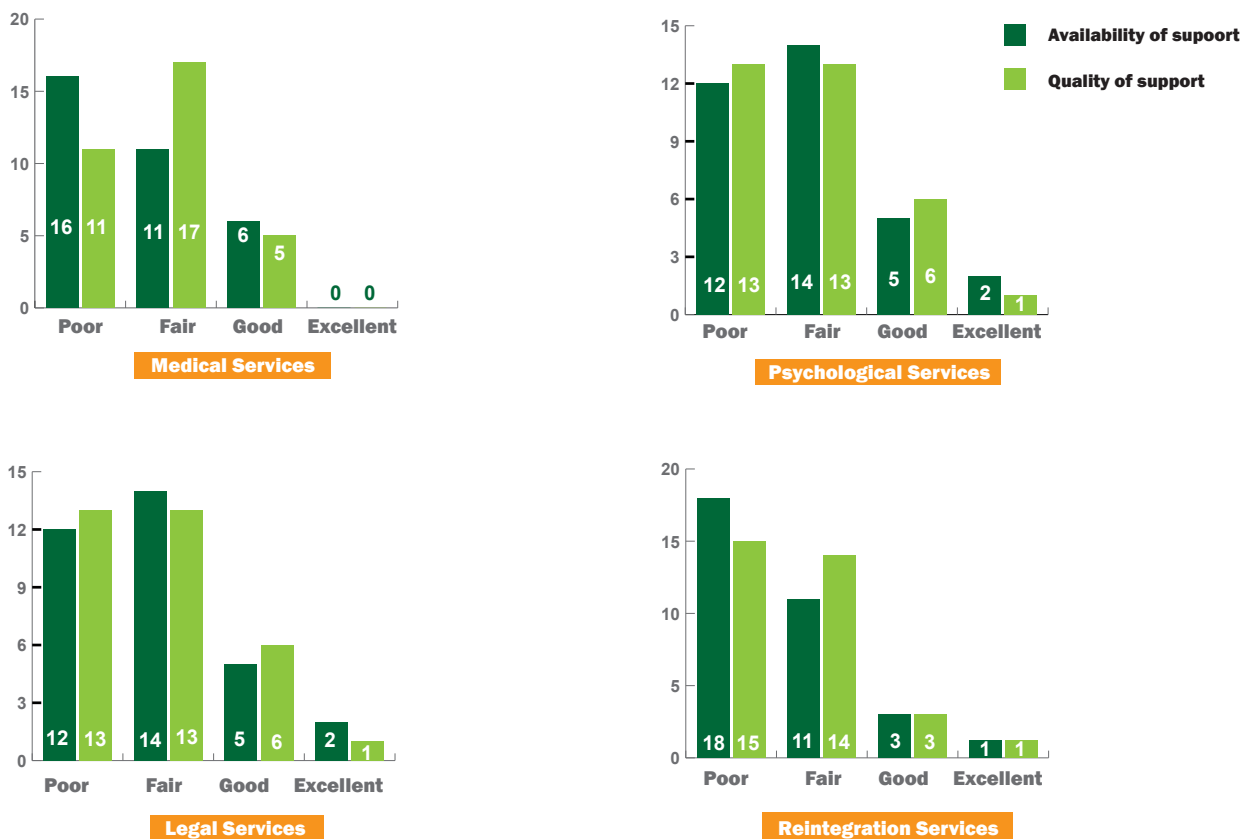
While it's not certain the intended aim of the psychotherapy, the respondent describes pessimism about how much Marci could be helped, noting the lack of accessible therapists who could work with this case. The respondent continues,

"I currently know only one psychotherapist in my circle who could help him, but she only sees private clients. Marci would not be able to pay." (R70)

OPINIONS ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY AND QUALITY OF SUPPORT SERVICES

Support workers were asked to rate both the availability and quality of existing service in Hungary for boys who have experience sexual abuse or exploitation. Figure 7 below shows that participants held an overall fair-to-poor assessment of both the availability and quality of a variety of national-level support services for boys who have experienced sexual exploitation.

Figure 7. Availability and quality of existing support services in Hungary.



Quality constraints in services for boys

Support workers were asked to reflect on why social support services for boys tend to suffer from quality constraints. A general reflection of the 29 participants who answered is that responses to this question were notably longer and more detailed than elsewhere in the survey indicating that responses to these recommendations from workers could have high buy-in and thus lead to quick and effective improvements.

Institutions have internal gaps which overlook boys: Eight responses described institutions being under-resourced. Another seven responses noted that boys were notably less visible to institutions or that institutions simply did not focus on boys as victims. Another respondent described that these institutional issues affect all children, including *“slow, prolonged procedures, and repeated hearings that further traumatise the child. I see no difference in the support services available for boys and girls.”* (R134)

Other respondents portrayed male sexual exploitation as an issue that requires “specialised assistance”, which state resources are simply not equipped to handle, also noting that legal and psychological services provide individualised assistance, without paying attention to more comprehensive community/ecological approaches. One support worker noted, *“the health care system is under-resourced and unprepared to provide this specialised assistance. Legal and psychological counselling is more widely available and more effective because of its individualised nature.”* (R115)

Boys are not identified: Ten respondents described challenges in identifying boys as victims. Workers have more training, awareness, and practice in identifying and treating girls, with many indicating that boys who experienced sexual abuse and exploitation were simply not noticed: *“because it is mainly the recognition and treatment of sexual abuse of women and girls that most professionals feel somewhat equipped to deal with. This is something that they have had more practice in, and the professionals have limited knowledge of the [nature of the issues] concerning boys.”* (R70)

Services are not accessible: Nine respondents noted services not being accessible to both genders in Hungary, but this appears to particularly be an issue for boys. Respondents described gaps for children in rural areas, noting that most public (free or low-cost) services were located within urban settings. While private services were said to be higher quality, the cost makes these services inaccessible to most vulnerable children. Respondents also indicated that services (particularly services for boys) were less publicly visible, making it difficult for children and parents to know who to contact for help. When children do access services, some workers said that professionals (particularly child-specialists) were few and often lack training. One respondent noted: *“A large number of victims of abuse come from poorer backgrounds, where using paid services (e.g., psychologists) to deal with what has happened is not an option. This reduces the number of services available, limits their options, and may (but not necessarily) lead to a deterioration in the quality of service due to the workload of professionals.”* (R146)

Service providers lack experience with boys: Nine responses described the issue that many workers lack practical experience with boys as victims or have not had any relevant training about working with boys: *“there is no well-established methodology [for boys] in this field”* (R91). Another remarked how low disclosure rates and lack of experience of working with boys further feeds the lack of recognition and responses, *“the abuse of male children is less revealed (it takes longer for them to disclose), and [there is] less professional experience [that] has been accumulated, thus less attention is paid to [boys].”* (R34)

Overcoming quality constraints

Professional development. Twenty workers described needed improvements in their engagement with boys, such as the development of confidential outreach, training for professionals on gender and sexuality, and the development/implementation of specific tools and methods for working with boys. Workers also indicated the need for increased funding for working with children from low-income families, those outside urban areas, and about social and cultural awareness *“to open eyes and eliminate stereotypes”* (R142). One respondent specifically described the need for the provision of “targeted

training for professionals on sexuality” and further emphasises the need *“to develop the language used [in their practice], as many professionals cannot even adequately pronounce the everyday Hungarian names for sexual organs. Without this, it is impossible to talk to children and parents. I consider this a trivial, yet significant problem.”* (R70)

Public Awareness: Fourteen people noted a need for better awareness so that boys know about their rights and how to seek help. They noted the need for awareness-raising initiatives encouraging victims to come forward and report: *“get more publicity about how big the problem is in Hungary and [that] not just girls are affected.”* (R35)

Institutional Development: Fourteen workers suggested improvements in funding, service specialisation, as well as practical improvements to the child protection monitoring system. Service providers also noted the need to address gender norms, including which lead to the under-recognition of boys as vulnerable persons by institutions: *“More emphasis on communication, different tools and means for addressing boys”* and the need for *“more inclusivity in existing services for children who have experienced exploitation and abuse.”* (R103)

VULNERABILITY FACTORS IMPACTING BOYS

Support workers were given an extensive list of factors that could potentially impact a boy’s vulnerability to child sexual exploitation or abuse and asked to select the top three factors they believed had the most significant impact. The presented list of vulnerability factors for them to select from was based on findings from research and practice in a diverse range of settings, taking into account both high and low income contexts.

Traditional beliefs and practices as vulnerabilities

The most prominently noted beliefs and practices impacting the vulnerability of boys related to stigma and shame that victims often face (81%). This was followed by “the belief that boys are strong, not vulnerable, and able to protect themselves” (44%) and taboos about discussing sex and sexuality (44%).

Workers provided insights into ways that these could be countered including 47% describing education or providing information. One respondent, noting stereotypes about boys and masculinity remarked that *“I try to educate children by example, to bring [the topic] into as many everyday conversations as possible, that these [assumptions] are not facts.”*(R40) Another respondent, noting stigma and the ‘culture of silence’ that victims face, went into detail about the specific need for educational resources within her specific context:

“Sex education is sorely lacking. At my current workplace, the majority of the population is Roma. Children cannot be talked [to] about safe sex. In the Roma culture, it is not acceptable to use condoms or contraceptives. Children have a need for it, but their parents do not allow it.” (R98)

Beyond education, seven workers described addressing these vulnerabilities through the creation of supportive, helping environments for the children they work with. One notes the importance of providing them with *“acceptance, trust, and lots of patience.”* (R100) Another says:

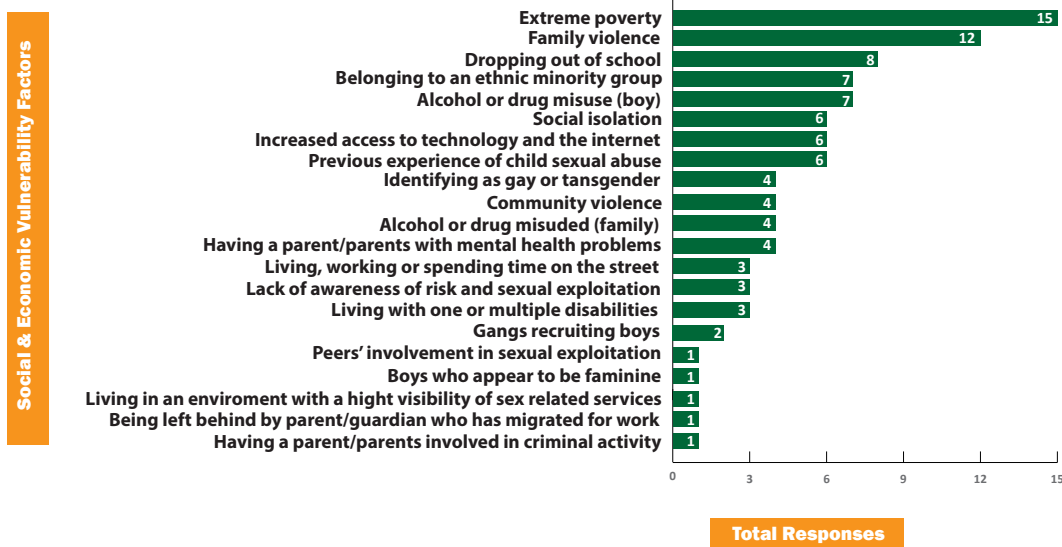
“It is very important to emphasise over and over again that [boys] also have rights, they [must be] protected, they [should not be] alone in any situation. No one can ever touch them. It is important to talk about [this] because few people do.” (R43)

Lastly, one support worker describes the need for increased vigilance, commenting, *“We have to watch out for signs [of abuse], as boys also [are more hesitant to disclose] than girls”* (R103) noting the frequent concealment and reluctance to disclose.

Social and economic vulnerabilities

Economic factors, such as “extreme poverty”, (42%) are commonly understood to increase vulnerability and this response was the most commonly selected. Family violence (33%) and dropping out of school (22%) were also commonly noted. Beyond these, a range of factors got small numbers – showing the heterogeneity of correlates that do occur. See Figure 8 below.

Figure 8. Social and economic vulnerabilities to sexual exploitation of boys.



Workers provided some insights into addressing social and economic vulnerabilities that centred around identifying them, treating root causes and connecting to the right, supportive services treating the full ecology around them:

“It is very complex. There must be support services and programs at individual, family and community level.” (R70)

Overall, support workers underscored the importance of relational approaches and comprehensive strategies that incorporate both the child and his full context.

BARRIERS TO BOYS' DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Support workers were asked to identify barriers to boys' disclosure from a list developed from the literature. Figure 9 indicates that of the 23 listed barriers, only eight are recognised with any frequency. They include stigma and shame that victims often experience, fears about how others will respond, and the discomfort of talking both about sex, and in disclosing the experience of sexual exploitation. Gender norms are also evident in the identified barriers, with workers indicating that boys are reluctant to view themselves as victims and beliefs that help-seeking is a challenge to masculinity being identified.

Figure 9. Barriers for boys to disclosing sexual exploitation.



Most significant problems

Responses to a question asking frontline support workers to summarise what “boys tell you are the most serious problems that they faced” provide interesting insights to the support needed for boys.

Isolation and gender norms: Eighteen responses included themes of isolation and a variety of interpersonal issues related to holding the secret of abuse, and often connected to gender norms. These most included fears of exclusion from social groups, fearing retaliation from offenders, and losing a sense of belonging and security in relationships. For example: *“Constant harassment, blackmail, [and] fear of the other people’s reactions”* (R77) and *“he is afraid of what will happen if it is revealed, what they will think of him. He is afraid that he will suffer some kind of disadvantage because of it.”* (R88)

Societal problems. Eight responses described stigma related to victimisation, not being taken seriously as a victim, and having the signs of abuse continually go either unnoticed, not regarded as important or understood as a cause to discriminate against boys.

Internalisations: Six responses related to boys’ gender identity and the expectations of masculinity. This included guilt, shame, and anger toward themselves for not being able to protect themselves and lacking the awareness that boys can be victims-- even as victims themselves. One notes, *“They do not know that this [shouldn’t] be done to them. They do not know who they can trust, who they can turn to. They do not know that they [can be] victims.”* (R43)

Institutional issues: Two respondents noted institutional issues such as delayed or insufficient responses, repeated interrogations, and prolonged procedures: *“the people around them do not believe them, they trivialise what has happened.”* (R134)

Most significant needs

Support workers were then asked to consider the most significant needs *that boys say they have*.

Supportive peer relations: Twelve support workers described a range of interpersonal needs including the need for peer support and overall healthy social relationships where boys feel safe and supported, and thus more able to disclose sexual exploitation and abuse. Two noted a need for friends and peers to be able to assist boys to find the help they need. Another emphasised the importance of mentoring for boys, which can *“create a trusting relationship with the boys, [and] create an atmosphere where anything can be freely discussed, where there is honesty and there are no wrong answers or questions.”* (R46)

Environmental supports: Nine respondents described environmental elements like the need for safe and trusting family environments or more supportive parents who do not blame or judge. One respondent reflected, *“I try to build a trusting relationship with the child, offer opportunities for informal time within the institution, and offer the help of a psychologist.”* (R134)

Clinical support: Eight support workers described things like referrals to psychologists or psychiatrists, as well as the need for personalised treatments for traumas including PTSD. Another noted the need for interventions, which can work to improve a boy’s sense of self-awareness. Some highlighted the unique needs of boys in service provision for CSEA, and the need for the specialised support for boys: *“boys need different methods of psychological support, counselling, [and] PTSD processing than girls, because of the even stronger secret [that they keep], shame, [and] stigma.”* (R103)

Preventions: Five support workers described needs such as prevention education for boys and their families and communities, but also education and information to address the questions they may have about sex, sexuality, and abuse.

ridiculed for failing to live up to expected gender roles that they and others have for them.

- **Around 13 to 15 years of age:** Peers and adults commonly begin asking them if they are dating, or if they have kissed a girl yet, reinforcing the heteronormative expectations placed on boys. By this age boys are expected to be actively seeking relationships with members of the opposite sex, and to be sexually active, which is paradoxically not encouraged for Hungarian girls. The participants explained the common implication that *not* being ready to engage romantically or sexually is regarded as abnormal and not in line with expectations of teenage boys. Further, the participants felt that these pressures may cause young boys to enter relationships for the sake of appearances, and to earn acceptance.
- **Between the ages of 15 and 20,** the men explained that significant expectations relating to dating behaviour are evident,

such as the assumption that boys should always ask the girl out, and obligations for boys or men to pay for everything on a date. In relation to being self-sufficient, one man described being expected to handle and solve his own problems, to *“do everything alone”*, and being able to take care of his family and himself. Other men described being told they were expected to keep the family secrets and be responsible for the family’s reputation, with one explaining that boys clearly learn that *“if there is a problem in the family, it should remain a secret, a family affair.”*

- **Between the age of 25 - 30** the men explained that expectations relating to the role of a man in relation to having a family, and being the provider appeared. These include expectations that men should leave the parental home, live alone, and be breadwinners, also supporting their family financially, being fertile and having children.



Sex and sexual identity

The men discussed several norms associated with sexual behaviour and sexual identity that are somewhat paradoxical in nature, depending on the age of the boy - but also perhaps that can contribute to the development of shame and embarrassment around any instances of sexual victimisation. For example, between the ages of 5 and 10 years, masturbation is often viewed as 'disgusting' and 'harmful' - while for teenage boys, there exists the expectation for a man to be virile, sexually experienced, and capable. Such comments may be harmful, since experiencing early sexual pleasure or having ejaculation are natural anatomical processes, within the development of healthy sexuality. The men also identified activities between peers that, in retrospect, may also have a negative effect on one's sexuality and sexual development, such as boys comparing penis sizes during teenage years. As mentioned above, boys are expected to be

heterosexual and have relationships with girls, while even friendships with SOGIE diverse people may also be treated with suspicion and/or derision, as one man explained, he would be asked *"are you really friends with a gay?"*. When faced with abuse or exploitation, it is not surprising that many affected boys will incorrectly conflate abuse with homosexuality, further ensuring their silence and exacerbating their confusion.

"Early ejaculation is awkward."

"Real men have several sexual experiences."

"Masturbation is harmful."

Portraying strength and resilience

The men identified that for boys there is significant pressure and expectations in respect of how they should behave and be perceived - including that they should instil fear in others, be

fearless and physically and mentally strong. The unacceptability of showing weakness, insecurity or fear was also highlighted, with participants remembering being told to *"stand up, boys are strong!"* and that *"boys don't cry!"* Boys also face expectations emphasising the importance of being able to handle and process things alone, and at all costs - not revealing their problems to others. The expectation of being strong and silent, especially in relation to family matters was emphasised by one participant *"If something comes up within the family, it must stay in the family"*.

"Boys aren't afraid"

"You have to show that you are the strongest"

"That's cool if you do martial arts."

"If you can hit through the wall, that's cool"

Image, looks, and clothing

The men recalled numerous experiences at every age concerning the accepted image, style of dress and 'look' of boys and men - which mostly reinforce traditional masculine expectations, and thus avoiding any hint of what may be considered feminine. These expectations also relate to the length of their hair, the way boys should smell, and the colours that they are not permitted to wear. Overall, it was acknowledged that having 'abs' (pronounced abdominal muscles) and a muscular body, was also considered manly and desirable in contrast with being skinny or short. For the men these expectations both reflect society's general expectations about what is considered manly and masculine, and equally what is considered to be "weird" and deemed feminine and/or described as "gayish" by others. While not obviously linked to vulnerability, the message is clear to boys: they risk being ostracised if they are different, a feeling that is all too familiar for boys experiencing exploitation and abuse.

“Men shouldn’t use stuff that smells nice.”

“Men should not wear pink.”

“Boys should be tall.”

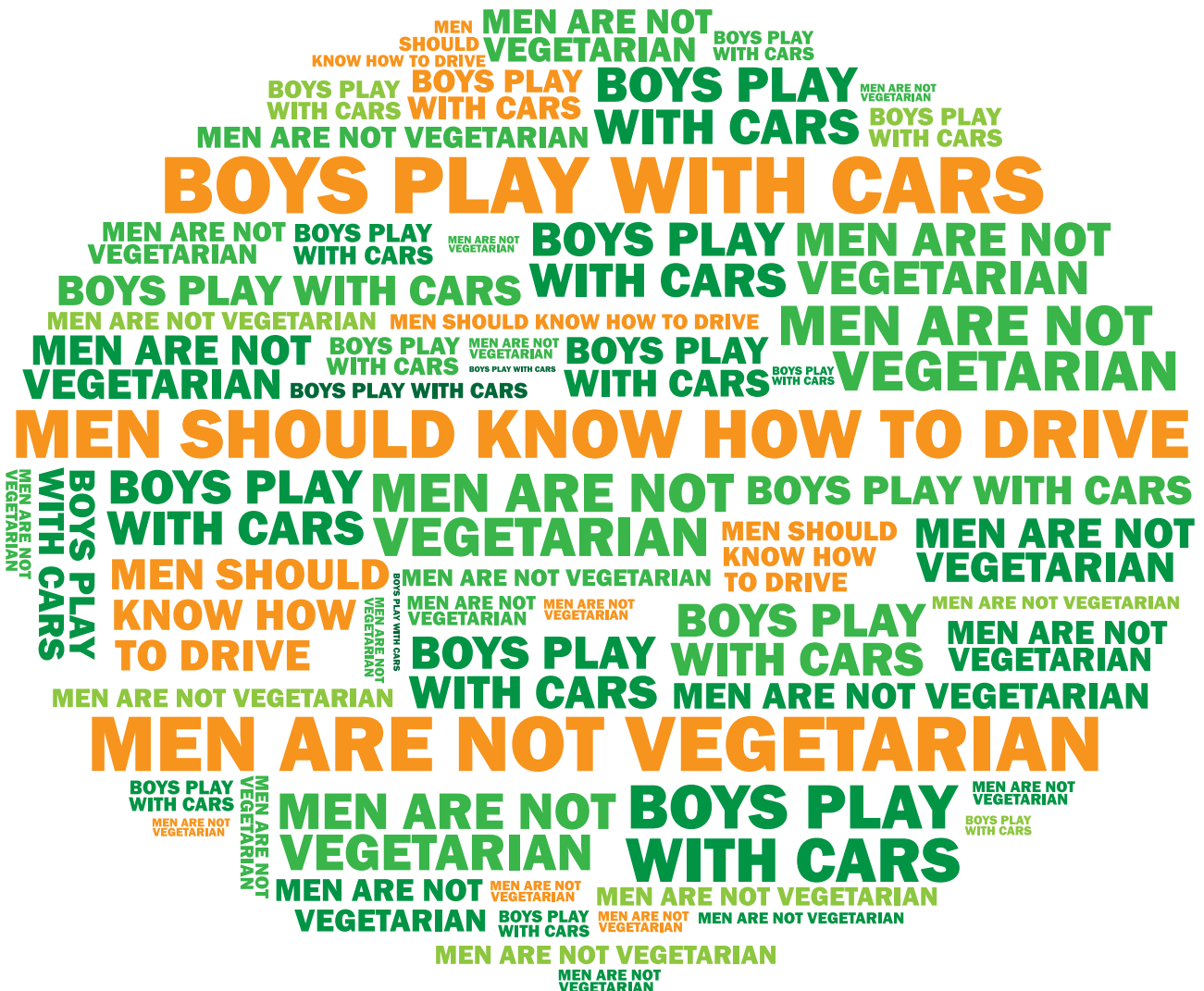
“Short boys are dwarfs.”

“Boys shouldn’t wear pink, sparkly or silly clothes, skirts, high heel shoes!”

“Boys should not dye their hair or shave their legs!”

Likes, interests, and occupations

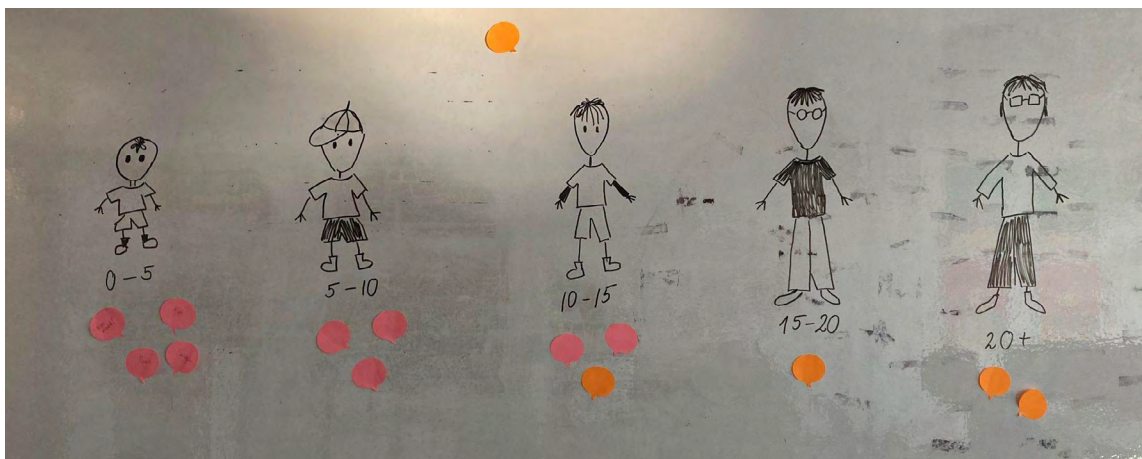
Traditional expectations of masculinity also reinforce the need for competitiveness and action, and that any interests or demonstration of behaviour that may be considered feminine, is undesirable. From an early age this relates to the toys that boys and girls are encouraged to play with - “Boys should play with ‘action men’ rather than a Barbie Doll”. Boys [and men] are expected to like and know about cars, be interested in football, and take part in active and competitive sports. Conversely, non- sport related activities, such as being part of a choir, or being interested in pastimes such as ballet or other forms of dance were regarded as “lame” and “gayish” by peers. Other expectations stipulate that boys should not listen to “girly music”, and even influence a boy or man’s eating habits, as one participant recalled learning that “boys must eat bacon and meat - a real man cannot be vegetarian!”.

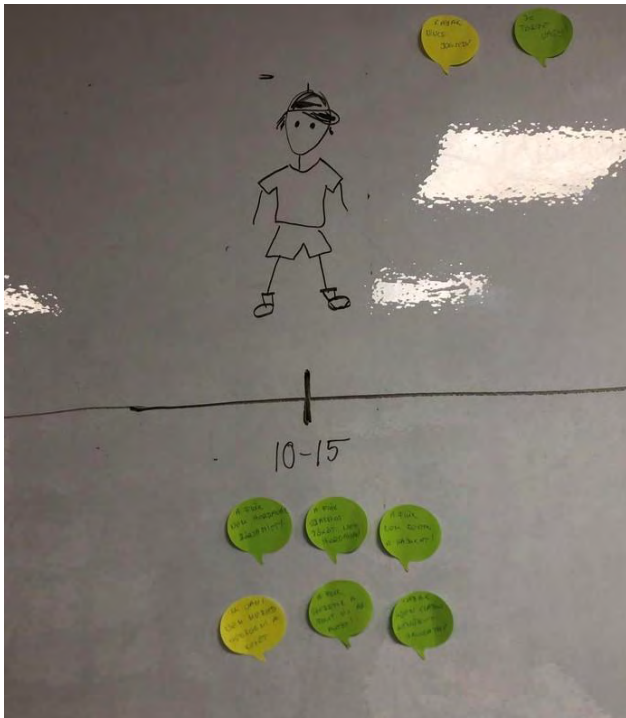


Peer pressure reinforces masculinity

The men explained that peer pressure is a powerful factor in reinforcing and policing masculine gender norms and expectations, in relation to a diverse range of activities, with the desire to avoid being marginalised, creating pressure that may lead to boys taking part in unpleasant and/or risky behaviours. Around teenage years and late childhood this includes:

- Refraining from a fight at school, was regarded as being “weak” and that there would be considered something “wrong” with a boy unwilling to take part in aggressive behaviour.
- For some, mocking other people considered to be “different” or “not ordinary” (e.g., obese, weak) was considered an acceptable masculine trait.
- During teenage years, being sober at a party, not liking, or being able to “handle alcohol” was considered uncool and unmanly. Smoking cigarettes or ‘weed’ is common amongst teenage boys and considered a measure of their coolness.
- Playing games such as ‘truth or dare’ was popular and participants commented that a boy failing to take part [in unwanted tasks], could lead to being labelled as lame or uncool, and boys feared being marginalised or left out if they did not participate.





Illustrations show the whiteboard used to explore cultural and gender expectations of boys in Hungary

The powerful cultural and gender norms and expectations described by the men appear to significantly influence, and in some respects regulate nearly every aspect of a boy or young man’s life and identity. Any behaviour that confounds these expectations, is likely to ensure that boys who may feel different, vulnerable or marginalised for any reason, meet with ridicule and other social sanctions.

BOYS’ EXPERIENCES OF SEEKING AND RECEIVING HELP

The men explained that “reaching out for support” and “seeking help” is unique to each person and may be shown in various ways depending on the context and the specific individuals involved, including the child and the people around him.

At the times that they were subjected to sexual exploitation, none of the men felt that they had any safe avenues to disclose or seek help for the

abuse they were subjected to, and at times were so confused, that they did not always understand that what was happening was abuse. However, instead of directly naming the problem, they tried to gain the attention of others through actions hoping that someone would notice. As one participant commented:

“I just wanted someone to pay attention to me and ask whether I’m okay”

All the men told us that at the time, they just did not consider going directly to professional services. The participants independently shared their experiences and when their responses were analysed later, common steps [and themes] seemed to emerge from their experiences. Their accounts showed that these steps needed to be negotiated before disclosure was possible, irrespective of the availability of support at the time.



Understanding and accepting that what happened was abuse

All four young men explained that they were subjected to abuse within a setting that they considered safe or, by someone who they and their families trusted. This made it difficult for them to realise at the time that they were being sexually abused or exploited. It should also be noted that they explained that they had no prior knowledge regarding sexual abuse or exploitation at the time. For the young men, the thought that they were being hurt by these individuals - or that the offenders were doing something wrong or harmful - didn't cross their minds. None of the men realised that what happened to them was sexual abuse or exploitation at that time of their lives, adding to confusion. As they tried to process what they were subjected to, one participant commented that:

“I considered it as something weird and uncomfortable... I thought the guy was just being weird and acting in an embarrassing way.”

Another also explained that he did not understand that what happened was wrong or illegal:

“I didn't know back then that this was something over the line, I thought it was just uncomfortable for me.”

Mixed Feelings and Confusion: To help them deal with these mixed-feelings, and try to make sense of what took place, they downplayed the events - also experiencing internal struggles and doubts - questioning if they had encouraged it in some way, and in some cases blaming themselves. Confusion about whether they took the situation too seriously and simply overreacted was common. One man recalled how the physical response that he experienced also affected his perceptions, adding to his confusion: “*Sometimes, it felt good, it was good for me too.*”

Responses of Others: One man recalled that he told a group of peers what one of their adult work

colleagues had done to him, and their reaction did little to help – they were indifferent and dismissive.

“Certain elements, parts of the abuse came up, and my friends were laughing about it... therefore I felt it was common and nothing to take too seriously ... I thought it was a common, and usual thing within this community.”

Responsibility for Protecting Family, Institutions and Communities: In all four cases, knowing the offender prior to the abuse hampered participants from disclosing, as they anticipated that speaking out would result in negative consequences. Support workers noted the potential for personal recriminations from offenders (or even others in the community) or simply that disclosing would identify a community institution in which the abuse took place, which were places loved and cherished by their families.⁵⁵ One participant recalled wanting to tell others about his experiences of abuse, but while one of his friends was supportive and understanding, he also raised concerns about the negative impact publicly disclosing such event could cause trouble for diverse SOGIE communities, since the abuser was known to be gay.

Grooming and Manipulation: The men described that their offenders manipulated them to internally rationalise and redefine events in their minds as if the abuse was something they had agreed to. They were subtly coerced by offenders to rewrite the narrative in order to reduce their resistance and increase the likelihood that they'd stay silent. While offenders may frame circumstances to the child or even to others as if the child 'gave permission' to be exploited by an adult, this is a deceit. Adults are responsible for sexually exploiting children. One man recalled the abuser saying things such as: “*but you were enjoying it too!*”

One man shared how living in an unsupportive, psychically and emotionally abusive, and neglectful family environment made him susceptible to the offender's attention. His

55 This included the church, schools and within the family.

attention created an emotional bond: *“He was often super nice with me; he once brought a puppy.”* As a result, he then interpreted the exploitation as a sign of love and attention, and the offender perpetuated this with grooming behaviours, so the abuse continued for several years.

“The abuser had a huge power over me, I felt withdrawn, and I was doubting myself”

Taboo and the ‘Culture of Silence’: Prior to, or at the time of the abuse taking place, the men did not recall that they had received any information from school or the media, nor had had any conversations at home related to sexual abuse and exploitation, how to recognise the signs or respond. Their recall was a perception that most people would have found this topic too upsetting to talk about, and if it involved men and boys, harmful stereotypes would be attributed to victims - including that if a boy was abused by a man, he would, as a result, become gay. This perception obviously would have had profound discouraging effects on any boy subjected to abuse talking to others of their situation.

These pressures are clearly reflected in the data from support workers with social ‘taboos surrounding sex and sexuality’ and ‘the stigma and shame that victims experience’ being among the most mentioned barriers. For the participants, this had a great impact on their lives, making them believe that what had happened to them was not a topic for discussion, leaving them feeling isolated and alone, helpless, and vulnerable.

Turning points and catalysts for change

All the men could clearly identify the moment that led them to realise that what they had experienced was sexual exploitation. One described this moment as a ‘catalyst’. In one case this was a year after the offending, for another man that was 10 years later. This delay in disclosure of CSEA for men (and many women) before they were able to make sense of what they remembered and seek help is common. For one man the catalyst was the global #MeToo

movement in 2017. Another man described hearing and reading about the stories of other male survivors in the media: *“I read and heard about stories, and then it popped into my mind, similar things happened to me too.”* For others, it was when they left the environment (institution or family) where the exploitation took place.

Attempting to ‘show’ they needed help

All four men shared that they often felt unable to explicitly ask for help, and instead, intentionally behaved differently to try and signal that something was not right. Examples included deliberately missing out on social activities and becoming quiet and socially withdrawn - or in other cases acting out and externalising their pain through behaviours - such as becoming loud and wanting to be at the centre of attention. However, these behaviours did not always have the desired effect, with trained professionals not appearing to make the connection between behaviour and underlying problems. As one man remarked: *“I was acting like an idiot and behaved terribly, yet no psychologist that saw me asked if there was something wrong.”*

This experience was not uncommon, with another man recalling that despite showing some unusual and worrying behaviour, he couldn’t remember anyone ever sitting down with him, showing genuine interest, and asking him about his well-being. Another recalled informing teachers about self-diagnoses of eating disorders, cancers, and other serious illnesses as a way to try and gain attention:

“I went to teachers stating that I had cancer or other fatal illnesses every week, no one asked what was going on with me, and I just wanted someone to genuinely ask me if everything was all right.”

Another explained how his behaviour at school changed:

“I became silent and started missing class and other activities that I used to enjoy, no one noticed anything except for one teacher, after months.”

Eventually a teacher simply asked him if anything was wrong, and he was then able to disclose what had happened to him. This example illustrates the importance and value of people who are around boys, noticing possible indicators of problems, taking an interest, and taking proactive action – which may be as simple as asking “*is anything wrong?*”

One man also recalled explicitly disclosing the continuous sexual abuse he was experiencing to a mother of one of his classmates, who he considered a “very cool mom”, similar to what he would have wanted for himself. However, after talking with her, nothing seemed to happen and she did not follow up with him again. He thus concluded that the mother did not act on his disclosure at all.

On reflection all four men could see that their behaviour was a ‘cry for help’ which was often ignored, or misinterpreted as anti-social or attention seeking behaviour, rather than a sign of distress. This challenge is similarly reflected within support worker data, with one respondent describing key issues that make it difficult to identify whether boys are experiencing CSEA. The participant notes, “*the avoidance of the subject, the seriousness of the conversation, ambiguous references, often joking about inappropriate things that make it hard to tell if they are testing my limits or if they really need help.*” (R34) This lack of recognition and appropriate responses compounds their experiences, and contributes to their ongoing sense of isolation, as one-man comments: “*The abuse may stop after a while, but the solitude will continue.*”

Keeping the secret

Once their situation of abuse was disclosed to family, all participants mentioned facing an additional barrier to seeking help: Having to keep it a secret. As a result of this expectation, they described families as ‘lacking honesty and openness’. Even when the family was aware of the abuse, it would be decided to keep it as a ‘family affair’, that had to be dealt with within the family and/also within the institutional setting in which the exploitation took place, in cases where

that was applicable. Consequently, the men recalled not having a supportive environment to discuss their concerns, or the freedom to seek the support they needed. When sharing experiences and explaining their journey in seeking and receiving help, the following additional themes, and barriers and concerns, emerged in their reflections:

- **Fear of losing control:** The men shared that one of their biggest fears in disclosing their abuse was to lose control over their life, and if others knew, they would no longer be the only ones in charge of what happens to them, or of their own trauma and its effects.⁵⁶
- **Feeling shame, stigmatised and fearful:** Participants felt extremely shameful about what had happened, and that disclosure would lead to being stigmatised by friends, family, classmates, and others. One man commented that this can lead to a sense of hopelessness: “*once you have suffered from abuse, you are a victim for the rest of your life*”. The men also experienced fear that their family, friends or other adults might perceive the situation to be ‘frivolous’ and might not be able to understand why they should be concerned. In some cases, their fears were realised, and had a profound effect: “*Certain elements, parts of the abuse came up, and my friends were laughing about it, I felt it was a common thing and nothing to take too seriously.*”
- **Feeling responsible for their family:** Participants explained that they were concerned that by reaching out to someone and unveiling their abuser, they may cause a scandal within their community which would have a negative impact on them and their family. Some men explained that they decided not to report to the police, to protect their families from the resulting legal procedures, and possible damage to their reputation. They also mentioned feeling responsible for the feelings of their family members, or anyone close to them, as indicated in the gender expectations for Hungarian boys. In some cases, this form of

56 This may reflect their knowledge at the time that children experiencing problems, including CSEA were commonly referred to state care, a situation that, according to comments of support workers, is still common to this day - and may also result in children experiencing CSEA being placed in institutions with youth in conflict with the law.

family pressure acted as powerful barriers for boys wanting to disclose their abuse and reinforced the need to remain silent.

- **Accessing Services:** One participant explained that he was aware of the existence of these services, however the lack of knowledge as to how they operate discouraged him to contact them. One commented, *“I think these institutions can guide me in legal proceedings or in psychological sessions, but to get there you need to have someone to go with, or to know what you want to do with your story.”*

After disclosure

Another common theme for some of the men was that after disclosure, they encountered a range of institutional and professional responses that did not meet their needs.

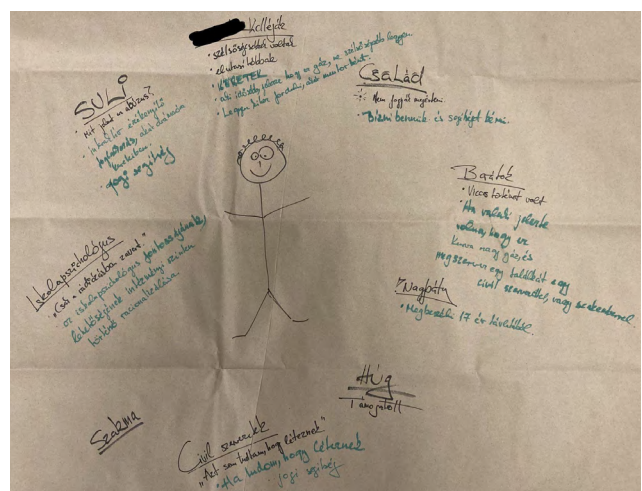
- **Inadequate Institutional Responses:** After disclosing abuse to a teacher of an institution where the abuse took place, one man reported he was directed several times to a series of more senior members of the institution - repeatedly having to explain everything, but without receiving any kind of support and assistance. The case was dismissed and closed without a thorough internal investigation or holding the person responsible accountable.
- **Consulting Psychologists:** All the men mentioned that they visited psychologists many times throughout their lives, with issues which either directly or indirectly related to their exploitation. They commonly all expressed that many of these professionals failed to identify their needs, did not *“pay attention to me”* and failed to provide appropriate care. One commented, *“children have little agency, and a psychologist is someone to whom you go, because adults tell you to do so, not because you want to”*.

According to another participant’s experiences, when he was consulting a legal clinic about issues partly related to his childhood abuse, he was strongly advised to visit a psychologist for safety’s sake, although he felt no need to consult. He explained that the sessions focused solely

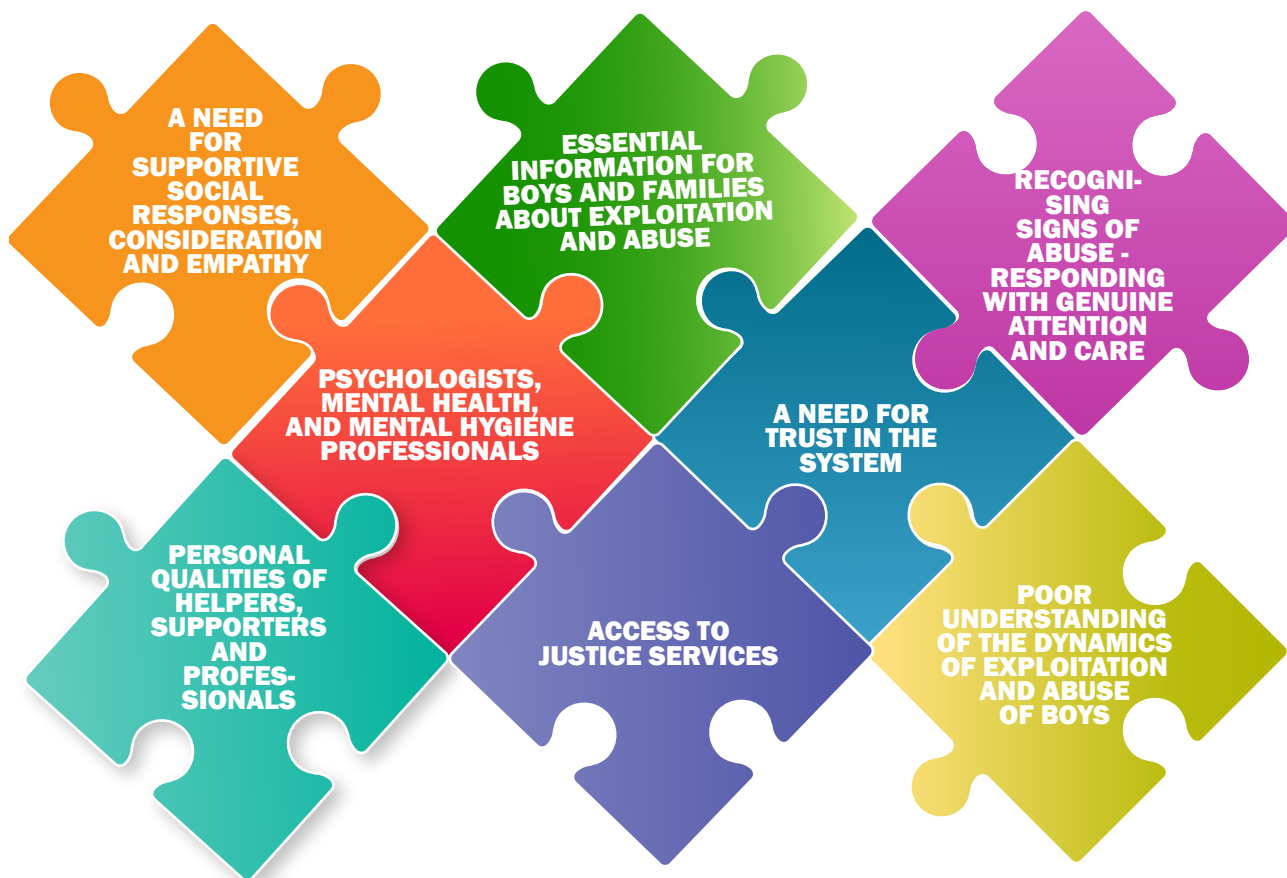
on the abuse, without the psychologists truly understanding and accepting the fact that he felt that he had no unresolved trauma resulting from his abuse at the time of these sessions. According to him, once the professionals have assessed you as being a victim, you shall always remain one.

Initiating Legal Proceedings and Accessing Justice: Some participants initiated legal action against their abusers, but their experiences indicate a lack of sensitivity and person (victim) friendly approaches, identifying several instances where the ‘system’ and those in positions of power failed to support them appropriately in the process. These include:

- A *“raw mannered and unfriendly”* attorney, who failed to provide a safe environment, and therefore talking to him/her about the abuse was extremely uncomfortable.
- Police officers who acted completely insensitively toward him, making him travel in the same car as the offender and taking him right back to the spot where the exploitation happened.
- When later making a statement, the officers posed several questions focusing on his sexual identity, and questioning his words and testimony, while also mentioning comments regarding the offender’s identity and status, appearing to sympathise with him: *“Do you have any idea who you hurled a defiance at?”* None of the actions resulted in offenders being convicted.



Photograph shows the identified support circles and the attitude and comments of others, in relation to their help seeking



GAPS AND NEEDS

After exploring participants' experiences relating to seeking and receiving support, the same tools were used to facilitate discussions and identify specific needs, and the gaps in service provision and support.

Recognising signs of abuse - Responding with genuine attention and care

- The main need expressed was for 'genuine attention and care', with some men commenting that they did not receive this when they needed it most.
- Participants felt that much of their behaviour (externalising their problems) provided clear 'warning signals' that something was wrong, but these were often misunderstood, or were overlooked, and that this represented a missed opportunity for them to gain the support they required.

Essential information for boys and families about exploitation and abuse

- All participants identified the lack of information available for boys related to exploitation and abuse as a crucial factor contributing to their vulnerability.
- This prevented them from realising what was happening was abuse, exploitation and was wrong - and being able to take action to protect themselves and stop it happening.
- Families experience a lack of information about boys CSEA, which affects their ability to protect and support them.

Poor understanding of the dynamics of exploitation and abuse of boys

- Boys and others in their environment often diminish its seriousness or dismiss it as something other than harmful abuse or exploitation.
- Gaps include understanding of what abuse and exploitation is, offender relationships, dynamics, and strategies - and the context and environments in which it occurs.
- The men expressed a significant need for greater education across the breadth of Hungarian society.

A need for trust in the system

- The men identified a major gap being lack of trust in existing institutions, victim support systems and other authorities, based on experiences of being passed around by and within institutions, being asked repeated questions about their abuse and feeling that no one was able to help them.
- Men noted a lack of visibility of services for boys, transparency, and information about what they could expect from services.

A need for supportive social responses, consideration and empathy

The men described a range of specific needs from family and friends:

“I need family and friends to be aware of my abuse and be there if needed - but also I need to be able to process [my experiences] alone, without talking about it”

“I would have loved more active engagement from friends and relatives after they became aware of the abuse, and for them to pose follow up questions, letting me know they are interested in my well-being, the state of the case etc.”

- The men expressed that they don't want to be left alone with their abuse and that even small, often unnoticed gestures of support which communicate genuine care, consideration and empathy are greatly valued.
- Importantly, they wished to remind helpers and support workers that they are unique, and there is no “one size fits all” approach, and therefore what they need will differ from another.

Psychologists, mental health, and mental hygiene professionals

- The men explained that some professionals and support workers see them [only] as “victims”, failing to consider their potential, and the wide range of individual and social needs they have.
- A gap in some professionals' training leads them to expect to be presented with a range of specific problems (symptoms), limiting their ability to provide individualised care and support.
- The men referred to the importance of, and the need for more community based mental health and “mental hygiene professionals”⁵⁷ to support survivors and provide general mental health and life management advice and support.

Access to justice services

- For anyone who has experienced CSEA, approaching and accessing all services is very challenging and difficult. Police officers, lawyers, court officials and judges need to work to make every step of the process easy for victims.
- There is a need to address the lack of clarity and how these institutions work, as it discourages victims from approaching them.

57 In the Hungarian context, mental health professionals often working within community settings.

Personal qualities of helpers, supporters and professionals

- In relation to the gender of helpers and supporters, the men explained that it doesn't make any difference if the chemistry is present. They suggested that these professionals should be *“kind, child friendly, should believe in the children, and it is great if they have some humour”*.



Illustration shows the identified support circles and the necessary added actors to fulfil the participant's needs

ANALYSIS OF LEGAL FRAMEWORK

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN HUNGARIAN LAW

Hungary has adopted and amended criminal provisions and procedural laws that help to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation, and by doing so, has largely complied with its obligations under the international instruments discussed above. However, legislative gaps do exist and there is scope for further enhancing the legal protections afforded to children. These will be discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

As Hungarian law applies the provisions of the CRC,⁵⁸ the definition of a child given in Article 1 is utilised in the national legislation, stating that “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years”.⁵⁹ Under the Hungarian Civil Code, the term “minor” is stated to mean any person under the age of 18, or in exceptional cases under the age of 16.⁶⁰ These exceptional cases involve instances in which a child over 16 has reached majority through marriage (as discussed below). In the Act XXXI of 1997 on child protection and guardianship administration, it is stated that what is to be considered a child is the same as the definition of a minor under the Civil Code, thereby defining a child as under 18, or 16 in the exceptional case stated above.⁶¹

The Criminal Code also uses the alternative terminology of “juvenile”, but only in reference to children in conflict with the law and in the context of the criminal responsibility of offenders under 18.⁶²

This divergence in terminology has no impact on the protections offered to children from sexual exploitation offences. In most offences relating to sexual exploitation, the criminal provisions specify that sentencing may be harsher when the victim is of a certain age, for example, prescribing heavier penalties for sexual offences in which the victim is under 18 or under 12.

As set out in the provisions on “sexual abuse”⁶³ and “sexual violence”⁶⁴ in the Criminal Code, the age of sexual consent in Hungary is 14.⁶⁵ This applies for both boys and girls, and for both same-sex and opposite-sex sexual intercourse. However, a close in age exemption exists, meaning that consensual sexual intercourse between a child aged over 12 and another aged under 18 will be permitted.⁶⁶ It should be noted that the five-year gap between a 17 and 12 year old is a particularly large age gap for a close in age exemption.

A survey question to frontline workers explored knowledge of legal protection pertaining to the age of consent (statutory rape) for boys under the age of 18 as depicted in Figure 10 below. Sixty-four percent of workers correctly identified that this is established under Hungarian law. Considering the provision of a close-in age exemption, 36% of respondents were aware that Hungarian law provides a close-in-age exemption to avoid criminalisation of peer-to-peer consensual sexual relationships, with 24% incorrectly answering and most uncertain.

58 Parliament of Hungary. (1991). [Act LXIV of 1991](#).

59 United Nations. (1989). [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). Article 1.

60 Parliament of Hungary. (2013). [Act V of 2013 on the Civil Code of Hungary](#).

61 Parliament of Hungary. (1997). [Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration](#). Section 5.

62 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Criminal Code \(last amended July 2021\)](#), Section 105.

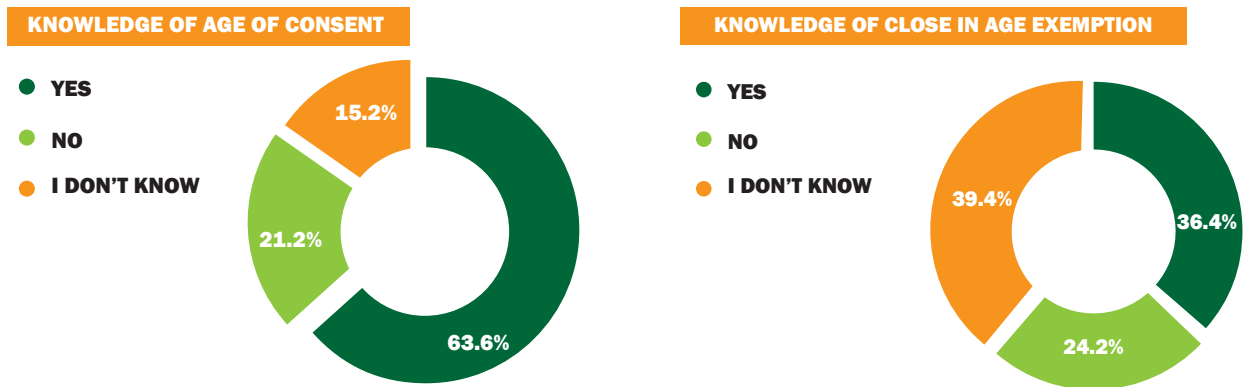
63 *Ibid.*, Section 198.

64 *Ibid.*, Section 197.

65 *Ibid.*, Section 198.

66 *Ibid.*, Sections 197-198.

Figure 10. Age of sexual consent in Hungarian law.



The Criminal Code also sets out the general offence of “sexual exploitation” which involves forcing another person to perform or endure sexual activities and carries a penalty of imprisonment for 2-8 years when the victim is under 18 and for 5-10 years when the victim is under 14.⁶⁷

The attempt at committing all crimes contained under the Criminal Code is covered by Section 10, which states that an attempt shall be subject to the same penalty range as the completed criminal offence.⁶⁸ A person may be prosecuted for an attempt if they “commenced but did not complete the commission of an intentional criminal offence”.⁶⁹ A person will not be liable for an attempt if an offender voluntarily abandons the attempt or voluntarily avoids the occurrence of the result of the crime.⁷⁰ Therefore, the attempt at all crimes relating to SEC is considered punishable under the Criminal Code. Further, Section 11 states that, for specified crimes, a person who provides the necessary or facilitating conditions for the commission of a criminal offence shall also be punished.⁷¹

In terms of sentencing, the Criminal Code states that recidivists will have their penalty range increased by half for imprisonment sentences (but should not exceed 25 years).⁷² This will

apply unless a specific offence already contains specific sentencing for recidivists,⁷³ as is the case with crimes such as procurement of a minor, for example.⁷⁴ Although it can be said that the minimum and maximum penalties provided for under Hungarian law do reflect the grave nature of SEC crimes, in practice, the courts do not impose sufficiently severe penalties to act as a deterrent for future offenders.⁷⁵

According to the Criminal Code, it is possible for the offenders liability to be excluded or limited by error,⁷⁶ meaning that an offender will not be punished for a fact of which they were not aware at the time of commission.⁷⁷ Therefore, ignorance of the age of the victim may be pleaded as a defence to excuse the conduct of the offender, and could be utilised by offenders of all crimes related to sexual exploitation of children. In such cases the burden of proof will be on the defence, meaning the defence will have to prove that the error committed did not derive from the alleged offenders own negligence.⁷⁸ There is a lack of data available to show whether this defence has been widely or successfully employed by those who have faced prosecution for crimes relating to sexual exploitation of children. However, research conducted at the National Institute of Criminology operating as the research institute of the Prosecutor General highlighted that in

67 *Ibid.*, Section 196.

68 *Ibid.*, Section 10.

69 *Ibid.*

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Ibid.*, Section 11.

72 *Ibid.*, Section 89.

73 *Ibid.*

74 *Ibid.*, Section 200.

75 Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation. (2021). Personal Communication.

76 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). *Criminal Code (last amended July 2021)*, Section 15.

77 *Ibid.*, Section 20.

78 Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation. (2021). Personal Communication.

2016 and 2017, of 178 cases involving child sexual abuse materials, there were instances in which offenders used this error in fact defence, by stating that the images in question were accidentally stored on their computer, or that the age of the person in the footage was not determinable.⁷⁹

In Hungary, it is compulsory for children to attend school until the end of the academic year in which they turn 16.⁸⁰ The Labour Code sets out that the minimum working age is also 16, with the exception that full time students aged 15 may be employed during school holidays.⁸¹ There are also several specific protections afforded to “young workers”, who are those workers aged under 18. These provisions state that young workers may not be ordered to work at night, or work overtime and must cap their working hours at eight hours per day.⁸² Further provisions in the Decree on medical examinations and opinions on occupational, professional and personal hygiene, set out an extensive list of prohibited works for young workers.⁸³ However, these refer mainly to working in extreme physical conditions and do not prohibit any types of work that may cause children to be vulnerable to sexual offences, such as employment in late night entertainment venues.

WHY DO BOYS NEED SPECIFIC AND TAILORED MEASURES?

International instruments aimed at enshrining the rights of children provide comprehensive protection against sexual exploitation for all children irrespective of gender. It is important that all State parties endeavour to provide the

same level of protection, through robust legislation and effective policy, which place the interests of the child at their forefront. Article 34 of the CRC requires State parties to protect children from “all forms of sexual exploitation”. It explicitly outlines that the State Parties must prevent: ‘1) the coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity; 2) the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices; and 3) the exploitive use of children in pornography.’⁸⁴ This is compounded with Article 19 wherein it states that “the State Parties must undertake legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of violence including exploitation and sexual abuse.”⁸⁵

Each of the sections below will analyse the legislation relevant to each of the contexts in which SEC can occur and, where relevant, highlight any provisions that may have special significance for boys. In recent years there is reason to be hopeful, as Hungarian legislation has placed a stronger focus on all children, for example through the enacting of improved child sensitive justice measures. While Hungary does not discriminate between boys and girls within its criminal or procedural legislation, there is relatively little exploration of how this is implemented in practice, relation to different genders. It should be noted that gaps do remain in the legislation and improvements must be made to raise the levels of protection from sexual exploitation that all children are afforded. Further, whilst strong legislation is extremely important, it is only one piece of the puzzle and so it is vital that the practical implementation of such laws do not discriminate against boys and diverse SOGIE. Throughout this analysis, where possible, we will also try to shine a light on how the protections enshrined in law are reflected in their practical implementation.

79 Judit Szabó, Bernadett Csapucha. (2020). *A gyermekpornográfia tényállása a jogerős bírósági ítéletek tükrében, különös tekintettel a fiatalok elkövetőkre 2. rész.* *Ügyészségi Szemle* 2020/3.

80 Parliament of Hungary. (2011). *Act CX. of 2011 on National Public Education.*

81 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). *Act I of 2012 on the Labor Code.*

82 *Ibid.*, Section 114.

83 Government of Hungary. (1998). 33/1998. (VI. 24.) NM decree on medical examinations and opinions on occupational, professional, and personal hygiene. Annex 8.

84 *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.* (1989). Article 34.

85 *Ibid.*, Article 19.

EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN PROSTITUTION⁸⁶

It is increasingly being recognised that like girls, boys too are affected by exploitation in the context of prostitution.⁸⁷ Although adult prostitution is legal in Hungary, selling and buying sexual services is heavily regulated by the Infringement Act⁸⁸ and the Criminal Code. Further clarification and specificity on the application of these regulations are contained under the 1999 Act on the Rules for Combating Organized Crime and Certain Related Phenomena and Related Amendments to the Law (hereafter Combating Organized Crime Act).⁸⁹ The Combating Organized Crime Act contains, among other things, provisions that identify certain zones in which it is prohibited to engage in prostitution⁹⁰ and prescribes that those selling sexual services must hold a medical certificate from the appropriate authority.⁹¹

In a welcome change, in 2020, amendments were made to both acts that ensured higher levels of protection for children exploited in prostitution. The Combating Organized Crime Act was amended to state that a “person under 18 may not offer sexual services”,⁹² whilst the Infringement Act was changed to state that any person who was under 18 at the time of violating any of the regulations related to offering sexual services, could not be punished.⁹³ Further, the Infringement Act now establishes that where a child under 18 has violated the regulations on offering sexual services, the child must be treated as a suspected victim of human trafficking and the police must take immediate general protection measures and arrange placement for the child and notify the guardianship authority.⁹⁴

The Ombudsman highlighted in its 2011⁹⁵ and 2018⁹⁶ reports that proceedings were initiated against those who had violated the regulations in the Infringement Act, irrespective of their age. In the period 2014-2017 the number of cases of exploitation of children in prostitution was significantly lower than the number of 14-18-year-old minors prosecuted as offenders of illicit prostitution proceedings, and almost no children appeared as victims of human trafficking from this age group.⁹⁷ This shows how children were being treated as offenders of prostitution, not as victims of sexual exploitation. Therefore, given that before 2020 children could be reported and prosecuted as offenders for being exploited in prostitution, these amendments are a hugely important legislative steps towards ensuring that children are treated as victims in the eyes of the law. At the time of writing, these amendments are still relatively recent and so it is unclear how they have been implemented in practice by law enforcement bodies.

In addition to the regulations that govern the selling of sexual services, the Criminal Code contains several provisions that provide protection to children from being exploited in prostitution. Section 200 prohibits offering a child for prostitution or inviting a child to engage in prostitution.⁹⁸ The penalty for such crime amounts to between 2 and 8 years imprisonment, which may rise to between 5 and 10 years if it has been committed with the use of deception, violence or threat.⁹⁹ In addition, Section 201 covers crimes relating to procuring and prohibits persuading another person to engage in prostitution and making a building or other location available to another person to engage in prostitution.¹⁰⁰ When these crimes have been committed with a child as the victim, the

86 ECPAT prefers the term ‘exploitation of children in prostitution’ instead of ‘child prostitution’ in line with the recently widely adopted Terminology Guidelines. Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2016, January 28). [Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#). Bangkok: ECPAT International. 30.

87 ECPAT International. (2020). [Summary Paper on Exploitation of Children in Prostitution](#). 8.

88 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Act II of 2012 on the Infringement Act](#).

89 Parliament of Hungary. (1999). Act LXXV of 1999 on the Rules for Combating Organized Crime and Certain Related Phenomena and Related Amendments to the Law.

90 *Ibid.*, Section 7.

91 *Ibid.*, Section 9.

92 *Ibid.*

93 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Act II of 2012 on the Infringement Act](#). Section 172 (2).

94 *Ibid.*, Section 172 (5).

95 OCFR. (2011). [Report of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights in case No. AJB-2031/2011](#).

96 OCFR. (2019). [Report of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights in case No. AJB-1485/2018](#).

97 Varga-Sabján Dóra, Sebhelyi Viktória. (2018). [Child prostitution - Situation in Hungary from a human rights and psychological point of view](#). Fundamentum.

98 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Criminal Code \(last amended July 2021\)](#), Section 200.

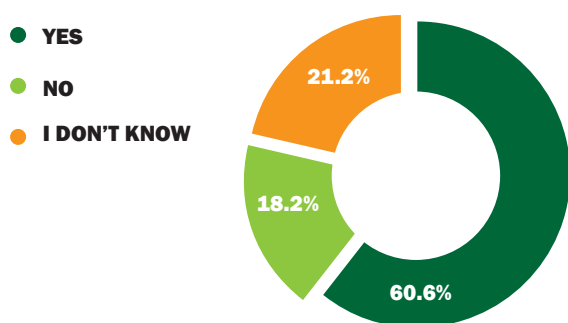
99 *Ibid.*

100 *Ibid.*, Section 201.

punishment is set at imprisonment for 2 to 8 years.¹⁰¹ Further, Section 203 on the “exploitation of child prostitution” prohibits a range of acts. Any person who endeavours to profit from the exploitation of the prostitution of a child, or who gives money or any other form of remuneration for sexual activities with a child will be punished with imprisonment between 2 to 8 years.¹⁰² Any person being supported partly or wholly by profiting from the exploitation in prostitution of a child will face a penalty of 2 to 8 years imprisonment.¹⁰³ This Section also criminalises the maintaining, operating or providing material assistance for the operation of a brothel where the prostitution of a child takes place.¹⁰⁴ Finally, crimes involving the exploitation of children in prostitution may be punished under Section 192 on human trafficking as it creates an offence relating to trafficking a person for the purpose of performing sexual acts (as discussed below).¹⁰⁵ All of these criminal offences apply to boys and girls without distinction.

Figure 11 illustrates responses from the frontline worker survey about their knowledge of Hungarian law regarding the sexual exploitation of boys in prostitution. Sixty-one percent of participants correctly identified that it is a criminal offence in Hungary to engage a boy below 18 in sexual activities for money. Eighteen percent answered no and 21% were uncertain.

Figure 11. Criminality of sexual exploitation of boys in prostitution.



101 *Ibid.*

102 *Ibid.*, Section 203.

103 *Ibid.*

104 *Ibid.*

105 *Ibid.*, Section 192.

106 Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation. (2021). Personal Communication.

107 Dr. Habil. Bárándi Gergely. (2019). *Emberkereskedelem vagy gyermek sérelmére elkövetett kerítés? – Egy legfőbb ügyészégi iránymutatás értelmezéséről.*

108 ECPAT prefers the terms ‘child sexual exploitation material’ or ‘child sexual abuse material’, but in a legal context still uses ‘child pornography’ in line with the recently widely adopted Terminology Guidelines: Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2016, January 28). *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.* Bangkok: ECPAT International. 40.

109 Unified Investigation and Prosecution Crime Statistics. (2019). ‘Child pornography’.

110 *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, the provisions used to prosecute crimes relating to exploitation in prostitution have many overlapping components, creating difficulty in distinguishing between crimes, deciding upon applicable provisions and therefore hampering prosecution efforts.¹⁰⁶ In recognising and attempting to remedy this weakness, the Office of the Prosecutor General issued guidelines in 2018 that offered direction to prosecutors on the crimes of human trafficking and procuring of a person for sexual activities. According to the guidelines, all the County Attorney General’s Offices have retrospectively reclassified the crime of procuring as a crime of human trafficking that is more severely punished. Ongoing cases were also reviewed accordingly.¹⁰⁷

ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Online child sexual exploitation is a continually evolving crime that knows no borders, affecting children globally and Hungary is no exception to this. There is a lack of data and research focusing specifically on how these crimes affect boys in Hungary. However, data from the Office of the Prosecutor General highlights that, in 2020, there were 24 identified boy victims of crimes contained under the “child pornography”¹⁰⁸ section of the Criminal Code.¹⁰⁹ While this number is relatively small in comparison to girl victims of the same offences,¹¹⁰ it emphasises that crimes relating to online child sexual exploitation can and do affect children of all genders.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, global law enforcement agencies, child helplines and online reporting mechanisms indicated that there was increased reporting of a range of online related sexual exploitation of children offences in many

countries.¹¹¹ This may be due to the resultant lockdown measures, ensuring children (and offenders) have been spending more time online, thus making children increasingly vulnerable to the risks of sexual exploitation. This may also be a result of the increased attention on our online lives overall, and a heightened sense of vigilance resulting in more concerns being voiced.¹¹² This is particularly worrying when considering that, according to INTERPOL, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in fewer reports reaching police, difficulties in moving forward with existing investigations and reduced use of the global International Child Sexual Exploitation database, due to movement restrictions and other priorities faced by law enforcement personnel.¹¹³ Whilst uncertainty still exists surrounding exactly how COVID-19 has affected OCSEA, it is clear that now more so than ever, how important it is to be vigilant and to have strong legislation to tackle these offences.

The increase in reporting is reflected by the National Media and Information Communication Authority, who reported that in 2020 the amount of 'paedophile content'¹¹⁴ reported through the organisation's Internet hotline almost tripled, compared to the number of reports in 2019 (276 to 709).¹¹⁵ The next year, in 2020, nearly half of the reporting was determined to be 'paedophile content' (709 of 1633).¹¹⁶ Nearly a quarter of the reported 'paedophile content' was determined to be CSAM by the National Media and Information Communication Authority.

In July 2021 the offence of 'child pornography' has been entirely reshaped with the aim of widening the scope of the offence, providing broader protection for children online and to serve as deterrence with increasing the penalties. The new text of section 204 of the Criminal Code criminalises a series of conduct related to

CSAM understood as a "pornographic recording" portraying a person below 18 years of age. A "pornographic recording" refers to - "a depiction of one or more other persons in a way that depicts sexuality in a grossly indecent manner for the purpose of arousing sexual desire, including the realistic depiction of one or more non-existent persons. A video, film, or photo recording or an image recording produced by any other means, depicting sexuality in a grossly indecent manner for the purpose of arousing sexual desire".¹¹⁷ The wording of the definition is vague and not in line with the OPSC as it is left to the judges discretion to define what constitutes "a grossly indecent manner". Moreover, the definition does not specifically refer to children nor specifically mention representation of children engaged in explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes, as prescribed by the OPSC.¹¹⁸ Further, the definition provided by the Criminal Code does not cover materials other than visual nor materials depicting persons appearing to be minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Section 204 also contains a range of prohibited offences in relation to CSAM. If an offender "acquires or keeps" CSAM they will face a penalty of 1 to 5 years imprisonment,¹¹⁹ if an offender "offers, hands over or makes available" CSAM they will face a penalty of 2 to 8 years.¹²⁰

These penalties will increase to 5 to 10 years and 5 to 15 years when committed "against a child under 12 years, against a person raised by or under the supervision, care or medical treatment of the offender, or by abusing any other power or influence over the aggrieved party, or by exploiting the vulnerable situation of the aggrieved party, committed by a public officer, using that capacity, or with a recording depicting tormenting or using violence, or as a special recidivist".¹²¹ The punishment is even

111 See e.g., Europol. (2020). [Exploiting isolation: Offenders and victims of online child sexual abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic](#); National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. (2020). [COVID-19 and missing & exploited children](#).

112 INTERPOL. (2020). [Threats and trends. Child sexual exploitation and abuse. COVID-19 Impact](#).

113 *Ibid.*, 7.

114 The term 'paedophile content' is the term used in the Hungarian database. ECPAT prefers the term 'child sexual abuse material', in line with the recently widely adopted Terminology Guidelines: Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2016, January 28). [Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#). Bangkok: ECPAT International. 38.

115 National Media and Info communications Authority. (2020). Public interest data request.

116 *Ibid.*

117 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Criminal Code \(last amended July 2021\)](#), Section 204 (7).

118 UN General Assembly. (2000, May 25). [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#), Article 2 (c).

119 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Criminal Code \(last amended July 2021\)](#), Section 204 (1) (a).

120 *Ibid.*, Section 204 (1) (b).

121 *Ibid.*, Section 204 (2).

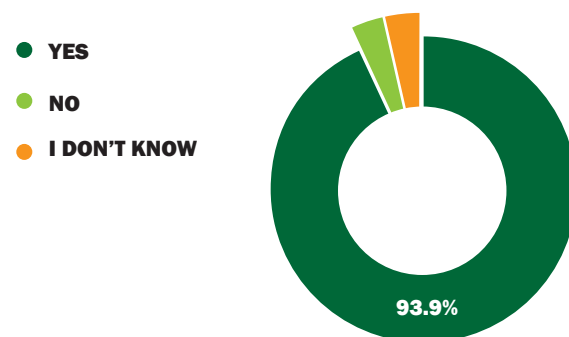
more severe if the crime includes a recording of torment or violence against a child under 12.^{122,123} Those who “place on the market, trade in, or make accessible to, a large audience” CSAM, will face imprisonment for 5 to 10 years.¹²⁴ Those who provide material means for the commission of these offences will also face punishment of 1 to 5 years and those who commit preparation for this offence shall be punished for up to 3 years.¹²⁵ If the child victim of CSAM-related crimes is between the ages of 14 and 18, offenders will be subjected to punishment lower imprisonment penalty (up to 3 years, and 1 to 5 years), unless the aggravating factors listed above, such as exploiting the vulnerable situation of the child, are present.¹²⁶

Further, the Criminal Code criminalises the mere possession (“acquiring” and “keeping” in the words of the law) of CSAM with up to 3-5 years of imprisonment.¹²⁷ Similarly to the other CSAM-related offences, the penalty is increased to 2 to 8 years in case of aggravating circumstances.¹²⁸ The Criminal Code commentary states that the terminology “acquire or keeps” should be intended in a broad sense to also cover the offence of knowingly obtaining access to CSAM.¹²⁹ However, it should be noted that whilst this commentary is written by highly esteemed judicial scholars and has a strong persuasive value in judicial proceedings, it is ultimately an academic piece and so cannot be said to be legally binding. While the Criminal Code does not explicitly state that these offences cover conduct committed in the online environment, this can be inferred as the commentary emphasises the intention for this Section to cover offences prescribed in the OPSC, Directive 2011/93/EU and the Lanzarote Convention.¹³⁰ Although there are no known cases in which Directive 2011/93/EU or the Criminal Code commentary have been used as basis to prosecute knowingly obtaining access to CSAM, given that EU Directives have indirect effect in Hungary, it is possible for this

to occur. However, for the sake of clarity in aiding prosecution efforts, it is important that the Hungarian legislation clearly and explicitly criminalises knowingly obtaining access to CSAM.

Figure 12 below illustrates responses from the frontline worker survey about the criminality of child sexual abuse materials in Hungarian law. 94% of respondents correctly identified that “mere possession” of child sexual abuse material with no intent to distribute/share is criminalised in Hungary. One person was incorrect and one unsure.

Figure 12. Criminality of possessing child sexual abuse materials.



A pornographic show is also defined under the Hungarian legislation as “an act or performance depicting the sexuality of one or more other persons in a grossly indecent manner for the purpose of arousing sexual desire”.¹³¹ The penalty for having a child participate in a pornographic show or organise such shows is imprisonment between 5 and 10 years.¹³² It is also a criminal offence to attend or to provide material means for making one or more children participate in such a show.¹³³

Although it is not legally binding, according to the Criminal Code commentary, this provision may also be used to prosecute online grooming

122 *Ibid.*, Section 204 (3).

123 *Ibid.*, Section 204 (2).

124 *Ibid.*, Section 204 (1) (c).

125 *Ibid.*, Section 204. (4) (a)

126 *Ibid.*, Section 204.

127 *Ibid.*, Section 204 (1) (a).

128 *Ibid.*, Section 204(2).

129 Kristina Karsai. (2019). *Nagykommentár a Büntető Törvénykönyvről szóló 2012.*

130 *Ibid.*

131 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). *Criminal Code (last amended July 2021)*, Section 204A (7).

132 *Ibid.*, Section 204 A(1) (b).

133 *Ibid.*, Section 204 A(1) (a) and Section 204A (4).

offences.¹³⁴ Further, as the offender’s solicitation must be for the purpose of having the child participate in such a show, this provision is not broad enough to cover online grooming as provided by the Lanzarote Convention and intended as the building of a relationship of trust through information and communication technologies with the intent of sexually exploiting the child either online (through, for example, the production of child sexual abuse material) or offline (in person).^{135,136} Research by the National Institute of Criminology revealed that in 2016 and 2017, amongst 178 cases relating to CSAM, 25 percent of the victims had an unlawful sexual approach on the part of the offender towards the victim, including cases where a victim who had not reached the age of consent had been contacted by the offender on a social media site, in order to have sexual intercourse.¹³⁷ This further emphasises the need for robust legislation criminalising online grooming offences.

According to the Hungarian regulations, self-generated sexual content involving children, whether willingly produced or through coercion, could also be classified as a “pornographic

recording” under Section 204.¹³⁸ Although this conduct meets the elements of crimes under this Section, the Criminal Code states that for an act to be considered criminal, it must contain some danger to society.¹³⁹ As sharing of self-generated sexual content involving children is unlikely to represent a danger, it would not be considered a crime in Hungary.¹⁴⁰ There have been cases where children were forced to prove their innocence in court for such actions.¹⁴¹ This could be avoided by including a provision in the legislation that excludes a child’s liability for producing CSAM in such circumstances.

The Hungarian legislation contains no provisions that explicitly criminalise the live streaming of child sexual abuse. Although the Criminal Code

commentary suggests that Section 204(1) (a) on acquiring or keeping CSAM, may be used to prohibit live streaming offences, it may be difficult to demonstrate the intent of the offender in proving guilt. Therefore, it is important that the offence of live streaming child sexual abuse is explicitly criminalised. In addition, offences relating to the sexual extortion of children are not criminalised under the Hungarian legislation.

All the crimes relating to OCSE apply to all children, irrespective of gender. Whilst most of the provisions also apply to all children under 18, providing “the conditions necessary for or facilitating the making or placing on the market of, or the trading in, pornographic recordings” involving a child is considered a misdemeanour and punishable with two years of imprisonment only when the child is under 14.¹⁴²

Unfortunately, the law in Hungary does not prescribe any obligation for Internet Service Providers to block or filter CSAM.

SALE AND TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN FOR SEXUAL PURPOSES

In terms of trafficking legislation, Hungary’s provisions are contained under Section 192 of the Criminal Code.¹⁴³ Paragraph (2) of this Section states that “for the purpose of obtaining a regular advantage, a person who induces another person to perform work, perform a work-type activity, provide other services, or continue an illegal act (a) with deception, with using the position of power, authority or influence in relationship of the victim, arising from the victim’s education, supervision, treatment or other relationship, with the exploitation of the victim’s vulnerable position induce or (b) coerces by force or threat, is guilty of crime”.¹⁴⁴ Further, “a person who, for

134 Kristina Karsai. (2019). *Nagykommentár a Büntető Törvénykönyvről szóló 2012.*

135 Council of Europe. (2007). *Lanzarote Convention*, Article 23.

136 Council of Europe’s Lanzarote Committee. (2015). *Opinion on Article 23 of the Lanzarote Convention and its explanatory note*. Para 20.

137 Országos Kriminológiai Intézet. (2020). *Ügyészégi Szemle*.

138 Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation. (2021). Personal Communication.

139 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). *Criminal Code (last amended July 2021)*, Section 4.

140 *Ibid.*, Section 4.

141 Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation. (2021). Personal Communication.

142 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). *Criminal Code (last amended July 2021)*, Section 204 (6).

143 *Ibid.*, Section 192.

144 *Ibid.*

the purpose of committing this criminal offence “sells, buys, exchanges, hands over, receives, recruits, transports, accommodates, harbours or, for another, acquires another person” will also be guilty of a crime. When these offences are committed against a child aged 12-18 the penalty will be raised to imprisonment for 5-10 years and when the child victim is under 12 the punishment will be between 5-15 years of imprisonment.¹⁴⁵ In addition, Section 192 makes it a separate offence to commit the crimes listed above “for the purpose of performing sexual acts or for the purpose of illegal use of a human body.”¹⁴⁶ This crime has a penalty of imprisonment for 5-15 years for children aged 12-18 and 5-20 years for children under 12.¹⁴⁷ It is also an offence, punishable with 1 to 5 years imprisonment, to make use of any sexual services provided by a victim of trafficking.¹⁴⁸ It is welcome that the severity of the crime of trafficking children for sexual purposes is reflected in the fact that it carries the highest penalty of all offences associated with trafficking.

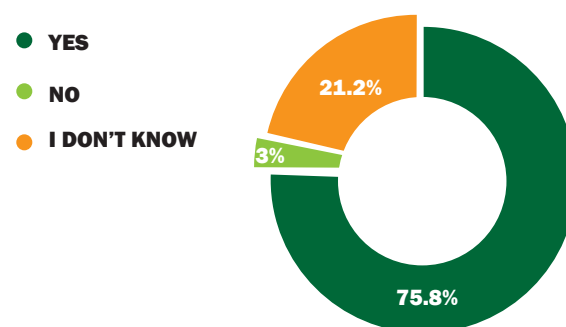
In line with the UN Trafficking Protocol, the means used to carry out the trafficking, i.e., threat, coercion etc. are listed as aggravating factors and are not required to constitute the crime of child trafficking for sexual purposes. Further, the ‘movement’ or ‘displacement’ of the victim is not required to constitute a crime and offences committed both domestically and internationally will be covered by these provisions.

Section 192 (1) also makes it an offence to “(a) sell, buy, hand over or receive another person as consideration or to (b) transport, accommodate, harbour or, for another, acquire another person for the purpose of committing an act specified in (a)”.¹⁴⁹ Although this covers the sale of children, it is included as part of the trafficking legislation and is not a standalone offence. All these crimes apply to all children, irrespective of gender.

Figure 13 illustrates responses from the frontline worker survey about the criminality of trafficking child victims. 76% of participants correctly answered that Hungarian legislation explicitly states that a child victim can never give consent

to be trafficked. One person answered incorrectly and 21% were uncertain.

Figure 13. Criminality of the trafficking of children.



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM

The organisation of travel arrangements or transportations that are explicitly or implicitly meant to create or facilitate opportunities to engage children in sexual activities is not criminalised in Hungary. Further, there are no provisions that regulate the use of volunteers that work in roles with direct contact with children and companies that operate within the travel and tourism industry are not required by law to adhere to specific national codes for child protection. Finally, there are no provisions that deny entry or leave to persons convicted of sexual exploitation of children or that set up strict conditions for their travel. As seen in section 4.4, the data from the surveyed workers does indicate that an estimated 12-16% of offenders in observed cases were foreigners, so this topic does deserve attention.

Whilst only an individual person may be convicted of a criminal offence in Hungary, there are certain measures that may be taken to hold travel and tourism companies liable for the conduct of individuals associated with their business. If the commission of an intentional criminal offence was intended for or resulted in gaining advantage for the legal entity, or the offence was committed using the legal entity and was committed within

145 *Ibid.*

146 *Ibid.*

147 *Ibid.*

148 *Ibid.*

149 *Ibid.*

the scope of operations of the legal entity by or with the knowledge of persons specified by law, action may be taken against the company.¹⁵⁰ If these circumstances are fulfilled, the court may impose a fine, restriction of the activity of the company or dissolution of the company.¹⁵¹ In the course of this research it has not been possible to find evidence of these sanctions being applied to travel and tourism companies for SEC offences committed in the scope of their operations.

Whilst there are no provisions that oblige tour companies to include a warning against the illegality of SECTT-related conducts in all their marketing and promotional material, “it is prohibited to offer, advertise or participate in such activities, the sexual services of another person in writing, by means of video or sound recorders or other equipment.”¹⁵²

CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE

The legal age of marriage is set out under the Hungarian Civil Code. This stipulates that child over 16 may marry, but only when they have prior consent from the guardianship authority.¹⁵³ Any marriage of a child under 18 that has been concluded without this consent will be deemed invalid.¹⁵⁴ The laws governing marriage apply to both boys and girls.

The guardianship authority shall grant prior permission for marriage, if the marriage is in the best interests of the child, the application for permission has been submitted by the child without influence on their free will and if certain conditions prescribed by law are met.¹⁵⁵

The latter conditions include a certificate of a general practitioner stating that the child “has reached the physical and mental development necessary for the marriage”. The family protection services may also be involved in the examination (the couple must attend counselling).¹⁵⁶ The child’s emotional and psychological maturity is not examined in the authorisation procedure. Although one of the preconditions of approval is that “the marriage is in the best interests of the child”,¹⁵⁷ there is no indication as to what circumstances the guardianship authority would consider a marriage to be in the child’s best interest.

Further, a loophole exists in this legislation whereby if a child under 16 marries without the approval of the guardianship authority, and if they have still not challenged the validity of this marriage six months after turning 18, it will become valid retroactively to the date that it began.¹⁵⁸

There are no criminal provisions that prohibit the inducing or forcing a child to marry. Whilst it may be possible to punish such crimes under the offence of endangering a child as it could amount to endangering “the physical, mental, moral or emotional development of the minor”,¹⁵⁹ this would only apply to guardians or caregivers to the child and so is far from sufficient in protecting from these offences. Similarly, knowingly marrying a child is not criminalised under Hungarian law.

On a positive note, there are no provisions in the Hungarian legislation that would exclude liability for sexual abuse and exploitation offences for offenders who subsequently marries their victim.

150 Parliament of Hungary. (2001). [Act CIV. on Measures applicable to legal entities under Criminal Law](#). Section 2. (1) and (2).

151 *Ibid.*, Section 3.

152 Parliament of Hungary. (1999). [Act LXXV of 1999 on the Rules for Combating Organized Crime and Certain Related Phenomena and Related Amendments to the Law](#).

153 Parliament of Hungary. (2013). [Hungarian Civil Code](#). Section 4:9.

154 *Ibid.*

155 Parliament of Hungary. (1997). Gov. Decree 149/1997. (IX.10). on guardianship authority and child protection and guardianship authority procedures. Section 34-35.

156 Gyurkó Szilvia. (2018). [Minden napra jut egy gyerekházasság Magyarországon](#). Budapest: 168óra.hu.

157 Parliament of Hungary. (1997). Gov. Decree 149/1997. (IX.10). on guardianship authority and child protection and guardianship authority procedures. Section 36.

158 Parliament of Hungary. (2013). [Hungarian Civil Code](#). Section 4:9 (4).

159 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Criminal Code \(last amended July 2021\)](#), Section 208.

EXTRATERRITORIALITY AND EXTRADITION

Section 3 of the Criminal Code stipulates that all offences committed in Hungary that are contained under the Criminal Code will be punishable, regardless of the nationality of the offender.¹⁶⁰ Further, active extraterritorial jurisdiction is applied as Hungary can also prosecute “acts committed by Hungarian nationals abroad if the act constitutes a criminal offence under Hungarian law.”¹⁶¹ Therefore, active territorial jurisdiction allows Hungary to prosecute illegal conduct (including all SEC crimes) by their own citizens that has been carried out abroad. The Hungarian legislation also goes further and applies passive extraterritorial jurisdiction. This means that Hungary will also punish those offences, which are punishable under Hungarian law, committed by foreign nationals abroad against a Hungarian national.¹⁶² However, as stated in Section 3, in these cases it will be up to the Prosecutor General to launch criminal proceedings.¹⁶³ It is unclear under what circumstances these proceedings would be launched and indeed if they would be initiated for all SEC-related crimes. It is a positive that double criminality is not required to prosecute offences listed under the Criminal Code, which enables Hungary to prosecute offenders even if the offence is not criminalised in both Hungary and the country where it happened.

Under the Hungarian legislation, “A person residing in Hungary may be extradited at the request of a foreign state for the purpose of conducting criminal proceedings”.¹⁶⁴ However, the principle of double criminality applies to extradition proceedings, meaning that in order

for an offender to be extradited the offence committed must be punishable by a minimum of 1 year of imprisonment under both Hungarian law and the law of the requesting State.¹⁶⁵ Although all SEC offences contained under Hungarian law exceed this minimum sentencing requirement, issues could arise when a requesting State has more lenient sentencing for SEC crimes.

A recent example of Hungary’s extradition proceedings being applied to a SEC case can be seen, in January 2021, with the court ordering the extradition of an American man who was wanted for crimes including sexual coercion, sexual exploitation and incitement to sexual activity of a child under 14.¹⁶⁶

Hungary is a party to the European Convention on Extradition, which includes all forty-seven members of the Council of Europe, as well as Israel, South Africa, and South Korea.¹⁶⁷ In addition, within the European Union, the European Arrest Warrant applies to the cross-border transfer of wanted criminals.¹⁶⁸ This framework has entered Hungarian law with Act No CLXXX of 2012 on cooperation in criminal matters with the Member States of the European Union. According to this, a much faster procedure can be carried out, and the transfer of a Hungarian citizen for the purpose of conducting criminal proceedings is also possible.¹⁶⁹ In cases of extradition under the framework of the European Arrest Warrant, if the conduct for which extradition is requested falls under one of the major crime categories set out in the framework, the court will allow the extradition without examining whether the act is punishable under the law of the requesting country. SEC and conduct related to child sexual abuse material are among those major crime categories.¹⁷⁰

160 *Ibid.*, Section 3.

161 *Ibid.*

162 *Ibid.*

163 *Ibid.*

164 Parliament of Hungary. (1996). [Act XXXVIII of 1996 on International Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters](#). Section 11.

165 *Ibid.*

166 Courts of Hungary. (n. d.). [Metropolitan Court - American man circulated for sexual offences against childhood court ruled](#).

167 Council of Europe. (n. d.). [Signatories and ratifications to the European Convention on Extradition](#).

168 European Commission. (n. d.). [European Arrest Warrant](#).

169 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Act CLXXX. of 2012 on the on criminal cooperation with the Member States of the European Union](#).

170 *Ibid.*, Appendix 15.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND REMEDIES

National complaint mechanisms and reporting

The Hungarian Act on Child Protection and Guardianship Administration imposes a mandatory duty to report SEC cases on a wide range of professionals that may work with children.¹⁷¹ The list of professionals covered by this duty is extensive and includes, among others, health care, education and law enforcement workers.¹⁷² Although this duty does not mention the reporting of instances of SEC specifically, it obliges these professionals to report to the relevant authorities “in case of the child’s vulnerability” as well as “to initiate official proceedings in cases of child abuse or gross neglect or other serious threat”.¹⁷³ Whilst any citizen¹⁷⁴ or organisation can report instances of SEC,¹⁷⁵ the reporting obligations do not extend to all private citizens. Anonymous reports will also be processed if they relate to a minor.¹⁷⁶ Most often, employees of educational institutions avail of the reporting mechanism established under this Section.^{177,178}

The members of the alert and reporting system are obliged to cooperate and inform each other of suspected wrongdoing.¹⁷⁹ However, the mechanisms mentioned above are not completely successful, due to the lack of information about reporting processes and the high number of cases coupled with the low number of professionals. This means that vulnerabilities in many cases are not adequately, or not at all identified.¹⁸⁰ Several shortcomings and problems in the functioning of the child protection system can be identified,

which make it difficult to identify and provide effective assistance to children who are at risk of sexual exploitation or who have already become victims. This contributes to the fact that it is more difficult for children to exit the vicious circle of exploitation and causes a sense of failure and frustration for professionals.¹⁸¹

In June 2021 a legislative package passed the parliament which introduced the formulation of a so called national ‘paedophilia database’ containing convicted offenders of child sexual abuse and exploitation crimes. The database is browsable through the personal Client Gateway and users can find out the names, date of birth, settlement-level residence of the convicts, the crime they have committed, and a photo of the offenders. The list is searchable by name, and the number of data requests is not limited, so anyone can search for any number of names.

The Ministry of Interior also maintains a more general criminal database in which sex offenders are included.¹⁸² If an offender is included in this database, they will not be able to access a Certificate of Good Conduct. According to the Criminal Code, it is prohibited for sex offenders to hold positions that may involve or facilitate contact with children.¹⁸³ Further, the Labour Code prohibits employers from hiring anyone to such positions if they are contained in the criminal database for committing sex crimes.¹⁸⁴

Following a change in the law, in 2014, sexual offences against children are now exempt from the statute of limitations if the offence is punishable by more than five years of imprisonment.¹⁸⁵ However, this provision is not applied retroactively and therefore, cases that involve crimes committed before 2014 will still

171 Parliament of Hungary. (1997). [Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and the Guardianship Administration](#). Section 17.

172 *Ibid.*

173 *Ibid.*

174 Parliament of Hungary. (1997). [Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and the Guardianship Administration](#). Section 17.

175 *Ibid.*

176 Hungarian Central Statistical Office. (2016). [Gyermekegély-A gyermekvédelmi jelzőrendszer működése](#), 2014. Statisztikai Tükör.

177 *Ibid.*

178 *Ibid.*

179 Parliament of Hungary. (1997). [Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and the Guardianship Administration](#). Section 17.

180 Hatvani Erzsébet Dr., Sebhelyi Viktória, Vaskuti Gergely. (2018). [Gyermekegély-A gyermekvédelmi jelzőrendszer működése](#), 2014. Statisztikai Tükör. Budapest: Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Child Protection.

181 *Ibid.*

182 Parliament of Hungary. (2009). [Act XLVII of 2009 on the Criminal Registration System, on the Registration System of Court Decisions against Hungarian Nationals by the Court of another EU Country, and on the Registration System of Criminal and Biometric Data](#).

183 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Criminal Code \(last amended July 2021\)](#), Section 52.

184 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Act I of 2012 on the Labor Code](#). Section 44.

185 Parliament of Hungary. (2012). [Criminal Code \(last amended July 2021\)](#), Section 26 (3)(c).

be subject to the original limitation rules. These rules state that punishment for criminal offences will become statute barred after a period equal to the maximum sentence for that crime, with a minimum of five years.¹⁸⁶ These limitation periods are prescribed by law and designate the maximum amount of time after a crime has been committed in which legal proceedings may be initiated against an offender. When children experiencing SEC do disclose their abuse, their disclosure is often delayed. In these cases, their access to justice can be thwarted by short statutes of limitations for sex crimes.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, the change in the law to remove such limitations removes an important obstacle for the reporting of these crimes, allowing children in Hungary to come forward if they feel comfortable to do so. However, the oversight of continuing to apply the old rules for crimes committed before 2014 may act as a barrier to justice for those who experienced SEC crimes before this date.

Positively, public prosecutors are obliged to initiate proceedings *ex officio* in Hungary, meaning that they will have a duty to open an investigation through their power of office, based on information they receive.¹⁸⁸ Once this investigation has been initiated the public prosecutor will inform the victim.¹⁸⁹

Hungary has several helplines through which SEC crimes may be reported. The most known helpline for child abuse in the country is operated by the Kék Vonal Child Crisis Foundation, and can be reached 24/7.¹⁹⁰ In addition, the Directorate General for Social Affairs and Child Protection operates the Child Protection Helpline, which aims to facilitate a professional, effective and timely response to any call indicating a child in danger, regardless of the person making the call and whether or not they are obligated to report.¹⁹¹ The Telephone Witness Program of the National Police Headquarters also gives an opportunity for anonymous reporting of

crimes.¹⁹² However, the latter two services are not specifically aimed at helping children who have experienced sexual abuse or exploitation although they can be used to report such crimes. The helplines ensure anonymity and notify specialist services or authorities immediately, if necessary, provide emotional support and practical assistance and legal advice to those in need. Data from these helplines (disaggregated by gender, age, or crime) are not publicly available and so it has not been possible to check whether they have been widely used by boy victims of SEC. Furthermore, it is not clear how the different crisis lines cooperate and what protocol the different organisations follow in the case of a minor being a victim of SEC.

As discussed above in relation to Hungary's international commitments, it has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, which could hinder Hungarian children's ability and right to appeal to international mechanisms when national mechanisms have failed to address violations effectively.

Child-sensitive justice

Since 2012, Hungary has begun to place more emphasis in achieving the goal of implementing child sensitive justice measures and thereby ensuring that they have a justice system that takes into account the special needs and considerations of children.¹⁹³ Between 2012 and 2019, trainings, conferences and professional publications on the topic became regular¹⁹⁴ and in 2017, the new Act on Criminal Proceedings introduced a wide range of procedural safeguards that sought to afford children within the justice system special treatment.¹⁹⁵

Under this Act, a representative may act on behalf of the victim, including lawyers, relatives, or an

186 *Ibid.*, Section 26.

187 ECPAT International. (2017). *Through the Eyes of the Child: Barriers to Access to Justice and Remedies for Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation* ECPAT International. 58.

188 Government of Hungary. (2017). *Act XC of 2017 on Criminal Proceedings*. Section 375.

189 *Ibid.*

190 Kék-Vonal. (n.d.). *Line for lost children*.

191 Directorate-General for Social Affairs and Child Protection. (n.d.). *Child protection helpline*.

192 Hungarian Police Service. (n.d.). *Telephone witness*.

193 Information Service for MPs. (2014). *Gyermekbarát igazságszolgáltatás*. Budapest: Office of the National Assembly, KKI.

194 Hıntalovon Child Rights Foundation. (2021). Personal Communication.

195 Parliament of Hungary. (2017). *Act XC of 2017 on Criminal Proceedings*. Sections 85-89.

NGO that represents the interests of the victim.¹⁹⁶ In addition, the Act on Legal Aid prescribes that all victims may be granted legal aid, regardless of their citizenship. In the cases of children, this legal aid will be available to all, regardless of their income or financial situation.¹⁹⁷ Section 82 of the Act on Criminal Proceedings sets out a list of “people in need of special treatment without a separate decision”, which includes all children and victims of crimes against freedom of sexual life and sexual morality.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, child victims of SEC will be afforded the special treatment set out under this Act.

There are a few measures set out under the Act on Criminal Proceedings, which protect the privacy of victims and help prevent their re-traumatisation. Section 85 sets out that due diligence must be exercised throughout proceedings in order to protect the privacy of the victim.¹⁹⁹ In addition, the public may be excluded from some or all stages of the proceedings and enhanced protection of the victim’s personal data will be afforded.²⁰⁰ Child victims of SEC will be allowed to record video or audio testimonies and to participate in proceedings through telecommunications.²⁰¹ Further, care will be taken to avoid the possibility that a child victim comes into contact with the alleged offender and that proceedings are conducted in such a way that repetition is avoided.²⁰²

In cases involving children, Section 87 states that the judge, the prosecution or the investigative bodies may request that a forensic psychologist must be present during proceedings and that a witness below 18 may only be confronted with the consent of the child.²⁰³ If the witness is under 14, they may not be confronted under any circumstances.²⁰⁴ Additionally, in cases involving

child victims of SEC, the victim may only be interviewed by a person of the same sex and the accused and defence counsel must not be present at any stage of proceedings requiring the participation of the victim.²⁰⁵ All of these legislative measures are extremely important in providing full, safe and equitable access to justice for child victims of SEC. However, as there is no publicly available data to show the extent to which they have been implemented since 2018, it is difficult to know how much the justice procedures have changed and benefited children since the introduction of the new legislation.

Another important protective measure for child victims of SEC is that all procedures must be carried out in a designated room specifically designed or adapted for that purpose.²⁰⁶ Special interview rooms have been systematically built since 2012 in the police buildings and courts with data indicating that special rooms were used in the courts in a total of 1,874 cases²⁰⁷ (currently a total of 59 such rooms are available). Further, special interview rooms are available in all county police headquarters (a total of 29 in 2020). Previously, Hungary has implemented a pilot programme of the Barnahus²⁰⁸ model, a child protection system aimed at providing child friendly, multidisciplinary and interagency care and services under one roof to prevent re-victimisation of children experiencing SEC.²⁰⁹ However, the initial implementation of this model was constructed in Szombathely, close to the Austrian border, instead of the capital Budapest, which is located in the middle of the country and therefore was seen to have limited success.²¹⁰

Given the models success in other countries it is welcome that the government’s action plan for the implementation of its anti-trafficking strategy

196 *Ibid.*, Section 61.

197 Parliament of Hungary. (2003). [Act LXXX of 2003 on Legal Aid](#).

198 Parliament of Hungary. (2017). [Act XC of 2017 on Criminal Proceedings](#). Section 82.

199 *Ibid.*, Section 85.

200 *Ibid.*

201 *Ibid.*

202 *Ibid.*

203 *Ibid.*, Section 87.

204 *Ibid.*, Section 88.

205 *Ibid.*, Section 89.

206 *Ibid.*

207 Data issued by OBH in August. (2020). Request for data of public interest.

208 At the time of writing, this centre has not been opened. However, in 2020, the Child Protection Service in Budapest and the Chief of Police of Budapest did sign a Memorandum of Understanding on future collaboration, which included the establishment of a child friendly interrogation room in one of the establishments of the Child Protection Service. The concept of this interrogation room is based on the Barnahus model.

209 Promise Barnahus Network. (n.d.). [About us](#).

210 Hıntalovon Child Rights Foundation. (2021). Personal Communication.

states as a goal that a new Barnahus centre will open in Budapest before 31st December 2021 in order to care for child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.²¹¹ At the time of writing, this centre had not yet opened. However, in 2020, the Child Protection Service in Budapest and the Chief of Police of Budapest did sign a Memorandum of Understanding on future collaboration, which included the establishment of a child friendly interrogation room in one of the Child Protection Service locations.²¹² The concept of this interrogation room is based on the Barnahus model.

Access to recovery and reintegration

In recent years, Hungary has developed a special focus on victim support, with the Minister of Justice identifying it as a priority issue in 2019. This is evident through the passing of a government resolution in the same year, that commits to the wider enforcement of victims' rights and agrees to expand the [victim] support centres to a national network, in order to implement and facilitate [victim] assistance more effectively.²¹³ The resolution outlines the need to

establish a state [victim] support system based on direct access to children experiencing SEC the essence of which is that [victim] support professionals visit the individual concerned in order to offer assistance, so that a wider range of people will be able to receive support.²¹⁴ Although this renewed focus on supporting victims is positive, it focuses more broadly on all victims and does not address the special needs of SEC victims.

According to information provided by the Ministry of Justice, which operates the Victim Support Services, in 2019 a total of 35 cases involving the sexual exploitation of children (25 boys and 10 girls), were registered at the Victim Support

Services.²¹⁵

In 2020, the amended Child Protection Act came into force, prescribing protective measures for children affected by SEC. As discussed above in relation to exploitation of children in prostitution, these new measures mean that children who may previously have been treated as offenders, were now protected as potential victims of human trafficking and granted special care.²¹⁶ The special care measures afforded include placement in a special children's home as well as education, vocational training, employment, socialisation and resocialisation, as well as rehabilitation treatment adapted to the child's age, condition and needs.²¹⁷ These protective measures will apply to children with Hungarian citizenship, those with Hungarian residency, those with settled, immigrant or tolerated status, refugee children, children with subsidiary protection and stateless children.²¹⁸ These measures also apply to children without Hungarian citizenship living in the territory of Hungary, if waiving the non-temporary placement, educational supervision

or guardianship placement would result in endangering a child or would cause irreparable damage.²¹⁹

The Victim Support Service, operated by the Ministry of Justice, provides financial and information assistance to victims of crime, but treats victims of sexual exploitation as a priority group.²²⁰ The service informs victims of their rights, as well as what recovery services and institutions are available to aid their rehabilitation.²²¹ Victims of SEC may also be assisted by the National Crisis Management and Information Telephone Service, which provides accommodation for victims if necessary.²²² In the cases of foreign victims of sexual exploitation, temporary residence permits will be offered and, in the event that the victim wants to stay in

211 Government of Hungary. (2020). [Decree 1046/2020 \(II. 18.\) on the National Anti-Trafficking Strategy for 2020-2023 and the Action Plan to be implemented in the period 2020-2021.](#)

212 Budapesti Rendőrseg. (2021). [Szintet Lépett A Rendőrség És a Gyermekvédelem Együttműködése Budapesten.](#)

213 Government of Hungary. (2019). [Decree 1645/2019.](#)

214 *Ibid.*

215 Ministry of Justice. (2020). Request for data of Public Interest.

216 Government of Hungary. (1997). [Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration.](#) Sections 7-8.

217 *Ibid.*, Section 53 & 76/B.

218 *Ibid.*, Section 4.

219 *Ibid.*

220 Ministry of Justice. (n.d.). [Victim Support Service.](#)

221 Government of Hungary. (2005). [Act CXXXV of 2005 the assistance and public compensation to victims of crime.](#) Section 24.

222 Ministry of Justice. (n.d.). [Victim Support Service.](#)

Hungary, a permanent residence permit will be processed.²²³

Access to compensation

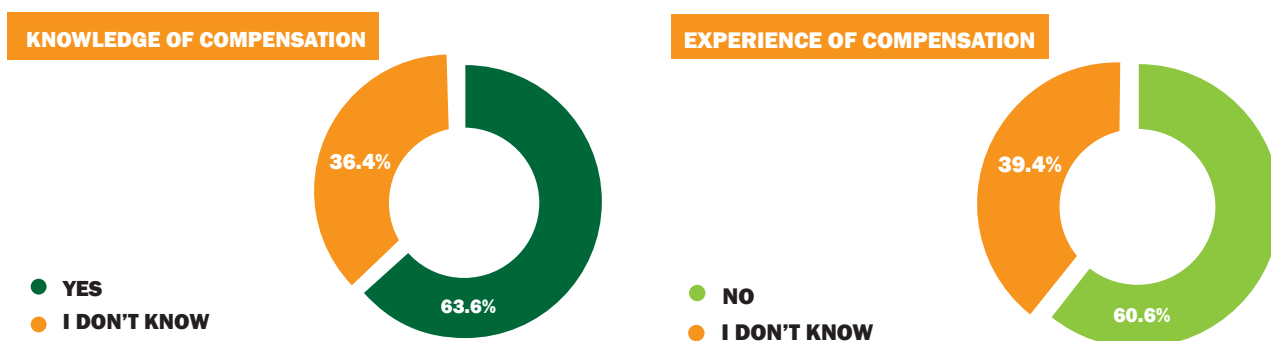
Whilst there are no explicit provisions in Hungarian law regarding the compensation of children who have been victims of sexual exploitation, there are several methods through which these children may be able to access compensation. It is possible to enforce a civil claim for compensation or restitution in connection with a criminal offence in criminal proceedings (adhesion procedure).²²⁴ However, this compensation is dependent on the convicted offender's financial situation and only includes those damages that are quantifiable and, therefore, may not cover damages for trauma suffered. To assert a claim for non-quantifiable damages, child victims of SEC would have to submit a separate civil claim for a grievance award.²²⁵ This may potentially act as a barrier to accessing compensation, as children experiencing SEC are likely to want to avoid the re-traumatisation involved in continued legal proceedings.

Children experiencing SEC may apply for immediate financial assistance and state compensation from the Hungarian state, from the Victim Support Services and Network operating under the Ministry of Justice.²²⁶

These funds are not exclusive to victims of SEC and are available for those who have been the victim of an intentional violent crime, and their physical integrity and health have been seriously damaged as a result.²²⁷ Further, applications for compensation must be submitted within three months of the offence committed²²⁸ and applications for immediate financial assistance must be submitted within five days of the offence committed.²²⁹ As discussed above, when sexually exploited children do disclose their abuse, their disclosure is often delayed.²³⁰ Therefore, including these time limits may act as a barrier to child victims of SEC to access the compensation to which they are entitled.

Figure 14 below illustrates that just 36% of respondents correctly identified that child victims may seek formal financial compensation through civil or criminal court proceedings in Hungary from either offenders or the state-managed fund. Furthermore, no respondents were aware of a young male who had received such compensation.

Figure 14. Availability of victim compensation for SEC crimes.



223 Government of Hungary. (2005). Act CXXXV of 2005 the assistance and public compensation to victims of crime. Section 24.

224 Government of Hungary. (2017). Act XC of 2017 on Criminal Proceedings. Section 55 & 56.

225 Government of Hungary. (2013). Hungarian Civil Code. Section 2:52

226 Government of Hungary. (2005). Act CXXXV of 2005 on the assistance and public compensation to victims of crime.

227 *Ibid.*

228 Section 30 (1) of Act CXXXV of 2005 the assistance and public compensation to victims of crime.

229 *Ibid.*, Section 4(3).

230 ECPAT International. (2017). *Through the Eyes of the Child: Barriers to Access to Justice and Remedies for Child Victims of Sexual Exploitation* ECPAT International. 58.

In 2021, the maximum amount of compensation that could be awarded was 2,372,520 HUF (approximately US\$7689 as of October 2021).²³¹ According to the latest available statistics at the time of writing this report, in 2020, Victim Support Services received seven applications for support from boys, of which one was an application for state compensation and six were applications for non-financial support.²³²

In 2021, the maximum amount of the immediate financial assistance was 158,168 HUF (approximately US\$512 as of October 2021).²³³ In 2019, the Victim Support Service made a positive decision on the payment of immediate financial assistance a total of 759 times but did not provide immediate financial assistance to any child victim of sexual exploitation.²³⁴ These statistics emphasise that child victims of sexual exploitation are not routinely able to access these forms of compensation.

231 Ministry of Justice. (2021). [Victim Support Service](#).

232 Ministry of Justice. (2020). Request for data of public interest.

233 Ministry of Justice. (2021). [Victim Support Service](#).

234 *Ibid.*

DISCUSSION

GENDER NORMS IN HUNGARY

Gender norms influence the lives of Hungarian boys and men throughout their lives, from birth through to adulthood. Society places expectations on boys and men to be invulnerable, demonstrate strength, be self-sufficient, and when faced with adversity – to control their emotions and solve their problems alone. Varying from these norms, for example, by seeking help, can be regarded as a form of a weakness – failing to be a ‘real man’. Gender norms can even prevent boys from recognising they have been victimised or impact the ways they show they need help. They can also make it hard for others to recognise boys are vulnerable or reaching out.

The four young men described peer pressure as a powerful tool used to reinforce gender norms, young men monitor and regulate one another’s gender-expression. Any behaviour that contradicts the norm is likely to receive quick condemnation, ensuring that boys who feel ‘different’, vulnerable, or marginalised are met with indifference, ridicule, and other social sanctions. These social pressures were emphasised throughout the support worker survey data where stigma and shame and fears of how others will respond were the most commonly identified barriers to boys disclosure.

The four young men described being subjected to sexual exploitation as a topic that they could not discuss with others, leaving them feeling “withdrawn” and doubting themselves. A number of support workers highlighted the need for changes in the perspectives of society toward boys, particularly with regard to projections of strength and invulnerability upon men and boys. Participants noted the need for *“more publicity about how big the problem is in Hungary and*

[that] not just girls are affected,” (R35) as well as the need to *“raise awareness in society that [CSEA] also happens to boys--they need help too.”* (R40).

For the team directly involved in the facilitation of the workshops with the participants, their experiences enabled them to gain deeper insight into the impacts that gender norms played on survivors’ experiences of abuse and help seeking.

“These expectations are clearly ‘heavy baggage’ for life, and determine the behaviour, the feelings, the attitude, the roles, the sexuality, the appearance, thereby basically the whole of the personality for boys, especially in determining the process of seeking help. Growing up with such expectations in Hungary makes it extremely hard for boys to realise problems, talk about feelings, cry, and ask for help. The influence of these norms is not limited to boys themselves, and impacts upon family, friends, and support workers. For a boy to admit he has been exploited or abused is very stigmatising”.²³⁵

Gender norms encourage secrecy

The culture of silence was further reinforced by a combination of additional individual, relational, community and institutional factors - contributing to the perfect storm for silence to be maintained, often for many years. This included young men describing that while they had learnt about sex, they had no prior knowledge of what sexual exploitation really was before they were targeted. They were not aware in some cases that it was wrong and they were exposed to manipulative grooming strategies by offenders.²³⁶ As is all

235 Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation. (2021). Personal Communication.

236 One participant painted a picture of a rather unsupportive, verbally, psychically and emotionally abusive family background in which the only genuine attention he received was from his abuser. Due to a lack of affection, he accepted the conduct, and considered it as a sign of love and attention.

commonly indicated in global research,²³⁷ our data reinforced that often sexual exploitation of boys was committed by people that they and their families trusted, and within settings considered to be safe. Stigma, shame and the burden of responsibility for boys to be the protectors of themselves and others contributed to participants believing that disclosing the abuse would negatively impact them and harm the reputation of people or institutions that may be loved or respected by the boy's family.²³⁸

Young men in the survivor conversations noted that once the abuse was either disclosed or discovered, the focus then shifted to keeping the secret within the family. One survivor remarked *"If something comes up within the family, it must stay in the family"*. Even when the family or the trusted institution was aware of the abuse, all experienced adults decided to keep things quiet.

Overall, the four survivors expressed that at the time there were no opportunities or supportive contexts for them to be heard, discuss their concerns, or receive the help they needed. While recognising that silence and secrecy can serve a protective function for victims of trauma, including CSEA, the implications of hiding abuse and exploitation for long periods are serious. Boys affected by CSEA may experience significant problems related to mental, physical, and sexual health, while unmet emotional needs can also increase their vulnerability to exploitative relationships.²³⁹ For support workers and caregivers there is a clear need to acknowledge how gender norms contribute to boys' vulnerability and affirm their silencing thus potentially also maintaining boys' ongoing abuse. Gender-blind laws in Hungary provide a good framework for protection, but implementation is needed to ensure they are used.

Gender norms discourage disclosure

Support workers expressed concerns about observations that boys' internalisation of gender norms is part of the problem. They witness guilt, shame, and internalised anger at themselves

for not being able to 'protect themselves.' One participant described some of the internal confusion expressed by boys: *"They do not know that this [shouldn't] be done to them. They do not know who they can trust, who they can turn to. They do not know that they [can be] victims."* (R43)

To ask for help, a boy must accept weakness, and a break with the expected norms. The young men explained that they framed help-seeking as failing to protect themselves or conversely accepting that that they 'allowed themselves' to be hurt by someone. (It should be noted that the participants had now many years later come to terms now with how problematic and incorrect these framings were).

Additionally, in cases where boys were exploited by a male offender, they felt confronted by questions regarding their sexual identity. With hostile attitudes towards people of diverse sexual orientation common in Hungary, this was described as a further barrier to disclosure or help-seeking. (Of course, an offender's victimisation of a child has no relevance to the child's sexuality).

The young men explained that, in their teenage years, gender norms reinforced the expectation that boys should be actively dating, and seeking out sexual relationships with girls. That all sex was desirable and that boys would be in control of those experiences. The lack of awareness and accurate information related to CSEA available, alongside these expectations, makes it very difficult for boys with experiences of sexual exploitation to make sense of what has happened.

Media representations also tend to reinforce unhelpful assumptions and myths that deny the possibility of boy's victimisation, also reinforce expectations of hypersexuality of boys and young men. For example, abuse by female offenders in school settings has been portrayed as male student-female teacher "relationships" suggesting that the boy has seduced his teacher.²⁴⁰ In

237 ECPAT International. (2021). *Global Boys Initiative: What does the global literature tell us about the sexual exploitation of boys?* Bangkok: ECPAT International.

238 This included the church, schools, and within the family.

239 ECPAT International. (2021). *Global Boys Initiative: What does the global literature tell us about the sexual exploitation of boys?* Bangkok: ECPAT International.

240 Blikk Magazin. (2019). *Döbbenet: diákjai szeme láttára szexelt a tanárnő egy 13 éves tanulóval.*

another case, abuse of a 15-year-old boy by a 30-year-old woman, was presented as “forbidden love”, an “affair” or other euphemistic phrases.²⁴¹

There is a departure from this narrative when the offender is male, as the child sexual exploitation may be conflated with homosexuality and downplayed. One young man commented on this problematic framing: “community attitudes in Hungary tend to articulate ‘gay people are like this’ and that ‘everyone knows that gays often swap partners, and it’s not uncommon for young boys to go with older men’.”²⁴² It is perhaps no surprise that survivors continue to remain silent, when attempts at reaching out for support receive such responses.

HELP-SEEKING

Reaching out for help takes considerable courage for an individual who has been subjected to sexual exploitation. The process requires placing a great deal of trust in others, which may be exceptionally difficult. Thus, silence serves a protective function and, to a certain degree, may help boys maintain a sense of safety and control at a time of significant fear, confusion, and uncertainty. When they do reach out for help, this can occur in different ways.

Missing the signs

Both the survivor conversations and the data from the workers’ survey showed that rather than direct disclosures, boys more often indicated something was wrong by behaving differently and hoping it would be noticed. Examples included both social withdrawal or attention-seeking behaviours. One young man explained that it was only after a teacher finally noticed his signals and simply asked him if anything was wrong, that he was able to disclose what had happened to him. Conversely, another participant recalled that despite showing unusual and worrying behaviours, he couldn’t remember anyone ever indicating genuine interest or attention and asking him about his well-being. He consequently didn’t

disclose for several years. The young men genuinely believed that, in the absence of verbal disclosure, their behaviour would show others that there was something wrong and that they needed help. However, these signs were missed.

Support workers’ responses indicated how boys’ behaviours may be viewed very differently. They too described boys displaying attention-seeking behaviours, but they struggle with the ambiguity, as boys may deflect or deny when pressed. It is hard to know “if they are testing my limits or if they really need help”. (R40) Others similarly described boys under their care struggling to make sense of their experience and formulating their feelings into words. While frontline support workers highlighted their own difficulties with identifying the signs of abuse/exploitation among boys, it is likely that parents, carers, and community members may struggle even more.

Working with boys

While recognising that disclosure of abuse and exploitation is not easy for any person, it’s clear that gender norms regarding male vulnerability present a particularly challenging barrier for disclosure and victim identification in Hungary. Support workers noted that the topic of vulnerability or victimisation of boys is not addressed in training and rarely discussed. One frontline worker simply commented that “[Hungarian] society cannot handle the sexual abuse of boys” (R98).

Workers were acutely aware of the limitations in supports for boys. They indicated a vicious cycle in which limited disclosures and referrals mean they have limited experience with the issue. They noted a dearth of training on working with boys. Workers expressed that they are not equipped to identify and meet the needs of boys subjected to sexual exploitation if they were in contact. Workers with more experience with boys noted limited practical tools for working with boys and challenges identifying victims. They recognised that gender norms also influence the helping profession. One described a need to “open

241 SONLINE. (2017). *Tiltott szerelem: tizenéves fiúval szexelt a tanárnő*.

242 Hıntalovon Child Rights Foundation. (2021). Personal Communication.

eyes and eliminate stereotypes” (R142) among support workers – which may also be referring to work with marginalised communities like Roma populations and people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.

Furthermore, support workers described institutional challenges which can complicate help-seeking. This included delayed or insufficient responses from law enforcement, repeated interrogations, and prolonged procedures. One survivor shared how procedures following his disclosure were stressful and difficult. After making a formal complaint, he was transported in the same vehicle with the offender to the scene of the alleged abuse, and later faced insensitive interrogation that questioned his honesty, and cast doubt on his account, which he felt was influenced by the community status of the alleged offender.

Support processes can also be poorly coordinated. One young man suggested that support workers “work under one umbrella” and communicate more effectively, to avoid the need for repeated statements being made to different professionals.

While support workers noted an increasing number of child-centred and trauma-informed professionals in the field, the opportunities for children to meet them are limited. One support worker observed that: *“Very few support services are available, and quality services are usually available only at high prices”* (R35), with another remarking *“A large number of victims of abuse come from poorer backgrounds, where using paid services (e.g., psychologists) to deal with what has happened is not an option. This reduces the amount of services available, limits their options, and may (but not necessarily) lead to a deterioration in the quality of service due to the workload of professionals.”* (R146) Many noted needs for increased funding for workers supporting children from low-income and rural settings.

Breaking the silence

The four young men all noted that their eventual decisions to disclose sexual exploitation were not simple. It was a process that took much time and consideration. Their disclosures were strongly

shaped by the context in which they lived, and their belief about whether they would be believed and supported. These fears are clearly illustrated throughout the support worker data. One commented *“the people around them do not believe them, they trivialise what has happened.”* (R134) Others emphasised the significant need for *“supportive and non-blaming attitudes”* (R88) from people within their family and community.

The time it took to speak out about the abuse differed for the four young men we spoke with. For one it was a year, for another it took ten years to tell anyone. They described a number of ‘catalyst’ moments’ when they in fact realised that what happened to them was sexual exploitation. These catalysts were prompted by changes in environment and increased feelings of safety - such as moving away from the place (family or institutions) where the abuse happened. Growing visibility of the issue also served to help them come to terms. For example, the #MeToo movement and other media representations in Hungary where survivors had spoken out were named.

These catalyst moments in *understanding* their exploitation did not immediately lead to disclosures, and for each man their journey to disclosure was unique. However, once they had felt able to disclose their experiences, the men described a myriad of further internal challenges that they faced, particularly in relation to the norms expected of them as males. These mostly received empathetic responses from support workers to facilitate their recovery. The challenges they highlighted in the conversations included coming to terms with shame, stigma, fears about losing control, and feeling responsible for their family.

Recognition of what helps boys to break their silence - and the challenges boys face following this – has implications for support workers. Even when disclosing and clearly asking for help, the survivors indicated that the responses of others sometimes fell short of their expectations and did not always meet their needs in those moments.

There is clearly a need to transform thinking about sexual exploitation of boys and the way that practitioners might connect with and respond to boys. Survivors clearly identified that

increased visibility of this issue is an important enabling factor. Similarly, if we know that boys struggle to start the conversation, and then to find the right words, there are opportunities to skill up workers in holding these conversations. Finally, common emotional reactions of shame and guilt can be mitigated with regular messaging to all children that counteract these reactions – ‘this should never happen to a child,’ ‘it is never a child’s fault’ and ‘you are loved and cared for no matter what’ can be simple reinforcements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LEARNING 1:

Gender norms incorrectly underpin assumptions that boys are less vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

There is stigma surrounding the exploitation and abuse of boys in Hungary, based on gender norms. This contributes to silencing victims and an ambivalence to seeing boys as victims.

For caregivers and the community:

- Challenge and critically reflect on gender norms and the concurrent expectations on boys' behaviour.
- Normalise that boys are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and other forms of harm and that help-seeking is ok.
- Provide education and support in recognising warning signs for sexual exploitation of all children and encouraging caring and non-judgemental responses.
- When children do not know about sex and the possibility of sexual exploitation, it enables offenders to take advantage. Ensure that knowledge reaches children about sex, consent, boundaries and what adults can and cannot do to them.

For workers and support services:

- Develop and deliver training to frontline workers from government and civil society that critically reflects on gender norms and the concurrent expectations on boys' and girls' behaviour.
- Implement gender-inclusive approaches to training for support workers that includes signs of child sexual exploitation and abuse, and ways boys may communicate vulnerability and the need for support.
- Develop and provide *comprehensive* training on working with boys for frontline staff. Consult survivors to develop these tools.

LEARNING 2:

Learning 2: Boys face complex and unique challenges in reaching out and seeking help.

For frontline workers:

- Learn more about the challenges that boys may have in disclosing abuse and asking for help, and how they often show their vulnerability through behaviours. The survivors recommended that support workers should recognise the 'warning signals' that something is wrong, and respond by asking them how they are, and what they need.
- Take your time to build trust and relationships with boys and help them gain trust in you by listening, not asking repeated questions, and quickly passing them on to others. Recognise that there is more to a boy than his abuse and pay attention to his wider needs.
- Listen and collaborate closely with survivors and organisations representing them to develop effective and targeted services.
- Ensure greater 'visibility' of services related to issues that affect boys - with greater transparency, information, and links to confidential access, including helplines and online support resources, to make it easier for them to seek help.
- Develop services that highlight privacy, flexibility, and confidential access to support (e.g., 'drop in' services, and 'assertive outreach' in communities and spaces where vulnerable boys spend their time).
- Make spaces more welcoming to boys - with materials and information about

services that focus on boys. Provide alternative hours and entrances, if possible, to provide privacy, confidentiality and promote safety. Training other staff to be more 'welcoming' to boys (e.g., reception staff, guards etc.) can also be very important.

- Gender sensitivity training for police officers who may receive disclosures to ensure procedures take them seriously and respond sensitively using the strong gender-blind legal framework that exists. Specialist positions may train peers (the goal is service-wide change rather than isolated specialists), but may also support victims in reported cases.

For educators and advocates:

- When children do not know about sex and the possibility of sexual exploitation, it enables offenders to take advantage. Provide knowledge to children on issues such as consent, boundaries, the nature of exploitation and abuse - and how to respond and seek help. Similar information should also be aimed at parents and caregivers.
- Lobby government to identify funding and develop strategies for improving comfort for boys to disclose, and for services to respond.
- **Information, resources and reporting options should also be made easily accessible** through online platforms used by children and young people, that are linked to specialist services.

- **Ensure information is inclusive and accessible for all children and young people from marginalised communities**, including children with disabilities, ethnic minorities and those who identify as SOGIE diverse.

For media:

- Survivors noted the crucial role that is played by the media. Lobbying to ensure coverage is sensitive, avoids stigmatising framing of victims (e.g. as active participants in adults' offending), refrains from identifying victims.
- Training may be developed with specialists to assist in developing media output related to child sexual exploitation and abuse for all genders.
- Work together with institutions teaching and training journalists to develop guidelines, or a code of conduct related to ethical guidelines for reporting on sexual violence, abuse, and exploitation.
- Online social media platforms need to develop clear guidelines to monitor and address hateful blaming and homophobic responses to all victims and survivors of CSEA, irrespective of their identity.
- Organisations could engage with social media platforms to utilise tools such as the Search Engine Optimization (SEO), to ensure that information relating to sexual exploitation and the availability of support for boys appears before discouraging and discriminatory articles in search engines.

LEARNING 3:

Support workers face significant challenges identifying boys who have experienced CSEA and struggle to build/maintain rapport once they do.

For workers and support services:

- **Review and revise existing training content** to be inclusive of boys' issues; facilitate learning and needs assessments of support workers, to develop in depth learning curricula as part of their initial professional education and ongoing in-service training.
- **Work toward the development of more adequate support systems for boys**, this includes the development of better protocols and guidelines on how professionals engage with and relate to children, when to refer, and how to

implement programs catering to the needs of boys and young men.

- Information and engagement with boys affected by CSEA should address what specific services are available, how services and systems work, what children's rights are, confidentiality and anonymity, what a child can expect, and always highlight the child's choices, including a choice of gender of person they will meet.
- Services that cater for young and adult men should also be prepared for disclosures as many male victims may have yet disclosed

- or sought support until years later.
- Develop opportunities for survivors of CSEA who have received services, to be supported to become advocates for males affected by abuse and exploitation and contribute to the development of services and support systems for survivors and their families.
- Enable boys to access the Victim Support Services that are available.
- Case management guidelines and procedures should be modified to ensure that male friendly and gender inclusive approaches are developed.
- Staff of specialist childcare institutions and juvenile detention facilities should receive training which sensitises them to the risks, vulnerabilities, needs and effective ways of working with and supporting boys.
- Develop focused initiatives to work with, and support families and caregivers of children affected by exploitation and abuse, to address the culture of silence, enabling them to develop the knowledge and skills required to support their children, enhancing recovery and resilience - and to reduce the necessity for unnecessary placement of children affected by CSEA in institutional care.

LEARNING 4:

There are systematic gaps in meeting the needs of boys subjected to sexual exploitation.

The survivors observed that many institutions work very separately from each other, not always communicating effectively, resulting in victims having to repeatedly tell their story, and often not receive adequate support.

For support services:

- Review operating procedures to improve referral processes and collaboration “under one umbrella” with the survivor, and that prioritise the needs of the individuals and their families.
- Establish a ‘community of practice’, where support workers engaging with children can share experiences, and contribute to the development of services and resources for boys and men.
- Explore the possibility of establishing a division within the Victim Support Service that is dedicated to victims of child sexual exploitation. Within this division should be included a role for an allocated and independent practitioner to work with and to support the individual needs of victims and survivors of CSEA, possibly similar to the Independent Sexual Violence Advocate (ISVA) system established in the UK.²⁴³

For duty bearers:

- Meaningfully engage with survivors and organisations that represent them to address the lack of trust they have, to create a system, processes, and responses so that boys (and all victims of sexual exploitation, violence, and abuse) feel safe, are treated with respect, and receive genuine care and attention.
- Fund and deliver preventative and awareness-raising campaigns against child sexual exploitation and abuse that challenge gender norms that currently serve as barriers to boys’ disclosures and help-seeking.
- Create opportunities for funding for the range of organisations working to prevent child sexual exploitation and abuse and support children subjected to it in their recovery.
- Provide a government operated website, where boys can access accurate and helpful information and support. (Similar to the existing resource dedicated to [human trafficking](#)).

²⁴³ ISVAs role is designed to act as a single point of contact and provide a professional service to support the individual needs of victims and survivors, and ensure the safety of all victims and their families; provide accurate and impartial information, provide emotional and practical support before, during and after any criminal proceedings. [The role of the Independent Sexual Violence Adviser \(ISVA\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

For law enforcement and Criminal Justice

Actors:

- Law enforcement and criminal justice professionals must facilitate that children 'receive attention and care' throughout criminal proceedings and, if children do not feel comfortable, they should have access to complaints procedures, and be able to request a change of personnel.
- Make training available to judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and other professionals involved in criminal proceedings on child-friendly procedures and on child sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Engage with child and youth survivors to create and provide brief, age and developmentally appropriate information resources for children participating in legal proceedings.

Researchers:

- Specific areas of research should include but not be limited to - prevalence; specific risk and vulnerability factors relating to boys; effective support strategies to promote recovery and resilience; and the needs of support workers. Research should also be initiated in relation to the identity of, motivation and modus operandi of offenders, and the nature of OCSEA and the specific risks, vulnerabilities, and experiences of children in Hungary.
- Ensure active and meaningful participation of survivors in qualitative research to provide valuable survivor perspectives - to inform the future development of strategies and interventions for prevention, protection, and support.
- Research is needed into the experiences of children and their caregivers into accessing the justice system for crimes related to CSEA.
- Encourage collaboration between service providers to promote research with boys who have experienced CSEA to amplify their perspectives and recommendations for solutions.
- Measures should be taken to ensure that children with disabilities, ethnic minorities and diverse SOGIE people are included in research, to avoid further marginalisation and to inform the development of expertise and sensitive programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC LEGAL CHANGES

- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, which specifically recognises that children have the right to appeal to international mechanisms specific to them, when national mechanisms fail to address violations effectively
- The definition of CSAM contained under the law is not sufficiently broad and should be extended to cover audio material, digitally generated CSAM or materials that depict a person appearing to be a minor engaged in sexually explicit conduct.
- In addition, the law does not contain provisions that explicitly and adequately criminalise crimes such as live streaming of sexual abuse, online grooming, and sexual extortion.
- Although 'sexting' is not considered a crime in Hungary, provisions should be included to exclude children's liability from sharing sexual material, thereby avoiding the need for children to prove their innocence in court (as discussed above).
- There are no provisions that oblige Internet Service Providers to block, filter and report CSAM, so it is crucial to introduce such regulations.
- Whilst Hungary has strong legislation that prohibits child trafficking offences, it does not contain a standalone provision that criminalises the sale of children. To ensure full legislative protection from these crimes it is necessary to distinguish between the two as two separate offences.
- Hungary could increase the protection offered to children by introducing relevant regulations that govern the travel and tourism industry and create specific offences that criminalise organising any travel arrangements that lead to children being sexually exploited.
- Changing the civil law to ensure children may not marry under any circumstances would help prevent CEFM within the country.
- As a general point relating to all CSEA crimes, Hungary should seek to ensure that the sentences given to offenders are reflective of those stipulated under the legislation.
- Hungary could improve its procedural legislation to help child victims of CSEA effectively access the justice they deserve. Although Hungary contains a database that stores details of those who commit all crimes in general, it would add extra protection if the country established a national register solely for those offenders who have committed sexual crimes. This would help ensure that no previous sexual offenders are granted employment opportunities which may put them in contact with children.
- Information-sharing with law enforcement agencies from other countries could help promote child protection from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism.
- To aid prosecution efforts, the double criminality requirement in extradition proceedings could be removed for all SEC crimes.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: DETAILED METHODOLOGY FOR SURVIVOR CONVERSATIONS

Background

The project aimed to explore and understand the experiences of boys affected by sexual exploitation and abuse in Hungary. Exercises and tools were developed to open discussion and encourage sharing, enabling insight into what the participants experienced growing up, what messages about gender they received and found helpful or harmful. Following these more general explorations of context, additional themes to be explored in the conversations included:

1. Participants' experiences of seeking and receiving help and support.
2. The expressed needs and gaps evident in their experiences of seeking help.
3. Recommendations and ideas for change that could contribute to improving the experiences of others.

The approach was designed to be implemented according to three distinct steps: A pre-meeting, the main conversation, a follow-up meeting. Throughout the preparation and implementation of the project, the team experienced a range of challenges in securing a sample, which led to modifications of the approach

Identifying the sample

As Hintalovon was currently not actively working with male survivors, the team utilised contacts with professionals in the field, existing partner organisations, also approaching new organisations to identify potential participants. This included agencies considered most likely to have contact with boys or young men who had experienced child sexual exploitation. This purposive approach to sampling also increased the likelihood that the team were able to identify participants who were well supported psychologically and had access to ongoing support if they required it.

The organisations and institutions were approached initially by email, and included a range of childcare facilities, juvenile detention facilities, NGOs working with children in relation to child protection, and victim support and advocacy agencies. Detailed information sheets which described the research objectives, proposed methodology, and highlighting our commitment towards confidential and ethical processes were shared. Emails were followed up with telephone calls to discuss the research and answer queries.

The team made extensive efforts over a number of months to identify and select suitable participants to take part in the group work, but encountered significant challenges and barriers. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic presented many challenges and difficulties contacting potential participants within the age range of 18-24 years. Due to pandemic related restrictions on movement and restructuring of their workload, many organisations we contacted simply didn't have the capacity to collaborate this time. As evident from the report, the sexual exploitation of boys is not an openly discussed topic in Hungary, and this lack of visibility and discourse also contributed to the difficulties in finding participants. Additionally, some organisations and workers did not wish to collaborate due to perceptions that the issue was too sensitive or risky for clients - with potential for distress or secondary victimisation, despite detailed discussions about the planned methodology, that it had underwent ethical review and there were extensive mitigations in place. For others, their reasons for not wanting to collaborate were not stated.

Due to the challenges described, a decision was made to increase our original age limit from 24 to 35 years. Although this was outside the intended age range, we considered that young men within this range would be able to provide valuable insights. The team contacted one survivor, who suggested that often, men come to terms with

their childhood abuse later in life, so extending the age limit would possibly increase the chances of finding participants. This was confirmed by professionals working with adult survivors.

Direct recruitment in locations where it was known that young men were sexually exploited in prostitution was suggested by some organisations, but not pursued as the research protocol reviewed by experts had stipulated recruitment through support services and such direct recruitment has ethical risks. Another suggestion not pursued was recruitment via public promotion of the research project using social media.

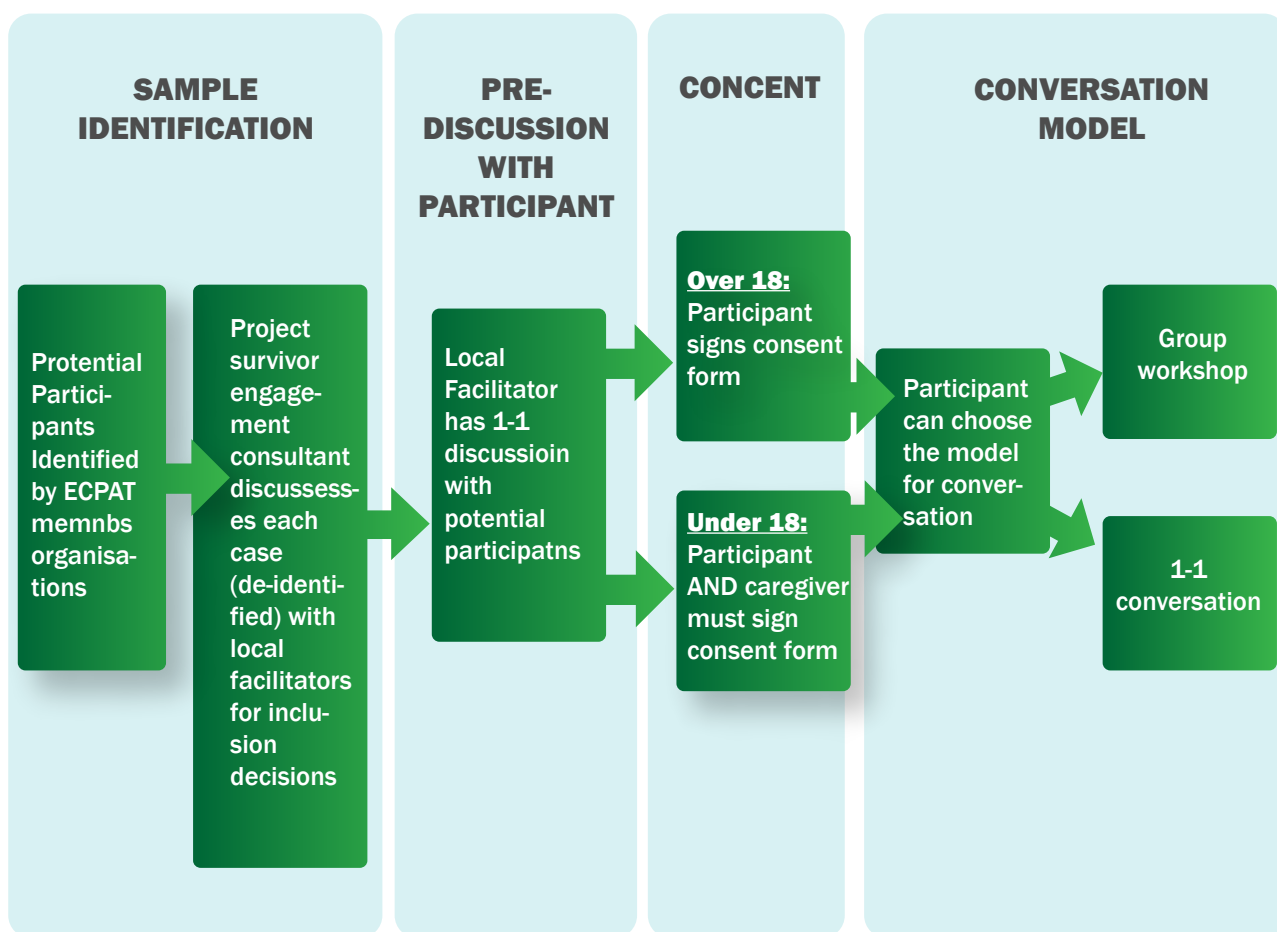
After some months of seeking participants with limited success, we expanded the age category for inclusion beyond 18-24 years in order to include four interested participants and proceed.

Approach

Pre-Meeting

Once potential participants were identified, preparatory meetings took place virtually (as COVID-19 movement restrictions were in place at the time). During these meetings, the purpose and methodology of the conversations, as well as consent processes were explained (see Figure 15 below). There were also opportunities for them to ask questions. As a child rights organisation, Hinalovon facilitators also explained their responsibility and obligation to report any current abuse involving children in line with their child safeguarding policy and procedures. The meeting also provided the opportunity for the facilitators to establish that potential participants were psychologically safe and connected to supports in order to take part in the process.

Figure 15. Consent procedures for survivor conversations.



Arrangements were then made to meet participants for the conversations in a safe and confidential environment, at a mutually agreed time. We prepared for the possibility of distress with a list of additional resources for participants to take away and details of organisations and psychologists who could be contacted for support.

Main Conversation

The main conversation had been planned to take place with a small group. However, COVID-19 movement restrictions led to this approach being adjusted to four 1-1 conversations. The conversations followed a loose structure outlined here.

Exploring gender norms: The team developed an activity to help participants share with us the messages they received growing up related to 'being a boy in Hungary' at different stages of their lives. This involved utilising a lifeline with figures drawn on the whiteboard, with different ages and stages of development. The activity involved informal conversation, with opportunities for participants to be creative and active.

Experiences of seeking and receiving help: The team created an activity called 'My Circle', designed to help the young men share the people and relationships in their life at the time of exploitation. They placed a drawing of a boy (representing themselves), on a board surrounded by those in their support circle (e.g. family, friends, school staff, support workers, and people). This enabled us to explore their experiences, feelings, motivations, and concerns as to how these actors responded to them when they were seeking help.

Identifying needs and gaps: The same drawings were used to prompt discussion of the initial responses, and how the participants may have wished for it to be different - what they needed and expected, and what attitudes and behaviours would encourage them to ask for help, and how their needs were met, or otherwise. This activity also supported participants to identify additional needs, and suggest new actors, such as helplines, or NGOs whose assistance they may have found favourable. Use of the timeline also helped participants visualise and share how the passage of time has affected their needs.

Recommendations for improvements: Closely linked to the previous activity, the team developed an activity called 'Creating the Dream Team', which was designed for participants to visualise and create an ideal 'dream team' of supporters for boy victims of sexual exploitation. Further, the activities were designed to encourage participants to identify and assign desirable qualities to each 'dream team' member. Further discussion prompted by the facilitators, encouraged them to shape ideas into specific recommendations.

Voices exercise: The team developed a creative activity for participants to share their voice with others. Potentially this could include messages of hope, encouragement and support for other males, thank you messages to people, further suggestions to provide better help, or statements for wider community and society. Participants were provided with blank postcards and writing materials and space and time to reflect as they complete the task. With the permission of the participants, Hinalovon will use these postcards and messages for an online social media campaign, in order that they can reach as many people as possible.

Closing and Follow-up Meetings

During the conversations, facilitators placed a strong emphasis on the detailed mapping of participants' close support networks - family and friends, with attention paid to psychological support. After the conversation facilitators ensured that the young men had appropriate space and time to settle their thoughts and feelings. This included discussion of their future plans and taking refreshments together. Information was also provided about how they could access support and help from Hinalovon if they required it. Plans were also made, following the completion of the study to meet, share and discuss the detailed findings together.

Collating and Analysing the Information

In addition to the outputs created by participants, facilitators took notes of quotes and ideas as the conversations progressed. Images were placed on a large whiteboard, and additional notes, post-its and images continued to be stuck, creating a gallery of their ideas. Photographs of the gallery were taken, enabling facilitators to later reflect on the process and content. Facilitators also made

notes in reflective journals and participated in a reflective meeting after each conversation. The facilitators reviewed and evaluated the conversation data to develop a summary report that identified main themes.

The Value of Reflective Practice and Journaling

The nature of this project required creating and utilising qualitative methods and tools to explore and gain insight into this sensitive topic. Therefore, throughout the process of learning, development, planning and implementation, facilitators were encouraged to continuously reflect on their experiences and incorporate this into their ongoing work. This approach was supplemented by the facilitator's use of a 'Reflective Journal' which was completed immediately following the conversations. Journal writing has a long and reliable history in the arts and humanities and is a powerful heuristic tool and research technique.²⁴⁴ Qualitative researchers recognise their role as the 'research instrument', and as such the journal is also considered as a major source of data.

The journal encouraged facilitators to reflect on what worked, and what could have been improved, highlighted important events, information and data for inclusion in analysis, and crucially, supported the exploration of the specific meanings and implications of information shared by participants. It enabled those involved to refine their understanding of the role of researcher, and their understanding of the responses of participants. This set the groundwork for analysis and interpretation, and helped keep a written note of thoughts, feelings and facts. Ultimately the use of reflective practice helped the researcher – facilitators - consider 'how are we to make sense of the stories and experiences that emerged from the process?

244 Janesick, V. J. (2004). *Stretching Exercises for Qualitative Researchers*. (Second Edition).



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