

WE ARE IN THE RIGHT PLACE WITH THE POOR

30 years in service

Aid programmes to start in 300 settlements

Workshops creating equal opportunities

THE **ACTIVITIES** OF THE



Hungarian Charity Service
of the Order of Malta

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Three teachings, 30 years, 300 settlements

In 2019, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta marked the 30th anniversary of its foundation. Three decades have passed since 4 February 1989, the day the Sovereign Order of Malta's Hungarian aid organisation was established with thirty-one founding members.

In those days, Father Imre Kozma, founding president of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, was serving at the Zugliget District Church in Budapest. In the 1980s, his students and the members of the community forming around him stepped more and more frequently outside the church, where they had to learn three basic teachings. First: Christianity is not theory, but practice. This meant that it was not enough for the faithful to attend services, they also had to undertake specific charitable tasks. Second: one must not wait with good deeds. Many thought that they first had to become good people, before they could help others. By contrast, Father Imre Kozma taught that one had to help whenever and wherever the opportunity arose. The third teaching warned not to spend too much time weighing up opportunities, because the risk would end up appearing too great. Miracles do not happen to those who wait, but to those who seek them out.

The young Hungarian organisation passed its test in these three teachings in August 1989, when it said yes to admitting East German refugees, and by doing so it launched what was then Europe's greatest humanitarian action. Today, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta is one of Hungary's largest and most prominent aid organisations: it takes care of 13,000 people in its institutions as part of its daily operations, while its volunteers assist hundreds of thousands of people in need every year.

The events of the anniversary did not only serve to conjure up memorable past deeds, but also to hold up a mirror to the organisation: Does it still show the same typical features, now that it has grown to the size of a large-scale enterprise, as back then when it only comprised a few enthusiastic volunteers?

However, there was not much time to celebrate and contemplate. In 2019 the Hungarian Government decided to initiate a programme to support the convergence of the 300 poorest settlements of Hungary. The plan is to begin aid projects seeking customised responses to local problems, based on the model of the

Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, in thirty new locations every year for the next ten years. The most important goal is for children not to follow the fate of their parents, but to receive real opportunities to develop their talents. There are altogether 270,000 people living in these settlements. Albeit symbolically, the Government assigned responsibility for all of them to the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, when it invited this organisation to direct the programme.



Events commemorating the 30th anniversary

On 4 February 2019, the day of 30th anniversary of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, Father Imre Kozma celebrated thanksgiving holy mass at the Zugliget Holy Family Church. The ceremony was an occasion to grant two actively serving volunteers, Sister Terézia Hanzséros and Lászlóné Tamási, the Csilla von Boeselager Award.

On 22nd August, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta celebrated the 30th anniversary of the reception of East-German refugees and the birth of the Charity Service with a festive holy mass in the Central District Franciscan Church and an exhibition entitled “The Day of Reception ‘89” held at the Hungarian National Museum. Over 25,000 people visited the exhibition open until the end of September.

“The mission of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta is the mission of the Church” said Father Imre Kozma at the festive holy mass on 22nd August. At the service falling on the day of the feast of the Virgin Mary, Father Imre Kozma recalled that just as the Blessed Virgin Mary said yes so too those serving others must say yes every day. “We are at the right place with the poor. Our task is not to find another place for ourselves but to ensure that wherever we are present our God and the Church are also present” he said.

After the mass, the celebration participants walked over to the Hungarian National Museum to attend the opening of the “The Day of Reception ‘89” exhibition coorganised with the museum. In his speech, Benedek Varga, General Director of the museum, called the assistance given by Hungary and the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta to the East-German refugees to cross the border in 1989 a historic act. Following his welcome address, Miklós Vecsei, Vice President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, conjured up how many times the building of the Hungarian National Museum had become the symbol of freedom in Hungarian history and how in 1989 the inclusive Hungarian community identified with the East-German refugees’ struggle for freedom. In his commemorations, the Vice President referred to how the community of the Zugliget Parish, the root of the Hungarian Charity Services of the Order of Malta, learnt the values of inclusion, presence and accompaniment from Father Imre Kozma and how it passed a test in them in August 1989 by selflessly helping the East-German refugees. Complimenting Father Imre Kozma, he added “It was him who taught us that Christianity was not a theory but a practice.”

Klaus D. Streicher, Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of Germany in Budapest, recalled how 48,600 refugees received help in Hungary between August and November 1989. He underlined that on 14 August the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta opened its gates to tens of thousands of East-German refugees. The Charge d’Affaires of the Embassy said that this aid operation, then the opening up the borders and the Pan-European Picnic was the celebration of peace.

The 30th anniversary of the opening of the borders was marked in Germany in a series of events organised throughout the year. On 10 September, Berlin was the venue of a ceremony to which Father Imre Kozma, founding president of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, and Lajos Győr-Dani, the organisation’s Executive Vice President, were

The exhibition – organized in honour of the 30th anniversary at the Hungarian National Museum – was visited by 25,000 people in one month.



both invited. At the anniversary event, László Kövér, speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary, and Wolfgang Schäuble, President of the Bundestag, the German Federal Parliament, laid a wreath, as a symbol of German-Hungarian friendship, at the commemorative plaque on the Bundestag's wall dedicated to a unified Germany, independent Hungary and democratic Europe.

On 12 September, the German aid organisation of the Sovereign Order of Malta and the Consulate of Hungary in Munich held a ceremony in the building of Munich's Allerheilige-Hofkirche, with support from the Bavarian provincial government. The commemoration was attended by hundreds of guests. "In 1989, the refugees received not only shelter and food in Zugliget but they also experienced Christian love and could understand the meaning of man's ability to love others more than himself" said Father Imre Kozma,

founding president of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, at the commemoration in Munich.

On 04 November, as part of the series of commemorations of the 30th anniversary, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas visited the national headquarters of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta and, together with Father Imre Kozma, founding president of the Charity Service, and the Maltese volunteers offering help during the East-German refugee crisis in 1989 recalled the Day of Reception. The Minister expressed his gratitude to the Maltese volunteers for their selfless activities during the events of 1989.

Mass of Thanksgiving at Zugliget Church, where the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta was established three decades earlier.



Programme to raise 300 settlements

In the summer of 2019, the Hungarian Government launched its long-term equal opportunities programme, targeting a population of 270,000 living in the 300 poorest settlements of Hungary. Under the Government's decision, the most disadvantaged small rural settlements will have 10 years to join the programme. Work began in the first 31 locations in 2019. Mostly Roma people live in the selected villages: schooling levels and employment rates are both low, and the number of substandard housing exceeds the national average.

The professional basis of the initiative is the Presence Programme of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, which seeks to find practical solutions to problems identified locally and to do social diagnoses for determining the next steps of development, rather than carrying out pre-determined tasks. The Government tasked the Hungarian Charity Services of the Order of Malta with directing the work, in which large church charities and NGOs operating in the settlements are also engaged.

On 27 August, Interior Minister Sándor Pintér, Human Resources Minister Tibor Kásler and Ministerial Commissioner for Convergence Miklós Vecsei, Vice-President of the Hungarian Charity Service of

the Order of Malta, informed the mayors of the settlements about the commencing programme in a meeting held in Tiszabura, where in November of the same year Justice Minister Judit Varga and Secretary of State for EU Affairs Attila Steiner presented the programme's components and objectives to EU countries' ambassadors accredited to Budapest.

The programme will monitor children living in the settlements from the moment of conception until their entry into employment. The basic principle is that those living in the most difficult circumstances must progress faster than the rest, therefore there is a need for the most up-to-date technologies and the latest and best tools, techniques and opportunities. This is showcased by an ophthalmology screening bus equipped with state-of-the-art digital diagnosing technology, a joint project of several ministries and universities, which will travel around the 300 settlements to test children in order to ensure early detection of any diseases. Based on the test results, children of families in need will receive their glasses free of charge.

The head of the carpentry workshop in Tiszabura shows a door made in the workshop, to Sándor Pintér, Minister of the Interior.





Workshops creating equal opportunities

The media, too, took notice of the workshops established by the Charity Service of the Order of Malta in Tiszabura. The Presence Programme has been in place in the village known as one of the poorest settlements of Hungary since 2016, and has set up a joinery shop and a sewing shop as a job creation pilot. Thanks to these facilities, the selected residents have also learnt a trade and today they are engaged in value-creating employment, which has also changed the lives of their families.

The women working in the Tiszabura sewing shop manufactured tens of thousands of glass holders to be worn around the neck for the Budapest Wine Festival held in September. At the popular event, attention was drawn several times to the fact that the glass-holding canvas bags given with the entry passes had been made by the Charity Service of the Order of Malta. Following their introduction at the Wine Festival, the INTER-SPAR chain store began selling environmental-friendly canvas bags manufactured at the Tiszabura sewing shop.

Nine disadvantaged men work at the Tiszabura joinery shop where they manufacture heat-insulated doors and windows, decoration boxes, chairs and benches. During Advent of 2019, they produced unique sound sculptures, modelled after the sound wave graphs of world-famous music works written by iconic figures of music culture, including Zubin Mehta, José Cura, Diana Krall, Iván Fischer or Atala Schöck, who also appended their initials to the sculptures. The Charity Service organisation sold the artworks at a charitable auction organised jointly with the Palace of Arts hosting the world-famous artists' performances in Budapest. The revenues generated from the sale were spent on purchasing new equipment for the joinery shop.



The seamstresses, originally unemployed mothers, gained national acclaim with their bags at the Budapest Wine Festival.

Help to find employment

Since June 2019, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta has been coordinating the Incorpora Hungary Programme through the Máltai Gondoskodás Kft (Maltese Care Limited Liability Company). Jobseekers who are disadvantaged in the labour market, including people with reduced work capacities, homeless and older people and those belonging to the Roma minority, are helped by the programme free of charge in the form of counselling and training. Over 2,600 people participated in the Incorpora Programme – which originated in Spain and was launched in Hungary in 2016 - and by the end of 2019 over 1,000 found employment.

Maltese Symphony in the city of Mozart

Children participating in the Maltese Charity Service's Symphony Programme were invited by the Sovereign Order of Malta to perform in Salzburg, at a sponsored evening event presenting the Order's Roma programme.



Finding each other in suffering: the Maltese in Syria

In February, the Charity Service hosted in Budapest Sister Agnes Mariam de la Croix - founder of the aid organisation belonging to the Monastery of St. James in Syria - who is engaged in wide-ranging humanitarian services in Syria and cooperates closely with the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta as well. Her Order is responsible for operating a hospital restored and expanded with the help of the Charity Service. The Charity Service launched a healthcare aid programme in the eastern district of Aleppo in 2016. The only hospital available in the city's poorest quarter, Al-Nayrab, doubled its capacity with the help of the organisation, and a mobile medical unit donated by the Charity Service provides cost-free healthcare services in the villages around the city.

The activities of the Charity Service in Syria were presented at a photo exhibition in Budapest, which was open between 14 August and 9 September in the House of Dialogue.



Sister Agnes Mariam de la Croix in the Hungarian capital.



Working together for the persecuted

The Hungarian Government and the Sovereign Order of Malta concluded a cooperation agreement to help people living in the most deprived crisis regions of the world. The Declaration of Intent was signed on 24 October 2019 by Tristan Azbej, Secretary of State in charge of assistance to persecuted Christians and implementation of the Hungary Helps Programme, and HE Imre Ugron, Ambassador Extraordinary and

Plenipotentiary of the Sovereign Order of Malta accredited to the Government of Hungary. At the event it was stated that the cooperation was based on the principle of taking help to the locations where it is needed. The programmes, aimed at helping people threatened in their existence and dignity, are expected to be first implemented in the Sub-Saharan, South African, Central African and Middle East regions.



The handbag idea became the campaign of the year

A fundraising, organised for a woman who lives in one of the Charity Service's institutions, turned into a national campaign in weeks.

The #nemluxustaska ("not a luxury bag") fundraising campaign, focusing on the problem of female poverty, closed with resounding success. The initiative called for donations of women's handbags, second-hand but in good condition, filled with basic hygiene products aimed at women for whom the purchase of hygiene items is a daily problem. The originators requested the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta

as a partner to distribute the donations. Initially, they wanted to collect 150 bags, but they received 10.000 packages within a short time as the news of the campaign spread around the country. The Charity Service handed out the donations to homeless women, women in crisis situations, to mothers and to single elderly women. NGOs selected the campaign as the most successful fundraising initiative in 2019.



Festival tents can also be donations

2019 was the second year that the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta removed tents and sleeping bags left behind after the Sziget Festival in Budapest. The organisation's volunteers collected three truckloads of mattresses, sleeping bags, camping chairs and other equipment. The organisation handed out the donations to those in need, homeless people and families living outside the borders of Hungary.



Forgotten children in the spotlight

In autumn 2019, the Charity Service's unit for assistance to addicts organised a one-day professional event under the title "Father, mother and booze – Conference for forgotten children". Estimates suggest that in Hungary about 400,000 children live in the same household with alcohol-dependent parents, hidden, ashamed and forgotten. The programme aims to help these children. Presentations were made at the meeting by well-known and recognised social health professionals directly involved with addicts and the children of addicted parents, who also held workshops and round-table discussions. The event also presented good practices, videos and publications of the Charity Service.

The conference drew attention to a previously unrecognized social problem.

Let's get to know Africa!

In 2018, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta and the Africa Research Centre of Pécs University's Political Science and International Studies Faculty signed a cooperation agreement. Under the agreement, the two organisations will contribute to Hungarian research in Africa through joint research programmes and co-organised domestic and international thematic conferences. The knowledge accumulated by the Research Centre and the Charity Service's experience with water management aid projects implemented in African countries can contribute to future humanitarian programmes.

Cooperation between the university and the Charity Service may influence future years' programmes.



Green light to help

The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta put into service six environment-friendly electric Nissan e-NV 200 Evalia Acenta 5sT vehicles, with support from the Ministry for Innovation and Technology. The organisation will be able to lower the costs of providing help to those in need, by using these cars that can be operated 60% cheaper than petrol-fuelled cars. The cars were presented on 16th December by Lajos Győri-Dani, Executive Vice President of the Charity Service, and Tamás Schanda, Secretary of State of the Innovation and Technology Ministry. The electric cars will be used, among other things, to support the work of street services caring for homeless people, services for with people with disabilities and various youth centres.

Transport costs will decrease significantly thanks to the electric cars.





Thirty years after the reception of East German refugees, the objects recalling the Charity Service's action are placed in the museum.

The activities of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta in 2019

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