



Pioneering policies and practices tackling educational inequalities in Europe

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Evidence-based co-authored and open-access report of most promising pioneering policies and practices

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Funding for the study halls from the central state budget [13]

Country	Hungary
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Name of the policy / practice	Funding for The Study Halls from The Central State Budget [13]
Short description and the main characteristics of the policy / practice	<p>Study halls provide voluntary extracurricular activities for students of low SES and Roma ethnicity as well as children and young adults having lived in state care. The goal of study halls is the development of their cognitive, social and/or psychological skills and providing compensation for their socioeconomic disadvantages. Operated by CSOs and churches, study halls have received EU funding since 2004. Cooperating with an independent network of study halls, the government began the funding of such institutions from the central budget in 2019, based on the modification of the law for child protection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decree 40/2018 (4 December) of the Ministry for Human Resources on the Professional Tasks and Conditions of Operation of Services for Increasing the Opportunities of Children • Law XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and the Administration of Guardianship
Target group of the policy / practice:	School aged (6 to 18 years) children either a) living in residentially segregated, poor neighbourhoods (within the category of multiply disadvantaged or disadvantaged and in majority of Roma ethnicity) or b) living in state care. Young adults having lived in state care are also entitled to access services of study halls.
Educational stage or transition phase of the policy / practice	ISCED 1, 2 and 3 (primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary school)
Level of implementation	Macro (national policy) Micro (institutional implementation)
MILC dimensions	<p><u>Intersectionality</u>: study halls by default aim to address multiple different disadvantages of students in their care, such as educational inequalities, socioeconomic disadvantages, issues related to child protection etc.</p> <p><u>Life-course perspective</u>: the policy specifies that a major task of study halls is the prevention of early school leaving. In practice, study halls often work with children throughout their school career, supporting them through transitions.</p> <p><u>Multi-level perspective</u>: the policy expects cooperation between individual students, their families, the study halls, as well as other institutions working with the student/family (e.g., school, children’s welfare). However, the lack of macro perspective has been a subject of numerous criticisms about the policy: focusing on the micro (and somewhat the meso) level, the policy does not address systemic issues. On the</p>

		<p>one hand, it maintains the segregation of disadvantaged students, on the other hand, it provides a supplementary service, rather than increasing the quality of formal education for everyone.</p> <p><u>Formal/non-formal</u>: it is recommended for study halls to focus on non-formal and informal education, and develop competences, rather than subject-specific knowledge.</p>	
Key dimensions of the identification procedure			
CONDITIONS: Foundational premise level	<i>Comprehensive</i>	The policy created the possibility of a more reliable funding and therefore more sustainability for study halls across the whole country. Moreover, it implicitly acknowledges that the reduction of educational inequalities is a task for the central government, rather than CSOs or churches on their own.	high
	<i>Coherent</i>	The policy focuses on individual development of disadvantaged students, aiming to provide them with multidimensional services, affecting several areas of their lives. However, it does not address the issues of the education system that exacerbate these students' disadvantages in the first place.	medium
	<i>Continuous</i>	The policy has created a more reliable financial background for study halls, but considering that it is still based on 3-year project cycles, sustainability is not fully secured. (Experts emphasize that for study halls to operate well, they need much longer periods of building trust, presence and reliability in the communities where they work.)	medium
ELEMENTS: Structural level	<i>Contextual</i>	The policy does not restrict the methodology or approach of study halls. Study hall leaders develop their methodological framework and choose the foci of their work according to local needs.	high
	<i>Relational</i>	The policy has created the possibility of study halls (traditionally operated by CSOs and churches) to rely more on the state. In practice, individual study halls often need help from local stakeholders, which provide some form of support to them (e.g., a location). The policy has been criticised for preferring some maintainers of study halls to others without a professional justification behind the decision.	medium
TOOLS: Action level	<i>Autonomous</i>	The policy does not restrict the methodological considerations of educators in study halls and encourages informal and non-formal approaches. The	high

		professional recommendations provided by the secretary of social inclusion list multiple different methods that may be used in study halls.	
	<i>Reflexive</i>	The policy does not specifically encourage reflection. However, the context of study halls, which is more flexible and autonomous than the formal system, is likely to develop richer reflective practices than schools.	medium
Evidence backing the policy / practice:		<p>The state-funded, project-based operation of study halls has been secured since 2019. Representatives of study halls were initially dissatisfied with the financial unreliability of 1-year-long project cycles (Fejes and Szűcs 2019), however, currently project cycles last 3 years. Apart from operational and funding issues of study halls, as well as their growing but still limited outreach*, critics have argued that this institution maintains educational segregation. Moreover, the centralization process has led to the diminishment of effectiveness of study halls in their original goal, complex social skills and communal development (Kiss and Vastagh 2021). In terms of the concrete results of study halls, Lannert et al. (2013) found that attending them did not increase the motivation of children to study, but had a significant positive impact on their mathematical skills, and some on their reading skills and inductive-deductive thinking as well, in comparison with the control group.</p> <p>*In 2015, 178 study halls were reaching altogether approx. 5800 students (Peterka et al. 2015). In the 2021–2023 period, 183 study halls were supported to varying degrees, with altogether 2.4 billion HUF (at the time approx. 6.7 million EUR) (SOURCE: Directorate General for Social Opportunities, 2020). They probably reach about 5-6000 students (our own estimation, since data have not been found).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WP3 analysis of the policy, WP5 interviews and focus groups with professionals from several study halls + detailed research of one in Tiszavasvári • Fejes J.B. and Szűcs, N., 2019. Stabil bizonytalanság... [Stable uncertainty...] Taní-tani Online. • Kiss, M. and Vastagh, Z., 2021. Hátránykompenzáció az iskolán kívül? : Az extrakurrikuláris intézmények szerepe és megítélése a tanulmányi eredményesség és előmenetel szempontjából [Compensation of disadvantages outside the school?: The role and evaluation of extracurricular institutions from the perspective of educational achievement and attainment]. socio.hu, 11 (2), 96–121 • Nagy K., Bernát A., Gábos A., Hárs Á., Holb É., Lannert J., Medgyesi M., Molnár L., Palócz É., and Tátrai M., 2020. A Magyar Nemzeti Felzárkóztatási Stratégia (MNTFS) érvényesülésének értékelése. Értékelő jelentés. [Evaluation of the implementation of the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy 	

	<p>(HNSIS)]. Budapest: Kopint-Tárki Zrt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peterka, J., Pont, B., Toledo Figueroa, D., and Fraccola, S., 2015. Education Policy Outlook. Hungary. OECD
<p>Brief concluding analysis of policy / practice in the context:</p>	<p>The introduction of the policy (funding for study halls from the state budget) was an important achievement of CSOs and the independent network of study halls. The policy acknowledges that the reduction of inequalities affecting disadvantaged and Roma children is a complex task, for which the state has to take responsibility. Nevertheless, the policy still does not guarantee a satisfactory level of stability. Moreover, study halls do not provide a solution to systemic educational inequalities and reach only a fraction of vulnerable students.</p>