Practices of cooperation, coordination

Hungary

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Hungarian Helsinki Committee – Strong embeddedness at the EU and international level

The Hungarian Helsinki Committee (HHC) (*Magyar Helsinki Bizottság*), founded in 1989, is a public benefit human rights organisation that protects human dignity through legal and public activities. Its activity primarily covers the protection of the rule of law, the rights of refugees, the rights of detainees and fairness in the criminal justice system and monitoring law enforcement activities.[1]

The HHC's embeddedness at the EU and international level deserves a closer look for the purpose of transnational learning. The HHC is regularly consulted by relevant members and committees of the European Parliament (e.g. intervention at the LIBE Committee's Frontex Scrutiny Working Group) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (e.g. intervention at the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons). Its strong interaction with the relevant EU and international actors is also reflected in the fact that the HHC contributes to all major regional and international reporting cycles, including e. g. Universal Periodic Review, UN Human Rights Committee, UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants on pushbacks.[2] In addition, the HHC filed a number of submissions, among others, to the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.[3]

Furthermore, the HHC has been participating in EU-funded domestic and international projects focusing on the Charter, e.g., the HHC's "CharterWise – Making the EU Charter a leading human rights litigation tool in Hungary" project,[4] carried out together with the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, aims at bringing the Charter from the attention periphery of the legal profession to the centre of the human rights litigation scene in Hungary, e.g., through trainings for attorneys and civil society representatives, and piloting an academic curriculum on the Charter. The HHC has joined forces to launch a

[1] For more information, see the HHC's webpage: Hungarian Helsinki Committee, About us.

[2] For a non-exhaustive collection of HHC submissions and reports to various international organisations here, see the HHC's webpage: Hungarian Helsinki Committee (2024), Helsinki File: Reports to international organisations, 4 February 2024.

[3] For a more detailed list, see Annex 4.4.

[4] For more information, see the HHC's webpage: Hungarian Helsinki Committee (2023), CHARTERWISE – Making the EU Charter a leading human rights litigation tool in Hungary (2023-2024), 10 February 2023.

new project named "STARLIGHT – Strategic Litigation for Rights in Europe" [5] that aims to facilitate more effective use of a powerful yet underused tool to protect fundamental rights in the European Union.

To sum up, the HHC serves as an excellent example of how the vertical dimension, i.e., the interaction between a national CSO and the international and European level institutions should work.

Human Rights Working Group and Human Rights Roundtable – an institutionalised cooperation with civil society

The Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) (*Emberi Jogi Munkacsoport*) was set up by the Government in 2012 as a consultative body organised by the Ministry of Justice.[6] Its main tasks are to monitor the implementation of human rights in Hungary, to consult with civil society organisations, advocacy and professional organisations and constitutional bodies, and to facilitate professional communication on the implementation of human rights in Hungary. The ten members of the HRWG are senior political and professional leaders representing the ministries of Hungary.

The HRWG operates a Human Rights Roundtable (HRR) (*Emberi Jogi Kerekasztal*). The purpose of the HRR is to consult with civil society, advocacy and professional organisations concerned with human rights in Hungary, and to formulate recommendations in the context of the activities and tasks of the HRWG. Currently, 76 NGOs are members of the HRR and a further 46 NGOs participate in the meetings of the thematic working groups with consultative rights.[7] The HRR also has a number of permanent guests.[8] In total, there are eight Thematic Working Groups (TWG) within the HRR (on equal opportunities, on social affairs, on rights of the child, on the rights of the elderly, on asylum, on national minorities, on women's rights and on Roma

[5] For more information, see the HHC's webpage: Hungarian Helsinki Committee (2023), STARLIGHT – Strategic Litigation for Rights in Europe (2022-2024), 16 January 2023.

[6] Hungary, Government Resolution No. 1039/2012. (II. 22.) [*1039/2012. (II. 22.) Korm. határozat az Emberi Jogi Munkacsoportról*]

[7] For details, see the HRWG's webpage: The Human Rights Working Group (Emberi Jogi Munkacsoport), Emberi jogi kerekasztal.

[8] Permanent guests of the HRR are the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, the Equal Treatment Authority, the Central Statistical Office, the National Data Protection and Freedom of Information Authority, and representatives of the individual ministries. See: https://emberijogok.kormany.hu/emberi-jogi-kerekasztal

issues), each of which is dedicated to addressing the legal and practical problems of vulnerable groups and to making policy proposals. To enhance the horizontal dimension, i.e., interactions between statuary human rights bodies, civil society actors and the executive branch, the representatives of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights and the National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information also attend the meeting of the HRWG.

According to the minutes of the TWG meetings,[9] the meetings often include lively debates and give NGOs the opportunity to express their views on government measures and the forthcoming legislation. However, some criticisms of the HRR have also been raised.[10]

Other practices

Crime's Victim Support System – Versatile assistance for victims

The state Victim Support System operates under the direction and supervision of the Ministry of Justice and is based on three pillars: Victim Support Services, Victim Support Centres and the Victim Support Hotline.

The operation of the Victim Support Centres, to be gradually established in all 19 counties by 2025, is based on a holistic approach by providing practical and psychological support tailored to the needs of victims, confirmed by agreements with local and national authorities and services. The primary task of the 24/7 toll-free Victim Support Hotline is to ensure the continuous availability of the victim support service so that victims can call the line at any time to receive information and counselling appropriate to their individual situation.

The Victim Support Service has intensified relations to victim protection bodies throughout society, such as the police, the courts, the prosecution service, the asylum and immigration authority, local and national self-governments, health institutions,

[9] The minutes are available on the HRWG's webpage: The Human Rights Working Group (Emberi Jogi Munkacsoport), Emberi jogi kerekasztal. E.g. the minutes of the Thematic Working Group on the Rights of the Child are available here: Gyermekek Jogaiért Felelős Tematikus Munkacsoport.

[11] Doszpoly, O., Barta, G., Novák, I. and Patai, P. (2020), 'A hazai áldozatsegítés rendszerének aktuális kérdései' ('Current issues in the domestic victim support system'), *Fontes Iuris*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 9–20.

youth and child protection institutions, family support services, social services and institutions providing primary and specialised care, public education institutions, vocational training institutions, civil protection, civil society organisations and religious communities.

In practice, the system provides for fast, tailor-made actions, based on instant assessments, in order to tackle the needs of victims of various crimes. As a result, the number of victims reached by the Victim Support Service multiplied between 2020 and 2023. It should also be noted that experts generally have positive opinion of the functioning of the victim support system.[11]

[11] Doszpoly, O., Barta, G., Novák, I. and Patai, P. (2020), 'A hazai áldozatsegítés rendszerének aktuális kérdései' ('Current issues in the domestic victim support system'), *Fontes Iuris*, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 9–20.