

HUNGARY/GENDER EQUALITY IN THE LABOUR MARKET

SUBMISSION TO THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION
OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
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This document outlines Amnesty International's concerns regarding persistent pay disparities, unequal distribution of caregiving responsibilities, occupational segregation, and shortcomings in the enforcement of equal pay for equal work ahead of the follow-up review by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in October 2025.

1. WOMEN'S EQUAL AND INCLUSIVE REPRESENTATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET (PARA. 30(A))

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE GENDER PAY GAP

The overrepresentation of women in low-paid sectors; the underrepresentation of women in well-paid management and decision-making positions; the unequal share of paid and unpaid work which shape career choices and limit progression opportunities; and pay discrimination contribute to a significant gender pay gap that has been increasing in Hungary since 2020. According to Eurostat, the gender pay gap in Hungary is 17.8%, which is one of the highest among EU Member States (EU average: 12%) and has been gradually increasing since 2020.

This high gender pay gap in Hungary reflects the limited professional opportunities granted to women and highlights their significant financial vulnerability. According to data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (2023), women are at greater risk of poverty or financial vulnerability.¹

European Union institutions, for example, have identified lack of pay transparency as one of the key obstacles to closing the gender pay gap.² In 2023, the European Union adopted the Pay Transparency Directive.³ In addition to promoting the principle of equal pay for equal work, the Directive intends to contribute to reducing women's exclusion from decision-making roles. It obliges EU Member States to enhance pay transparency before employment, make the criteria for pay progression transparent, and require employers with a minimum of 100 employees to report on gender pay gaps – including averages, medians, variable pay components, and representation across pay bands – thereby supporting greater equality in career advancement.⁴

In response to Amnesty International's freedom of information request, it became clear that the Ministry of National Economy has not yet prepared an action plan for the implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive. Hungary should implement the Pay Transparency Directive as comprehensively as possible. Amnesty International has submitted recommendations⁵ to the Ministry with this regard.

To fully grasp the complexity of women's exclusion from leadership positions, it is essential to consider the multiple dimensions of discrimination they face in the labour market.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Amnesty International recommends that Hungary:

- Adopt measures to close the gender pay gap, including take steps to implement the transparency mechanism;
- Ensure that the body responsible for Hungary's implementation of the Pay Transparency Directive initiate a dialogue between government authorities responsible for labour matters, the equality bodies, social partners, researchers and NGOs;

¹ Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 5.1.1.2. Proportion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by gender, age group, educational attainment, income quintile, economic activity, household type (EU2030 target) https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/ele/hu/ele0034.html

² European Council and Council of the European Union, *Pay transparency in the EU*, 2025, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/pay-transparency/>

³ European Union, Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to Strengthen the Application of the Principle of Equal Pay for Equal Work or Work of Equal Value between Men and Women through Pay Transparency and Enforcement Mechanisms (Text with EEA relevance). 17 May 2023, <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/970/oj>

⁴ European Council and Council of the European Union, *Pay transparency in the EU* (previously cited)

⁵ Amnesty International, Policy recommendation for the effective transposition of European Union Directive 2023/970 on transparency of the gender pay gap, 3 July 2025, https://www.amnesty.hu/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2023_970_EU_Policy-paper_AmnestyInternationalMagyarorszag_20250703.pdf (in Hungarian)

- Introduce training for employers on the application of the Pay Transparency Directive, on informing workers, on the establishment of worker categories, on wage assessments and legal procedures, and on possible sanctions;
- Take active measures to ensure that the provisions pursuant to the Pay Transparency Directive are brought by all appropriate means to the attention of the persons concerned throughout Hungary (for example, through social attitudes-related measures).

1.2 WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

According to the Concluding Observations on the ninth periodic report of Hungary, despite the call made by the Committee, no targeted measures have been taken by Hungary, for example through the application, in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and General Recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, of increased quotas in various areas. The lack of such measures is clearly reflected in the continued low representation of women in decision-making positions and in academia. Since 2015, Hungary has consistently ranked last in the EIGE Gender Equality Index – Power category.⁶

European Commission’s Eurobarometer data from 2024 measured gender stereotypes in EU Member States. In Hungary, it was based on 1,023 interviews with male and female interviewees. 41% of the respondents in the study indicated that they believed that “women in leadership positions lack the necessary authority to be taken seriously”, compared to an EU average of 23%.⁷ 42% of those surveyed perceived women as “too emotional to be good leaders” compared with the EU average of 21%.⁸ Despite these stereotypes, 76% of Hungarians agree that “gender-balanced leadership teams are more successful” (EU average: 73%).⁹

LEADERSHIP IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Although the Committee urged Hungary to support women leaders in the private sector through training and partnerships to promote equal participation, there is still a very low percentage of women among entrepreneurs and managers in the country. According to the data of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office from 2024, only one-third of the managers working in the private service sector are women, while in industry and agriculture, their proportion is even lower, with only less than a quarter of managers being women.¹⁰ According to the European Institute for Gender Equality’s findings from 2024, the representation of women on boards in largest publicly quoted companies, supervisory boards or boards of directors is only 11% in Hungary (EIGE).¹¹ These trends highlight structural barriers to women’s economic leadership and decision-making.

With regard to intersectional discrimination in leadership bodies, no data is available. The Committee expressed concern about Hungary’s “limited understanding” of temporary special measures to accelerate substantive equality, including intersectional approaches. Data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office clearly shows that Roma women not only lack access to leadership positions but are also underrepresented in the labour market in general. In 2022, only 35.8% of Roma women aged 15–64 were employed in formal settings in Hungary.¹² According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, a significant proportion of Roma

⁶ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender Equality Index*, 2024, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2024/compare-countries/power/bar>

⁷ European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 545 – Gender Stereotypes*, 2024, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2974>, p. 82.

⁸ European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 545 – Gender Stereotypes* (previously cited), p. 83.

⁹ European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 545 – Gender Stereotypes* (previously cited), p. 134.

¹⁰ Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 2.17. The share of women in leadership positions, 2024, <https://ksh.hu/kiadvanyok/fenntarthato-fejlodes-indikatorai/2024/2-17>.

¹¹ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender Equality Index – Power Indicators in Hungary*, 2024, <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2024/domain/power/HU>

¹² Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 4.2.

[Employment rate of the Roma population compared to the non-Roma population], 2023, <https://ksh.hu/s/kiadvanyok/fenntarthato-fejlodes-indikatorai-2023/4-2-sdg-8>

people live in regions of the country with unfavourable labour market conditions and poor transport connections (e.g. North and North-East Hungary). This is linked to limited access to local education and local employment opportunities and leads to almost 50% of employed Roma people performing unskilled jobs that provide lower employment security and payment, and approximately 5% participating in public employment schemes, compared to 0.3% of the non-Roma employed people. All this leads to a high share of Roma being at risk of poverty or social exclusion: 58.3% of the full Roma population, compared to 19.1% among the non-Roma population.¹³

The Hungarian authorities informed this Committee as part of the follow-up process to the latest Concluding Observations that “in recent years, Hungary has launched numerous programmes and opportunities to support and encourage women to become entrepreneurs”. However, the Hungarian Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise Strategy (SME Strategy) for 2019–2030¹⁴ does not specifically address the support of women entrepreneurs. According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor special report on Female entrepreneurs in Hungary (2025), the entrepreneurial activity of men in Hungary – regardless of age group and type of business – is typically higher than that of women.¹⁵ More than twice as many men (11.7%) as women (5.45%) in the age group between 25 and 44 are entrepreneurs in early-stage businesses and among those older than 44, the proportion is 14.45% to 6.45%, respectively in the case of established businesses.¹⁶

Contrary to the recommendations of the CEDAW Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of Hungary, the implementation of Directive (EU) 2022/2381, which aims to improve gender balance among directors of listed companies, has not yet taken place, despite the deadline being 2024. A Bill was submitted as a proposal in Parliament¹⁷ on 29 October 2024 but it did not address the exact proportion of women in all director positions (33% as per the Directive), it only set a quota for supervisory boards (40%). Even in this limited form, it has not been adopted by the Hungarian Parliament, however, and has therefore not been introduced to date.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN POLITICS AND SCIENCE

According to the information received from the Government of Hungary on follow-up to the Concluding Observations, “Hungary does not favour the use of quotas to increase women’s participation in political and public decision-making”, instead, it emphasizes “grassroots initiatives, motivation, training, and mentoring”. However, data gathered in recent years shows that between 2023 and 2024, the share of women in Parliament and regional assemblies remained low, at 14% and 15% respectively. There are no legislative candidate quotas in Hungary. As of 2024, there are no female ministers in the government, a decrease of 7% compared to 2023.¹⁸

Public attitudes reveal mixed perceptions. According to a 2024 Eurobarometer survey data for Hungary, 74% of Hungarians believe that “men are more ambitious than women in politics” (EU average: 47%).¹⁹ 58% believe women are less interested in positions of responsibility in politics than men (EU average: 35%).²⁰ Despite these perceptions, 71% support temporary measures, such as quotas, to address the underrepresentation of women in politics (EU average: 55%), and 68% believe that increasing women’s

¹³ Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 5.1.1.2. Proportion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by gender, age group, educational attainment, income quintile, economic activity, household type (EU2030 target) https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/ele/hu/ele0034.html

¹⁴ Government of Hungary, Strategy for Strengthening Hungarian Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises 2019–2030 – First Review, 2023, <https://cdn.kormany.hu/uploads/document/a/ae/ae6ddf3889f14153a81dbe7b089d7a60e3ff6312.pdf> (in Hungarian).

¹⁵ Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, *GEM 2024/2025 Global Report - Entrepreneurship Reality Check*, 2025, <https://gemconsortium.org/report/gem-20242025-global-report-entrepreneurship-reality-check-4> p. 35.

¹⁶ Judit Csákné Filep, Áron Szennay, Gigi Timár, *Women Entrepreneurs in Hungary*, 2025, https://webapi.uni-bge.hu/api/v1/files/display/documents/hirek/gem_noi-vallalkozok-2025_final.pdf?id=69743, p. 35.

¹⁷ Act ... of 2024 on Improving Gender Balance and Related Measures in the Governing Bodies of Publicly Listed Companies], October 2024, submitted by Dr. Zsolt Semjén, Deputy Prime Minister, T/9721., https://www.parlament.hu/web/guest/folyamatban-levo-torvenyjavaslatok?p_p_id=hu_parlament_cms_pair_portlet_PairProxy_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8&p_p_lifecycle=1&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_auth=hGwsRSdw&hu_parlament_cms_pair_portlet_PairProxy_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8_pairAction=%2FinternetesFoglyirom.irom_adat%3Fp_ckl%3D42%26p_izon%3D9721

¹⁸ European Institute for Gender Equality, *Gender Equality Index – Power Indicators in Hungary* (previously cited)

¹⁹ European Commission, *Special Eurobarometer 545 – Gender Stereotypes* (previously cited, pp. 126-129 & 72).

²⁰ Id. at p. 74.

participation in politics leads to better policy decisions (EU average: 60%).²¹ Despite all these values being reflected in public opinion surveys, the country's authorities still do not support the introduction of quotas.

Gender-based discrimination can also be observed in scientific advancement. Women's participation in the scientific field declines steadily as research careers progress, a phenomenon often referred to as the "leaky pipeline".²² According to the information received from Hungary on follow-up to the Concluding Observations on its ninth periodic report, women make up 55.9% of the workforce at universities and scientific institutions, including higher education and Research and Development sectors. However, this value does not provide the full picture of gender inequality in Hungary because it does not reflect gender inequalities in scientific careers.

In higher education, women are slightly overrepresented among students (54.5%).²³ The proportion is similar at the PhD level: according to data of the Central Statistical Office, in 2024/2025, 49% of PhD students were women.²⁴ However, this proportion decreases as the academic careers progress, with women representing only 29% of academic researchers in Hungary.²⁵ In 2022, the proportion of women among heads of institutions in the Higher Education Sector was at 15.9%, one of the lowest in the EU.²⁶ In addition – in connection with stereotypes on gender roles, in particular with regard to women's caregiving and family responsibilities (see Chapter 2.3 of this submission) – 20.1% of the female researchers worked part-time in 2019, compared to the EU average of 12.2%, and the proportion of male researchers who worked part-time was 8% in Hungary.²⁷ In 2025, women represented only 8% of full members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.²⁸

LEADERSHIP IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

In the public sector, both horizontal and vertical gender-based segregation are present simultaneously.²⁹ Gender-based discrimination that affects employment opportunities begins well before labour market entry. A 2023 survey commissioned by Amnesty International among over 1,000 secondary school students in Hungary – predominantly girls – found that almost 70% had experienced teachers emphasizing that certain subjects and professions are more suited to men or women.³⁰

While there is a higher representation of women in public sector leadership than in the private sector, this does not match overall gender distribution.

According to the information received from the Government of Hungary on follow-up to the Concluding Observations, women represent approximately 66% of leadership positions in the public sector. At the same time, it is important to highlight that according to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, more than 80% of employees in the social sector (e.g. social worker, social carer), education (primary school teachers, nursery school teachers), and healthcare (e.g. nurse, specialist nurse, laboratory assistant) – which takes up a very

²¹ Id. at pp. 86-87.

²² Judit Lannert and Beáta Nagy, The situation of women in Hungarian academia, 2019, p. 64., <https://unipub.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/5182/>, (in Hungarian)

²³ Central Statistical Office, 23.1.1.22. Students in bachelor's and master's programs by field of study and gender, 2025, https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/okt/hu/okt0022.html

²⁴ Central Statistical Office, Educational data, 2023/2024 (preliminary data), <https://www.ksh.hu/s/kiadvanyok/oktatasi-adatok-20232024-elozetes-adatok/index.html#azalapfokakzpfoksafelsfokoktatsnemnappalikpzseinegyarntemelkedettarsztvevkszma>

²⁵ European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *She Figures Index 2024 – Hungary*, 2025, <https://ec.europa.eu/assets/rtd/shefigures/2024/files/shefigures2024fiche-hu.pdf>

²⁶ European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *She Figures Index 2024*, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/6847557>

²⁷ European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *She figures 2021 – Gender in research and innovation – Statistics and indicators*, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/06090>, p. 153.

²⁸ Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 199th General Assembly of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 7 May 2025, <https://mta.hu/kozgyules199/bemutatjuk-a-magyar-tudomanyos-akademia-uj-tagjait-114347>

²⁹ European Commission's Expert Group on Gender and Employment (EGGE), *Gender segregation in the labour market - Root causes, implications and policy responses in the EU*, 2009, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=3799&langId=en>

³⁰ Amnesty International Hungary (2023). The manifestation of gender stereotypes in children's education and career choices. <https://www.amnesty.hu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/AIHU-report-The-manifestation-of-gender-stereotypes-in-childrens-education-and-career-choices-1.pdf>

significant part of public institutions in Hungary – are women.³¹ In summary, the percentage of female leaders does not reflect the higher concentration of female workers in the sector, which is clearly shown by the fact that Hungary's public sector pay gap exceeds that of the private sector – contrary to most EU Member States.³²

Recent government measures have introduced salary increases in education³³ and healthcare.³⁴ Nevertheless, these measures remain uneven: teachers' wages still fall short of the average graduate salary;³⁵ university lecturers were excluded from recent salary increases;³⁶ and nurses and healthcare professionals continue to earn disproportionately low wages.³⁷ Moreover, in 2025, the State Secretary for Health publicly indicated that, since the majority of healthcare workers (for example, 90% of nurses) are women and already benefit from family tax credits for mothers,³⁸ no additional salary adjustments are foreseen for 2025 or 2026.³⁹ In contrast with CEDAW's own findings, this attitude reflects on and reinforces the Hungarian Government's harmful gender stereotypes, a lack of recognition of women's professional achievements, which is discriminatory against childless women and, in the long run, increases the gender pay gap.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with Article 4, Paragraph 1 of the Convention and General Recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, Amnesty International recommends that Hungary:

- Develop and implement educational programmes that broaden career opportunities for young people and dismantle gender stereotypes from an early age,⁴⁰ in line with Article 10 of the CEDAW;
- Encourage teacher training and curricula reform to promote gender equality study subject choices and career guidance;
- Ensure further wage adjustments in the health, social care, and education sectors, covering a wide range of professionals, to ensure that people of all genders are remunerated fairly and equally;
- Encourage mentorship, capacity-building, and sponsorship programmes for women aspiring to leadership positions in the private, public, and academic sectors;
- Challenge gender stereotypes through public awareness campaigns that highlight the effectiveness of gender-diverse leadership;

³¹ Data for 2024 provided by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office during a freedom of information request by Amnesty International.

³² Eurostat, *Gender pay gap statistics*, 2025, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_pay_gap_statistics

³³ Hungary raises teachers' wages with EU support, 14 August 2025, <https://european-social-fund-plus.ec.europa.eu/hu/node/11004>

³⁴ New public health-care service contracts with pay rise for doctors, 1 January 2021, https://static.eurofound.europa.eu/covid19db/cases/HU-2021-1_1243.html

³⁵ Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 23.1.1.32. Gross average earnings of teachers in public education and of graduate employees in the national economy, and their ratio, 2024, https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/okt/hu/okt0046.html

³⁶ Atlatzo.hu, "Teachers in Hungarian universities often work for free or remain in positions below their qualifications", 20 June 2024, <https://english.atlatzo.hu/2024/06/20/teachers-in-hungarian-universities-often-work-for-free-or-remain-in-positions-below-their-qualifications/>

³⁷ Hungarian Central Statistical Office, 20.1.1.52. Gross average earnings of full-time employees by occupation [HUF/person/month, 2024, https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/mun/hu/mun0208.html

³⁸ This means that significantly less remains for public services funded by taxes (e.g., the condition of hospitals and schools, public safety). In reality, it does not address women's gross wages in the long term (which would also be reflected in pensions); rather, it takes resources from the shared public budget allocated to mothers, thereby legitimizing why their professional efforts are not properly compensated.

³⁹ Pénzcentrum, "Újabb megszorítást jelentett be a kormány: évekig nem kapnak béremelést az orvosok, ápolók" ["The government has announced a new austerity measure: doctors and nurses will not receive a pay raise for years"], 7 June 2025, <https://www.penzcentrum.hu/egeszseg/20250607/ujabb-megszoritast-jelentett-be-a-kormany-evekig-nem-kapnak-beremelest-az-orvosok-apolok-1180057> (in Hungarian)

⁴⁰ The current Family Life Education curriculum 'aims to assist students from a young age in reinforcing their gender identity in alignment with their biological sex, to learn about the basic distinctions between sexes (gender, brain function, communication, etc.).' Educational Authority, *Családi Életre Nevelés* [Family Life Education], https://www.oktatas.hu/pub_bin/dload/kozoktat/kerettanterv/Csaladi_eletre_neveles_9-12.doc, p. 2.

- Introduce temporary special measures, which can include quota systems, to ensure that decision-making bodies in public institutions reflect the gender distribution of the sector;
- Monitor and evaluate public institutions' compliance with gender equality standards and international commitments, such as CEDAW and Sustainable Development Goal 5;
- According to the CEDAW Concluding Observations (CEDAW/C/HUN/CO/9), Paragraph, 34(b), implement EU Directive 2022/2381 and improve gender balance among people in leadership positions of listed companies (see above).

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