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## INTRODUCTION

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The Hungarian *Social Report 2019* forms part of the long-standing tradition of social reporting in Europe. As Noll and Berger (2014: 9) emphasize, social reports and social monitoring activities are aimed at ‘regular monitoring and analysis of as well as reporting on the living conditions and well-being of the population and their changes over time’. By generating quantitative information and empirically based analytical knowledge on well-being and progress in a society (or group of societies), social reporting can contribute to better-informed evidence-based policy making. While social monitoring is about the periodic production of carefully developed indicators and indicator systems, social *reporting* goes beyond this to incorporate analysis, interpretation and evaluation of trends (Noll, 2004: 163).

The Hungarian *Social Report* first appeared in 1990 (Andorka et al., 1990a; 1990b). Its aim was to join the already existing reporting traditions of France, the Netherlands, Germany and the United Kingdom (to mention just a few of the most prominent reporting countries). Rudolf Andorka, Tamás Kolosi and György Vukovich, the editors of the first edition, set the series goal of painting as complete a picture as possible of Hungarian society. Theirs was the first social report published in a post-socialist Eastern European country.

Since then, a *Social Report* has been published every two years by TÁRKI Social Research Institute (for the most recent one, see Kolosi and Tóth, 2018) – and with this frequency it is certainly among the leaders on the international social reporting scene. The Hungarian *Social Report* series is envisaged as a collection of analytical chapters covering several domains, such as social structure, mobility, elements of well-being, values and attitudes, and addressing specific issues and problems in particular years. As such, it belongs to a tradition that also provides evaluation and interpretation of social trends: it aims to go beyond data, to offer better information for political decision making on the one hand, and on the other to provide the general reader with a better idea of social trends. As has been mentioned, a Hungarian edition has appeared every two years since 1990. But an English edition is published much less frequently: in 1990, 1998 and 2004 (see Kolosi et al., 2004).

Though pure chance, it is symbolic that the first in the series (in both Hungarian and English) dates from 1990 (the year of the first free elections after communist rule), while the most recent in the English series appeared in 2004 (when Hungary joined the European Union). Both dates are historic for the country, signalling two major milestones in the societal development of Hungary.

At various times, the *Social Reports* have reported on social structure, values and attitudes during the systemic change; on the incidence of the positive and negative effects of the transformation; on the creation of a very low level employment equilibrium at the beginning of the transition and on its consequences for political structures; on the phases in the ever-deepening polarization of Hungarian politics; on party preferences and election results; on evolution of inequalities and poverty; on changes in age, education and household structure; on attitudes to social policies and demand for redistribution; on preconditions and consequences of reforms; on consequences of the postponement of reforms; and on many, many more issues. The most recent recollection of individual chapters (published in the form of a *Repertorium* in Kolosi and Tóth, 2018) contains 344 items, to which one could add the 19 chapters of the current volume. All in all, the *Social Report* series has helped readers witness and interpret social and political developments in a country that started out as a regional front runner in the building of liberal democracy and competitive markets, but that, in the past eight years, has performed a U-turn (Kornai, 2015) towards recentralization in public administration and renationalization of the economy, and a curtailment of overall checks and balances in its political system.

The *Social Report* is not a statistical factbook. Though authors are asked to place a strong emphasis on statistical comparisons (time series and cross-national as well), the intention is not to provide full coverage of what is normally the table of contents of a statistical yearbook (we do not intend to compete with the Hungarian Central Statistical Office in this respect). Furthermore, we readily acknowledge that since the Hungarian *Social Report* first appeared, certain relevant topical series have come to be published regularly by other institutes. Thus, for example, readers who are particularly interested in labour market developments and data may find fuller details in the annual Hungarian Labour Market Yearbooks, which have been published since 2000 (most recently Fazekas and Köllő, 2018). Also, the Demographic Portrait of Hungary provides broad coverage of data and interpretations of major demographic trends for those who seek a better understanding of Hungarian demographic trends (see Monostori et al., 2018). In addition, the TÁRKI *Changing Roles* series (most recently Nagy and Pongrácz, 2011) provides an evidence-based

account of the situation facing men and women in Hungary. The continuation of this latter series will shortly be back on the agenda.

The 19 chapters in the current volume are organized into five blocks. Analysis of major social and demographic indicators is followed by observations regarding social structure and social mobility. The third block provides analyses of three vulnerable groups: the young, the poor and the Roma. This is followed by a detailed analysis of outcome indicators of non-material well-being in domains of education, health and housing. The final block is devoted to values and attitudes in various, individually very important fields (norms and rule of law, attitudes to refugees and indicators of xenophobia, party preferences, with special reference to the 2018 general elections, institutional trust in Hungary and EU countries, and also attitudes toward Russia).

Some data used in the analyses come from TÁRKI's own surveys; but many chapters base their analyses on data from other research centres and the Hungarian and European statistical system. We are proud to have roughly half the chapters authored by outstanding invited experts from other Hungarian institutes. A perusal of the affiliations of our authors (listed at the end of the book) gives some idea of the breadth of the social research community represented in this volume. We are especially grateful to all of them for lending their expertise and data to the 2019 Hungarian *Social Report*.

Apart from the 2012 and 2014 reports (when funding came from a foundation and from crowdfunding, respectively), all our previous *Social Reports* were financed by the actual Hungarian government ministry responsible for social and welfare issues. Acknowledgement should therefore go to the State Secretariat for Social Affairs and Social Inclusion at the Ministry of Human Capacities, which has supported the publication of this volume.

The readership of the Hungarian *Social Reports* is very wide. Over its almost three-decade history and 15 volumes, the series has won plaudits both in Hungary and abroad. Its international standing was bolstered by the inclusion of the *Social Report 2016* on a list of the world's 50 best policy study reports produced by a think tank in that year.<sup>1</sup> We are, however, at least as proud of the fact that the series as a whole, including the 2016 issue, is widely referred to in scientific publications and reviewed in the press, and that it has become part of Hungarian public discourse. It appears on university curricula, in the media, in public discourse (political and civilian) – and perhaps, from time to time, also in policy making. We hope this volume lives up to its heritage.

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<sup>1</sup> By the Global Go To Think Tank Index Report of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program of the University of Pennsylvania.

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