

Development programs, Covid epidemic in the settlements of Ormánság

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Emerging programs funded by the European Union and the Hungarian government have been running for decades in the settlements of disadvantaged areas, including Ormánság, which serves as an analysis / research field for the lecture. The lecture examines the current Infinite Opportunity District and Emerging Settlements program. The presentation presents the Emerging Settlements programs and their outlined results through the Presence Points programs run by the Catholic Caritas. The presentation will also present the responses of the Presence Points to the Covid epidemic. The outbreak of the coronavirus in 2019 unexpectedly hit the settlements and the Emerging Settlements programs in all respects. This was perhaps most evident in the lack of digital skills, tools and internet services. The charitable / non-governmental organizations operating in the area of Ormánság helped the local community with programs, tools, the Internet, and workshops.

The lecture focuses on two small settlements: Kisszentmárton, Tésény. The examined settlements are, on the one hand, typical small villages in Ormánság (in terms of population and economic indicators), and, on the other hand, small settlements with segregation. The settlements are among the settlements with a moderate to small population decline in regional terms. In the context of the segregation of the Gipsy population in the examined settlements, we can speak of villages with a young age structure, where the proportion of the population with a disadvantaged, low education and poor labor market situation is high. (Ragadics 2019) (Boros-Bucher 2020)

The average population of the villages of the district - excluding the two central settlements, Sellye and Vajszló - is 249 (KSH 2019). Tésény has a population of 289 people and 244 in Kisszentmárton (TEIR 2018). The two villages are among the settlements with a moderate to minor population decline. Since the 1990 census, the population of Kisszentmárton has decreased by 21% and Tésény by 9.5%. The aging index of the two small settlements is significantly lower than the national and district averages. While in Southern Transdanubia 147 children under the age of sixty reach one hundred children under the age of 14, in the examined settlements the proportion of children over the older age groups is much higher. The above data are also explained by the poor health status of the older population and the poor mortality rates. The negative migration trends characteristic of the region are more pronounced in the settlements we examined. In addition to the emigration of a more educated and active population, the relocation of the disadvantaged population appears. Low real estate prices and vacant housing offered by municipalities are an attraction for disadvantaged groups even in the face of unfavorable labor market conditions. The infrastructural supply of the two settlements is similar to other small villages in the area. Public education institutions (kindergarten, school) are not located locally. Economic activity is low and the proportion of registered unemployed with up to 8 classes is high. The local economy is typically made up of small agricultural enterprises, which, due to their mechanization, provide only occasional employment for locals. Commercial units, with a few exceptions, operate as mobile shops.

The social and economic situation of the Gipsy population shows a strong correlation with their territorial disadvantages, the role and functions of their place of residence in the Sellye district. In terms of livelihoods, from the 1950s to the late 1980s, agriculture, production co-operatives and some factories / plants provided employment to the local population. The majority of the population worked in agricultural production, mainly in producer cooperatives and their sites.

Examining the territorial division and the proportion of the Gipsy population, it can be stated that where their proportion exceeded 70%, there was a lack of development, and these settlements began to decline as early as the 1970s, when the majority of the Gipsy population moved. Based on the planned management, only the necessary developments were realized from the 1950s, and in the 1971 settlement network development concept it became clear that these settlements would remain without development. All this was exacerbated by the economic and social structural change that took place after the change of regime (Boros-Bucher 2020).

The children of the settlements affected by our research go to Vajszló and Baksa to kindergarten and school. Disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged children are over-represented in the public education institutions of Vajszló compared to the district average. The proportion of the latter is 65% in the Vajszló kindergarten, 70 % in the school, while at the district level 32 % of the kindergartens and 41% of the primary school children are cumulatively disadvantaged. The proportion of recipients of regular child protection benefits exceeds 60 % in all public education institutions surveyed (KIRSTAT2017).

Endless Possibility - A complex catch-up model program called Sellyei District was launched in 2018. The Infinite Possibility provides key services in 14 settlements during the project, of which 2 Presence Points operate in Tésény and Kisszentmárton, 2 Mobile Presence Points in Csányoszló and Majlátpusztá. In the remaining settlements, the Traveler Presence Service provides services to the target group in response to the emerging needs, reflecting the difficulties indicated by the cooperating partners.

In 2019, the domestically funded Emerging Settlements program was launched in both settlements. Kisszentmárton and Tésény were among the settlements joining in the first round. Today, the number of connected settlements reaches 118. The program will develop the 300 most disadvantaged settlements. In addition to five large national charities, the Emerging Settlements program is run by church and non-governmental organizations. The aim of the activity along the common values is a continuous presence, which means a permanence for the local residents and helps to develop trust based on the social work of the presence. The program brings a new approach to catching up, as the social workers and local people working in the settlement, in cooperation with the local and regional experts, can respond directly to the problems that arise from the bottom up and can suggest solutions based on them. The program focuses on children and through them the whole of local society. It addresses local problems, improves housing conditions, educational disadvantage, develops the local economy and stimulates the labor market. In any case, local people also have to make commitments to help, which strengthens their sense of responsibility.

In 2020, the Child in Focus program was launched as a sub-program of the Emerging Settlements program, which focuses on young children and pregnant women, and helps the first three years of children with a number of programs and grants.

Building on the experience so far, the goal has been to empower people, and programs have been launched and continued in the area to learn from the problems of the epidemic. The presentation covers the Presence Points' responses to the Covid epidemic, the changes that took place during the first and second waves, and the reaction of the programs to the situation. These programs, which encourage development and catching up, help to strengthen families and local communities. (classroom service, sensitization sessions, improving parents' digital skills, parenting clubs on parenting awareness, conflict management programs promoting a healthy lifestyle).

Ragadics T. (2019): Községek és helyi társadalom az Ormánság kistélepüléseiben. Pécs: Institutio Könyvkiadó.

Boros J.-Bucher E. (2020): Szerepváltozások hátrányos helyzetű településeken élő családokban. In Esély No.4 pp.3-31