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## *Child protection models for mainstreaming child's rights*

### **Introduction**

Thinking about and dealing with children, it is extremely important to ensure they get everything that is needed to unfold their skills and potential talents. The professionals working with children have to trust them and children living on the border of child protection, or those living in public care have to be supported in a way that their needs – special and unique – are taken into consideration just the same as if they lived with their families. The recognition of the family's role in children's life is inevitable; in care provision, it means the necessity to move towards an integrated, family-community based system of provision, which is capable of ensuring effective service packs for the primary and secondary target group of child protection, adjusting to the dual function of child protection. "Child protection is a social institution that was created to support another social institution, the family, in order to help the family in its tasks related to the child's development and social inclusion, and if it is necessary, to take over the responsibility for the child from the family which is unable to ensure it." (Domszky 2011: 3-4). First, the study presents Fox Harding's typology about the system logics of services for children. Then, we deal with the need of strengthening the rights of children in care and illustrate it by two examples: 1) FICE: tender for good practices in child protection and 2) the Children's Parliament 2014 which had the theme of social integration.

### **Child Protection Models and Children's rights**

The ideal types of services provided for children were developed most comprehensively way by Fox Harding (1991, 1997) who identified four "value position": 1) laissez-faire; 2) state paternalism; 3) models protecting the biological family; 4) models protecting children's rights<sup>1</sup>. According to his interpretation, the laissez-faire model is based on the belief that it is important for the family to not have any state intervention in the natural processes, that is, we can talk about only minimal, forcing intervention. Restricting the exercise of parents' freedom and exercise of the state's power rarely should be applied. In a broader ideological perspective Fox Harding associates this kind of approach with the patriarchy, where a strong father/head-of-the-household is identified. In his view, the laissez-faire model is not

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<sup>1</sup> Fox Harding acknowledges that there are uncertainties and the four positions overlap but believes that each model represents different orientation in the field of politics and practice aimed at children.

only a theoretical abstraction in periods, like the Victorian era or in the period of the Conservative government between 1979 and 1997, this approach can be observed in practice. The model's criticism is that state interventions are negative and a special gender-role can be identified as played by the father in the family. In the state paternalistic model, the role of the state has to be limited but exemplary at the same time. When the children are at risk in their families or the parents are incapable of taking care of them, strong and effective state interventions are needed for the children's protection. There is considerable trust in the ability of the professionals, in the intervention mechanisms and in that every situation would be assessed adequately and proper interventions will prevent bad treatment. The aim is to fix families that are falling apart and provide services for the children and the families. According to Fox Harding, this model is typical of the UK's practice at the end of the 1960's and in the 1970's, when the number of children living in state care significantly increased. The criticisms of the model are that it lets little space for the families and children and the authority of the professionals is too big. It was diagnosed too late that the interventions are not actually efficient and reliable enough. The state can seem to be oppressive during interventions, mainly in cases of poor and excluded families. The model about the protection of biological family can be interpreted as a belief in the positive role of state intervention where those promote the families' well-being. The financial and other forms of support serve the autonomy of the family. There is a partnership between the family and the service provider. The appropriate level of support is necessary for the family's welfare. Even if special needs arise, the intervention still has to have a supportive nature. If a child has to be removed, this temporary period should aim to strengthen the family and not to satisfy a need for long-term and continuous care. Within this model, Fox Harding perceives two types of approach: one is represented by the group of people who protect the family's rights and the other claims that state interventions aim to keep the child in the family. The model takes into consideration the fact that the relationship of the child and the family is complex and it should be the basis for interventions. Its criticism formulates the view that it idealizes the biological family and does not calculate realistically the capacity of the welfare state and its willingness to spend on family support and too optimistic in relation to the effectiveness of professionals' preventive activities. In the model that protects children rights the protection of the children at all cost appears on one hand and the social responsibility on the other hand. The Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989 brought significant shift in the approach of child treatment. From the children's rights perspective, meeting individual needs and requirements is most important so, the interventions have to be adapted to these and the child has to be an active participant. It is essential to have the child to participate, express his point of view and to be heard, as opposed to the other models that mostly put the emphasis on child protection. However, Fox Harding notes there are certain rights that have to be "grown into", that is, they are not universal or obvious from birth. The protection of children's rights requires active involvement from the adult society. Further criticism is that beside the rights, the issue of responsibility is difficult to interpret (Smith 2005: 22-27, Kirton 2005: 7-8).

Based on Fox Harding' standardization, Hungary can be classified as a paternalistic state model, although, the pervasive value of the Child Protection Act of 1997 is the extensive protection of children's rights. The Hungarian Child Protection Act was greatly influenced by the English one of 1989 that basically favored prevention. This means, in principle, that it is a basic requirement in the Hungarian system to provide every kind of help for the families and children in order to keep the child in his/her family. As for the ethos of domestic law, it is child-centered but in practice, the services mainly concentrate on families in crisis. (Domszky 1999; Rác 2013)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) is the sum of the minimum rights that have to be ensured for all children<sup>2</sup>. The Convention broadly defined the rights of children and categorized them into three categories:

- 1, Rights for care and provision, family support (to preserve family unit), health, social security, education, recreation and play, special care and protection for disabled children, for refugees, identity, nationality and freedom of religion.
- 2, Protection Rights: protection from violence and abuse, kidnapping, human trafficking, child labour, sexual exploitation, war and armed conflict, drug abuse, inhumane treatment in case of juvenile offenders.
- 3, Participation Rights for respecting children's rights, ensuring the freedom of association and expression and ensuring access to information.

By the birth of Convention on the Rights of the Child the view that states "children are properties of the parents" was replaced by the view that states the parent's primary responsibility is taking care of the child. The Convention changed the conception of children fundamentally and contributed to treating children as social value and to paying attention how to treat children, how to assess children's needs and competences (Robinson, 2010). Modern health care, social work and child protection consider children to have further rights in addition to human rights.

The existence and development of the Convention are strongly associated with child poverty and with the development of children in general. In mainstreaming children's rights, attention should be paid to what micro-level social issues are related to children, what political responses there are, that is, how granting children's rights appear, how the recession affected children, social institutions and the broader supporting environment. In the beginning of 2000's the UN Committee found that the politics relating to children can be considered good in certain countries, however, comprehensive approaches to children's rights prevail less. The issue of child poverty is not emphasized enough in particular situation assessments, furthermore, the opportunities for consultation with children and young adults are not widespread. The effects of the recession on children are obvious: malnutrition, increased child labour, bigger proportion of unemployed youth, different forms of child exploitation,

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<sup>2</sup> Hungary ratified the CRC in 1991 and proclaimed it by the LXIV law of 1991. Besides, the Fundamental Law (i.e. Constitution) also states that children must be protected with special measures. The Child Protection Act contains the widest range of child's rights.

violence and maltreatment, decrease in schooling, decrease in the use of health care services, decreased emotional security, and the access to public services related to care and provision became limited. All these threaten the future capacities of children. Several experts draw attention to the fact that the situation of children could be stabilized if countries realized the effects of the recession on children and responded along a well-developed strategy with effective toolboxes – in addition to including the civil society, conducting an active political dialogue and requiring the government's crisis management measure to be accounted for. This includes supported child care services, services for mental and psychical health, reducing addition, preventive measures, protection of the investments in child protection and social services (Harper et al. 2010). For example, Canada considers mainstreaming children's rights as not only a legal and moral obligation of the adult society but also as good economic and social investment. Needs were articulated for having children's rights mainstreamed, children's development ensured and for ensuring they become full members of the society. Furthermore, the politics on children should be centralized, that is, to unite the fragmented responsibilities of different governmental bodies and levels (Canadian Coalition for the rights of Children 2010). According to Eurochild (2014), besides developing a permanent children's right management system, it is also important for the politicians, decision makers and public officials to take part in children's rights training. For example, Canada urges to determine what effects the annual budget decisions have on the children and certain groups of people. In 2007, Hungary spent 22.7% of the GDP on social protection expenditure. By 2009, this expenditure grew (24.3%) but in 2011 it dropped to the level of 2007 (23%). Between 2010 and 2013, the proportion of the poor and excluded grew among children and in the whole population. 43% of the children belonged to this group. (Ferge-Darvas 2014: 64-66)

The need for strengthening children's right was reinforced by a survey in 2006, which pointed out that 75% of people do not know how to exercise their rights with respect to the other's rights. The survey also revealed that parents are more aware of children's right than the children. (Canadian Coalition for the rights of Children 2010:22) Századvég Foundation's research of 2014 shows that it is important for most of the society to be aware of basic legal knowledge. The majority (52%) requires information about financial services, 49% needs information about real estate and vehicle administration, more than 40% marked the areas of public administration and judicial administration. As for everyday life, legal knowledge is mostly used related to private affairs, daily life (43%) and the labour market (46%). More than 3000 interviewed people said that the most efficient information provision is personal informing, followed by electronic legal publications and specialized books.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.jogiforum.hu/hirek/32990> (last download: 27. 12. 2014)

It was expressed that more attention should be paid to how the helpers of children and young adults can be involved in the interpretation of children's views for the politicians (Harper et al 2010). An online survey<sup>4</sup> carried out among children between 9 and 18 years old Canadians in 2008, highlights the fact that the least prevailing area of children's rights are: ensuring children's participation and listening to them. Most parents ensure basic clothing, food, school attendance while security provision is unstable: 27% of the parents protect their children from bully, 38% ensures safety while they are at their workplace and 22% of them talk about drugs. (Canadian Coalition for the rights of Children 2010:23-24) Many research draw attention to the fact that children and young adults would like service providers and professionals to provide opportunities for involvement indecision-making about responsibility-taking in accordance with their maturity. It is a key area to have choice in regard to using services, inclusion into service planning, development and to ask them for feedback as a means of quality assurance and to provide them with adequate information about their rights, and certain provisions and services. For example, in relation to those who leave the system, it is problematic that the leavers are not involved in planning the process of leaving and are not treated as partners. In cases of disabled children, research shows that school consultations would mean great help for them in understanding their rights, however, professionals rather see their disabilities than their hidden potentials. Another research shows that those children who were expelled from school - that is, their studies were interrupted - were not consulted during the disciplinary hearing (cited by Mainey et al. 2009: 20-22).

Understanding children and supporting them in social environments are basically dependent on two main aspects: 1) holistic approach to children, which means disabled children, children without family are treated like children in the mainstream society and the professionals working with them ensure their participation in various programs and maintaining friendships; 2) Recognition of the family's role in children's lives is inevitable; children also see what supports are needed for maintaining family union and that these are also required during long-term care to maintain contact with the biological family. On care system level, it means the shift toward integrated family and community based care, ensuring efficient service and care packs for children and their parents (Mainley et al 2009; European Commission Daphne Programme 2007; Volunteer Development Agency 2011). In the case of children living in public care, it is very important for the care to have some kind of therapeutic atmosphere and with professionals support to help children learn how to cope with stress, get over traumas, to form appropriate behaviour and to be safe emotionally. For this, the professionals have to concentrate on the strengths of children, to recognize their talents and to support them. The basis of increase in children's responsibility taking and a positive view of the future is a stable emotional state, for which the professionals have the primary responsibility (Furnival-Grant 2014).

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<sup>4</sup>The sample's size: 629 people.

Participation can be interpreted as the pedagogy of listening, which ensures that the opinion and the perspectives of children are heard granting the chance to be understood. Listening means not only hearing the requirements/needs but also means attention and rights to share opinion, debate and questioning. Treating children as vulnerable dependent groups strengthens the denial of their rights to express their views. Exercising children's rights by children depends on how much parents can pay attention and how much the pedagogy of hearing, as an approach is embedded in society. (Te One 2011). The first Hungarian civil report of mainstreaming child's rights was written in 2013 covering the period between 2006-2012. This civil report is based on broad collaboration and partnership in which significant civil organizations, professionals and child protection professionals took part, furthermore, children were asked in written or drawn forms about how they see children's rights (Civil (Alternative) report 2013)

Because of the big changes in the lives of children removed from their families and because of the loss of their support networks, they need stable, safe home, advocacy, help in their education, extended relationship with peers and most importantly, a stable, caring, supporting adult in both institutional and foster care. (LEARNS n.y.). Therefore, kinship care instead of foster care is supported in many countries, although, a Canadian research highlights that according to professionals, the relatives go through the same struggles as the biological parents from whom the children were taken. (Briesbois et al. 2013)

### **Child protection scenes of mainstreaming child's rights: Hungarian examples**

The National Child Protection Conference was held on 20<sup>th</sup> of November in 2014, on the International Day of Children's Rights that aimed to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Hungarian Association of FICE contributed to the commemoration by the call for tenders for Good Practices in Child Protection and by holding a Children's Parliament session.

The tender for Good Practice in child protection aimed to collect the best and most innovative processes in basic care and long-term care and to make them available for professionals. The theme of the tender was: protecting and enforcing children's rights. At the same time, the 15<sup>th</sup> Children's Parliament session was held, with 40 children discussing what social integration means for those who live in care. After the session the Children's Parliament reported to the decision-makers and professionals participating in the conference what changes, supporting mechanism and professional programs are needed for social inclusion. In the following, we first present the classification of the proposals for Good Practice in Child Protection in terms of how the mainstreaming and protection of children's rights appear in the professional work, what new initiatives were created in the field of child welfare and child protection and

along them, what innovative solutions can be disseminated regarding the development of the child protection system.

### **Innovative initiatives in Child Protection**

Collecting innovative child protection solutions and local initiatives and spreading them among professionals are important elements of laying the methodological foundation of child protection work (Domszky 2011:10).

19 tenders were received and 3 of them were from the field of child welfare.

We typified the good practices in terms of how the protection and mainstreaming of children's rights appear.<sup>5</sup> Children as a target group were not addressed as a primary target group in every case, that is, we have to distinguish those practices that have children as a direct target group from those where children's rights prevail indirectly, for example, via the professional's work and strengthening parental treatment. The applications can be divided into four types: 1) programs aimed at children; 2) programs aimed at parents; 3) programs aimed at professionals; 4) programs aimed at system development. The programs aimed at children can be further divided:<sup>6</sup> a) programs based on teaching children's rights; b) programs aiming to develop the children's personality, competences and increase their knowledge; c) programs based on forming the society's view.

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to mention that the proposals can be classified in several ways. In the following, the presented pieces of information are from the programs of the proposals; they are presented anonymously. (Note that the Evaluation Committee took into consideration other aspects also during the evaluation process).

<sup>6</sup> Sub-types are not separated rigidly, there is some overlap in the goals.

*Table 1.: Types of applications according to target groups and achieved goals*

<b>Children as direct target group</b>		
<b>Programs based on teaching law for children</b>	<b>Programs aiming to develop children's personalities and competences and increasing their knowledge</b>	<b>Programs based on changing the society's view</b>
law camp creation and application on a constitution	drug prevention and other thematic programs complex lifestyle programs programs aiming to convey household knowledge talent support mentoring team-building	sport program carried out by broad social collaboration/ presenting values of the target group for the society
<b>Children as indirect target group</b>		
<b>Programs targeting parents</b>	<b>Programs for professionals</b>	<b>Programs aiming system development</b>
programs that develop parental competences programs for decreasing poverty	training professional training	developing a quality assurance system in pedagogical work IT development

The children were the primary target groups in 13 applications out of the submitted good practices.

Programs based on teaching child's rights (two proposals) convey the knowledge to children in different ways, like a law camp where the participants reflect about the fact that the children in juvenile justice are typically not familiar with the participants and stages of the process, and with their own rights. In these cases the competencies and goals to be developed were "taking responsibility, learning victims' emotions, awareness, strengthening advocacy, raising legal knowledge, increasing level of communication, prevention, reducing offending." In the other good practice – that can be classified into this type – children could create their own constitution, in which they declared the system of rights and responsibilities providing behaviour models for children and young adults. In the daily application of the accepted system of rules, the following main aims were formulated: to make children self-confident during decision-making, to demonstrate democratic attitudes in their expressions, to express

their views in an appropriate way, to recognize their own and their peers' values, to respect each other, to be empathetic. In relation to the proposals grouped in this category, supporting the development of law-conscious behaviour was formulated as the basic goal.

Programs aiming at improvement of children's personality and competences and extending their knowledge (9 tenders) were delivered in various ways and presented mainstreaming child's rights in various ways. There were tenders that aimed to change children's knowledge or views in a complex way including many areas. One proposal is especially worth mentioning in which children could learn about different topics like drug abuse, harm reduction, psychological-mental health, civil society, role of art within the framework of a series of thematic events. The motto was "learning by playing". "With the experiences, appropriate motivation can be formed for receiving the knowledge. Passive listening can be replaced with joyful learning activity. Thus teaching and competence development go hand in hand playfully and have the expected effects." Another good practice puts emphasis on becoming adult and helped to learn skills in regular sessions, like washing, cooking, cleaning and furnishing. A tender targeted overcoming school disadvantages and in its framework a mentoring system was developed and introduced. Two organizations considered talent support to be especially important in relation to mainstreaming child's rights. One more proposal is worth mentioning in this category, which indicates a complex pedagogical system, the so-called lifestyle method which is overall regarding the children's life living in children's home and contains healing elements as well. The professional program responds to the fact that children who are taken into long-term care usually get into a child protection institution at an increasing later age, usually at puberty; and that there are more and more people in care who have special needs and because of this, complex methodology is required in daily operation.

Programs for the formation of the society's view had two proposals; both based on broad collaboration. One of them is a global art meeting in which the show contained songs of individuals and bands and theatre plays as well. The participants were children who live in their families and in child protection. "In the public's mind there is an image of children living in child protection as unfortunate and helpless children (...) we would like to call the attention to the those children who are successful in some field of art – music, drama, fine arts – due to their talent or in spite of their disability." The other tender is the First Children's Marathon that aims to develop willpower, endurance and shape children's character by sport in order to have healthy self-esteem.

In six proposals, children and young adults appear as indirect target groups.

As for the programs targeting parents (two proposals), one of them was sent by a children's home and the other was sent by a child welfare service. The tender of the children's home aimed to strengthen the connection with the biological parents and

strived for developing parents' competences related to taking care of children and upbringing. "We experienced in many cases that the family has a dysfunctional nature despite the parents' efforts and good intentions." Both parents and children participated in the program. The other proposal aimed to improve life quality of a given settlement's population – and the youth between 5 and 18 years old is a priority target group - aimed to support the acquisition of right life management, to reduce poverty and disadvantages, to ensure equal opportunities, and providing support for preserving physical-psychological-mental health." A social program that embraces the whole life from the birth of the child over becoming adult until old age, preferring basic social values and norms and ensuring guidance."

The programs for professionals (two proposals) reflect that it is important to ensure training, develop professional competences and mental hygienic care for professionals who advocate mainstreaming child's rights. In one of the cases, a complex local program was introduced that consists of weekly team meetings where the small groups' work is based on case conferences, an annual two-day long professional training that is held off-site, as well as a presentation prepared at home made by a professional. In the case of the other proposal, training was carried out in a juvenile justice institution with the aim of "conflict solution", cooperation, problem processing, credibility, professional self-awareness, mutual trust, acceptance, empathy and creativity. This was a one-day long training off-site and 18-20 people participated. The workers took part in 6 groups and in the final event they could discuss their experience.

There are two proposals in the group of programs for system development. In the framework of one of the programs, an IT system was developed that can stabilize the operation of institutional care on system level. "Beside the professional characteristics of work their work, administration, working with administrated data and information are the greatest burden for the colleagues." Therefore, the applicant organization developed such an administration interface that can minimize time required for data recording and makes previously recorded data available. The result of the project was that the software adapts to the needs of the workers of the children's home and provides the following functions: planning schedules, time-sheets, group log, planning menu, statistical data provision. The other part of the proposal aimed to support the life-start and employment of those who are in after-care, in which the organization employs young adults as cleaners, repair men, carpenters, electricians, financial and IT staff. The other proposal for system development targeted the introduction and maintenance of a quality management system relating to child protection's corrective pedagogy processes. The program contained the following modules: preparatory training, adaptation phase, follow up, preparation of documentation and audit. According to the experience of the applicant, during the implementation of the quality management system, children's home workers' problem solving ability developed, predictability and planning improved and teamwork was also strengthened. The

effectiveness of professional work became objectively measurable and by this, the care's quality improved.

We can see that within the framework of the Good Practice tender, the organizations had many ways to approach the issue of protecting and mainstreaming child's rights. The protection of rights for care appeared which meant the support for preserving the family unit supporting health, social security, education, leisure and playing activities; ensuring access to information appeared widespread and there were some applicants that dealt with the issue of protection of rights by implementing the topic of protection from violence and drug abuse in the program.

In the following we explain the importance of participation by presenting the Children's Parliament's role in the field of mainstreaming child's rights.

### **Children's Parliament on social integration**

Under the 12<sup>th</sup> Article of CRC all children have to be ensured with the right to freely express their views about everything relating to them and their views have to be taken into account in accordance with their age and maturity. "Participation is a process, with which the youth can gain self-confidence and self-esteem as well as obtain and exercise skills and abilities." (Hazai 2014:359). During participation the young person takes the initiative since he/she recognizes when an issue is related to his/her and peers' life and formulates needs and proposes solution in the name of others. Participation is a public role (Hazai 2014).

FICE – Hungary organized the Children's Parliament in 2001 for the first time. Approximately 40-70 children and young adults between 15 and 20 years old in care take part in a session. They come from children's homes or foster care from all over the country. Several topics have been discussed in the sessions so far, for example, the difficulties of life in children's home, separate placement in case of siblings, dealing with homosexuality in children's home, placement of underage mother and her child, using pocket money, using housing support (Hazai 2014). The delegate selection for the Children's Parliament was done by children through Children's Councils. Where there is no Children's Council, the delegates were elected voluntary. Before every session, a preparation is held, where the delegates can get ready regarding the topic and form their joint views and formulate their demands. The topic of the Children's Parliament was the promotion of successful social integration and its motto was: "We are entitled to live our – satisfied and safe – lives."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>At the Children's Parliament we made a recording with permission of the participants. In the following, the presented pieces of information are from the Children's Parliament; they are presented anonymously.

The participating young adults dealt with very important topics and they formulated on both individual and system levels those changes that are needed to create basis for social integration successfully.

They named the following main changes on individual –children – level:

- Opening care places with programs for the society and environment at as young age as possible
- Development of a contemporary support system; presenting positive models for those who are in care
- More intense involvement into finance management and activities relating to independent life
- Accepting themselves and their situation, making real self-image
- Exercising the right to express their view.

The most important suggestions for the environment about the development of the child protection system:

- Supporting programs and forums where the society can learn about the values of children living in child protection (social sensitization)
- Supporting participation in education, the restoration of compulsory school age to the age of 18; in case of part-time studies – acquiring leaving examination or profession – the age limit for after care service should be increased in accordance with personal needs
- Training and supporting credible professionals
- Supporting mentor-system
- Support for sport and other forms of recreation
- Ensuring more efficient operation regarding advocacy (Children’s Council, Children’s Parliament) (Major 2014)

For the successful social integration, the delegates formulated several important improvements on system level. As previously mentioned, it is essential to put the emphasis on the strengths and talents of the children. Presenting successful models can greatly contribute to making children and young adults to be motivated (Furnivall-Grant 2014; Rácz 2009). Many studies draw attention to the importance of the development of a mentor-system, in which a stable and positive person provides help in keeping up, school career and in accessing different services. The relationship is based on trust. The mentor can stabilize the child emotionally and lead him/her to an independent life (without the system) (LEARNS n.y.) This is the need what for the participants of the Children’s Parliament responded. Besides presenting successful models, the establishment of a contemporary support system for credible information provision about different topics like addiction was also mentioned. “(...) my experience is that they accept more readily something from somebody who was in the same life situation, from such a credible person who really went through this and did it than from a person who sat in front of a book and learnt it during trainings about

what it really is, what to do and tells what not to do.“ “Because I don't want to convince them not to use drugs, I tell them facts, like see what I achieved, think about it.”

Both in foster and institutional care, the support for keeping contact with the biological family and preserving identity is particularly important. Many of those who live in care said that they do not belong anywhere and feel themselves rootless. The children and young adults living in child protection face exclusion and discrimination daily. In every session of the Children's Parliament, it was mentioned that the children and young adults feel ashamed of their situation and hide it, they want to break the fossilized walls around them built of negative social images. (Rác 2012; Hazai 2014). “We're trying, there is an image of us that we carry (...) we do not have self-confidence at all because we are emotionally damaged.”

Children and young adults criticize that they were taken from their close-wide environment, friends and family and by this, their cultural tradition and heritage; furthermore, maintaining relationships is also hard. The children also said that the professionals did not inform them about their rights, how they could express their views and what forums are enabled for them. In the case of those who left the system, we can talk about a very small social network and they are not prepared (finance and household management skills, getting job) to start an independent life. Many experience abuse, neglect in the system and even the professionals do not take children and young adults seriously; furthermore, they cannot or only after a very long wait (causing deterioration) can access certain services (department of addictology, child psychiatry). Their failures can be seen in their school career that greatly complicates social integration. Disabled children and young adults are also in difficult situations; most of them cannot access the appropriate services and they are rather a vulnerable target group<sup>8</sup> (Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children 2010; Rác 2012; Csurgó – Rác 2012).

According to many research, the children wish professionals to provide emotional and practical help for them. Hill (1999) summarized what features children seek for in a worker: show willingness to listen, be empathetic and reliable, take action regarding the children's matter, to be able to talk with them confidentially, respect them, consider them as a complete people. In contrast, a bad professional does not listen to the child or keep his/her promises, has too much control over the child's life, does not share information and does not take the child's opinion into account (cited by Oliver 2010:4). This requires the existence of several skills like communication skills (including communication with disabled children), ability to share information in accordance with the so-called 'you need to know' principle; satisfying their emotional needs, helping children to get involved in the decision-making on care and provision they get. (Children's Rights Director for England 2012). This need was formulated by

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<sup>8</sup> According to the results of a Canadian research, disabled children and young adults are overrepresented in the child protection system and are twice as likely to become victim of abuse. 55% of them cannot access basic services; the parents are in worse situation in the labour market due to the state of their children and as a consequence they have worse financial situation. (Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children 2010: 76)

the Children's Parliament as well, that is, to have space and opportunity to express their views and get involved actively into decisions about their lives.

The delegates formulated that they think the continuous training for professionals and the involvement of greater number of men into child protection to be important. According to international experience, young adults would love to take part in trainings for professionals in which they could express their views directly about what kind of help they need. (Children's Rights Director for England 2012). Children living in foster care also formulated that they would like to have less restriction in the care and more help in keeping contact with the biological parents. In case of unsuccessful return to home, the children and young adults would like to go back to the same foster parents and they would also like to keep in touch with the foster family after leaving the system and get little help occasionally. A survey<sup>9</sup> pointed out that according to the children's suggestions foster parents should make them feel more that they are full members of the family and they would like to get more support for programs (sleeping at friends, participating in a trip or staying out late) and they also would like to be placed in a family that has the same religion and ethnicity. (Children's Rights Director for England 2012)

The 15th Children's Parliament confirmed that sport and other leisure or recreational activities should be more supported. In this connection, they also said to forbid the restrictions of these activities with the aim of punishment. "(...) prohibition of sport should not be punishment. If someone wants to spend his/her free time this way or something does not go well in one's life it should not be punished by prohibiting sport, for example, because they have bad grades."

The delegates indicated that the quality and level of support of care and provision between types of care (institutional and foster care) and between the areas in the country are not the same. Rác's research (2012) on the after care system and after care provision pointed out that professional support is discretionary since in many cases, young adults get provision based on the child protection professional's judgment. Furthermore, implicit selection prevails since the young adults do not have information about what provisions are available for them.

## Summary

As the 15<sup>th</sup> Children's Parliament showed, children and young adults are capable of formulating very determined opinion about the received care and services. They can clearly see their situation and reflect on what changes are needed on both individual and system level for successful social integration. The children's and young adults' points of view greatly help to understand the upbringing processes and demonstrate that the youth does not necessarily think the same way as the adults. Children can express their views about their lives, the behaviour of their carers and parents, the

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<sup>9</sup> In connection with foster care 363 children and young adults were asked personally and with surveys; 60% of them were girl, 21% of them were under the age of 11, while 2% of them were older than 18 years.

attitude of the workers and about their emotions. Their message to the adult society for the exercise of their rights: "Listen to us, check whether we need something, help to keep contact with our families, ensure safety for us and remember we are human too." (Oliver 2010:32) The delegates said they can add that they accept "how the society affects us is the same how we are affecting the society (...) We have to learn to accept the society." Most of the children and young adults understand what care and upbringing mean, but they would not mind receiving preparation. It is important because their experience will affect what kind of parents they are going to be. (Madge-Willmott 2007) The proposals for Good Practices in Child Protection confirms that even on the lowest level of methodology building, there is a need for conscious "problem-solving, experience gaining, -sharing and professional rule-making" work for the profession's development. For this, continuous search for solution, self-reflection is needed on each organizations' level (Domszky 2011:2; 9). Listening with understanding to the views of those who are in care is the key for all these.

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