

THE DIGNITY **OF SERVICE**



ACTIVITIES OF
THE HUNGARIAN CHARITY
SERVICE OF THE ORDER OF MALTA

2024





THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED IN 2024

I January

In the second week of January, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta presented to the press Budapest's newest homeless care centre, a thousand square metre facility. The three-storey building with triple rooms has an easy-to-clean design, a ventilation

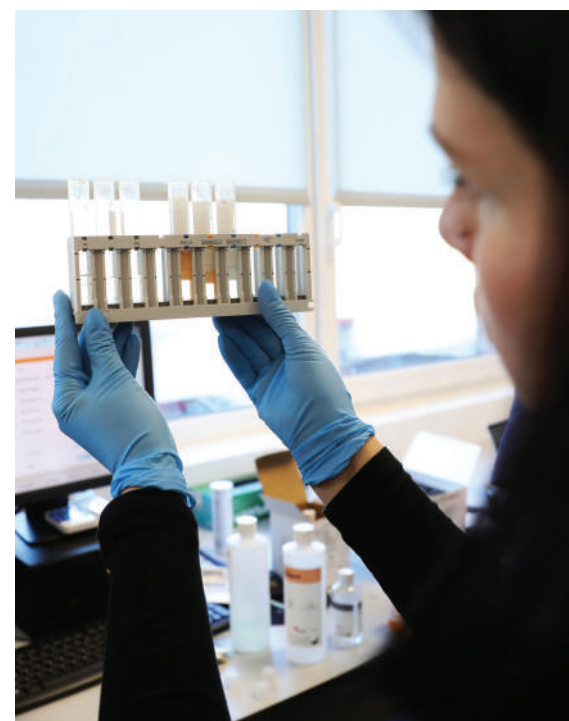


system to keep the air fresh, accessible barrier-free ground floor and wheelchair-accessible bathrooms. The interiors of the facility have been specifically designed under the guidance by homeless support workers.

A joint project with the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta won the main prize at the 4th Doing Good CSR Award, a competition established to promote Corporate Social Responsibility. In the best entry, music students of the Maltese Symphony programme, coming from the most deprived settlements, performed on a truck converted into a stage at the Pécs Light Festival. The truck concert was organised by Universum 8 and Carbon Group agencies in cooperation with WSZL and Volvo Hungária.

The “time gate” of digital primary healthcare opened up in Bicske, said Bence Rétvári, Parliamentary State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior, at the launch ceremony of the new health centre of the Charity Service, built with EU funding. According to the State Secretary, telemedicine care managed from the Bicske-based centre can serve as a good example of how digitalisation, state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment, laboratory and testing tools may be used to accurately diagnose patients remotely, by a doctor from hundreds of kilometres away. Under the telemedicine care introduced as part of the Emerging Settlements programme, mobile clinics bring fully-fledged care directly to people, for whom medical services have for long been hard to access. At the

inauguration ceremony, Lajos Győri-Dani, Executive Vice President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, said that Bicske has Hungary's most advanced health centre, “where no patients are received”, but from where telemedicine vehicles depart directly to the patients. Throughout the year, the Charity Service's telemedicine programme provided medical services to 38 small villages, most of which had been without a family doctor for years.



I February

4 February marked the 35th anniversary of the foundation of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta. As one of the first NGOs established in Hungary after the fall of communism, in three decades it has become the country's leading social and healthcare charitable organisation, caring for about 6,000 homeless people, 3,000 institutionalised elderly, 2,500 disabled people in its daily work, and having 3,000 children, most of them disadvantaged, in its public schools and caring for thousands of needy people through its traditional charitable activities.

Over 1,500 long-term Ukrainian refugees in Hungary received help for a period of one year to establish a new life, within the Charity Service's integration programme. According to the report published on the anniversary of the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the main aim was to enable families to become self-sufficient after a year. The EU-funded programme provides families with rented accommodation, Hungarian language training for children and adults and help in navigating the education and health systems. Family carers accompany the refugees on a daily basis, helping them, for example, when they need to call a mechanic or an interpreter at the

doctor's surgery. A special team is dedicated to helping them to enter the job market, e.g. as mechanics, accountants, operating theatre nurses, pharmacists, language teachers and economists, but most have found jobs in factories or in the construction industry and many as operators. Only a minority have found jobs in their original fields of work, some as nurses' aides, performing artists or purchasing agents.



I March

Father Imre Kozma, Founding President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, received a lifetime achievement award at the Hungarian Parliament. At a ceremony held in memory of János Esterházy, the most prominent Hungarian politician of former Czechoslovakia, who was martyred in prison, the Rákóczi Association awarded Father Imre Kozma the János Esterházy Prize in recognition of his life's work. His career was presented by Miklós Vecsei, Prime Minister's Commissioner, Vice President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, a former disciple of Father Imre Kozma at a ceremony in the Upper House of the Hungarian Parliament.

I April

Tamás Sulyok, President of Hungary, arriving in Rome on the National Pilgrimage organised by the Hungarian Catholic Bishop's Corps met with the Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta. Following his private audience with the Pope, the Hungarian Head of State was received by Fra' John Dunlap, Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta on 26 April.

A joint forum was established by catholic institutional leaders in Budapest to learn about each other's work and jointly prepare for the challenges ahead. The three key Catholic care organisations – the Catholic Relief Service, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta and the Ágota Community – entering into cooperation, together care for 32,000 people in need, one third of all the needy people in the care of Catholic





institutions in Hungary. The founders of the forum will share good practices, exchange information and organise training sessions to learn from one another. The Forum is supported by the Hungarian Catholic Bishops' Conference.



I May

The Máltai Manufaktúra opened its fully-automated, cashierless and vendorless shop at the Fény Street Market in Budapest selling handcrafted delicacies made from vegetables and fruits grown in the villages of the Emerging Settlements programme. The shop, located in the city centre, puts into practice the philosophy of the Emerging Settlements programme, by implementing the latest developments in the most disadvantaged areas as a boost to catch up with the others. Such opportunity-creating, innovative solutions include, for example, the construction of social solar power plants to support environmentally friendly heating, and the use of telemedicine to replace missing GPs in small villages.

I June

The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta supported the development of fifty small businesses in Syria. The Hungarian government-funded programme was aimed at helping to restart life after the 2023 earthquake and previous war damages, contributing to the livelihoods of 5,000 people. In cooperation with

the relief agencies of the Melkite Church in Syria and Bishop Antoine Audo, President of Caritas Syria, the Hungarian Charity Service launched a development programme for small entrepreneurs in severely damaged villages in the area between Homs and the capital, Damascus. The programme supported weavers, carpet-makers, retailers, cooks, spice, tea and herb growers, agricultural and other food production businesses, as well as parishes and monastic communities involved - besides their pastoral and social work - in production. In addition to financial support, some applied for technical assistance, others for technical improvements.

Dániel Solymári, Head of International Relations of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta was awarded a research prize by the American Society for Middle Eastern and African Studies (ASMEA). The award, presented in Washington D.C., was given in recognition of his scientific and professional work in the Middle East as well as for his publications in the field.

A strategic cooperation agreement was signed between the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta and the Faculty of Public Health Services of Semmelweis University. The agreement on joint research work was signed by Lajos Győri-Dani, Executive Vice President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta and Dr. Béla Merkely, Rector of Semmelweis University on 27 June in the University's ceremonial hall. The university and the Charity Service have been in contact for several decades and carried out joint research in a number of fields, including homeless, refugee and elderly care.

I July

Eighteen newly installed social solar power plants were commissioned by the end of July in the outskirts of the most deprived small settlements. By connecting the solar plants - typically located on one hectare-land pieces - to the power grid, the Emerging Settlements programme has begun to prepare for the



coming winter, with the proceeds from the installations going to support the household heating costs of families with young children in need. Prepayment meters were installed in the houses of the affected families, and instead of money, they receive fixed monthly top-ups for electric heating. For this purpose, modern Norwegian heating panels are made available for rent to the families from October to April. As a result of the programme, houses that serve as homes for the youngest children were heated throughout the winter, and there was noticeable reduction in winter air pollution caused by the burning of rags and plastics once firewood is used up. In addition to the social impacts, the programme brings environmental impacts as well. The solar power plants are operated by the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta.

I August

Over 2,000 pieces of left behind camping equipment, typically tents, sleeping bags and camping chairs, were collected by the Charity Service after the Sziget Festival in Budapest. In 2024, for the seventh time, the Charity Service was the key partner of Sziget Festival in reducing the event's carbon footprint. When leaving the festival, attendees were encouraged to drop off their unwanted



tents, mattresses, sleeping bags, blankets, pillows and other camping equipment all week long at the donation point of the Charity Service. After the event, 120 volunteers combed the island to collect good quality items left behind by festivalgoers. A total of 300 tents, 300 mattresses, 170 polyfoams, 180 sleeping bags, 280 blankets, 320 pillows, 240 towels, 400 camping chairs, 15 tables and 30 tarpaulins were collected, to be used at special camps or to be given to homeless people. In addition to good, intact equipment, for the first time, damaged and torn tents and mattresses were also collected and handed over to another nonprofit organisation, to be dismantled and upcycled into backpacks and fanny packs.

A summer camp was organised for disabled people at Lake Balaton by the Charity Service for the first time since the Covid epidemic. Two hundred young people came together for the week-long summer camp. Funds to cover the costs of the camp were raised at the previous year's Budapest Wine Festival Charity Wine Auction, where 20 million HUF was collected, with an additional 4 million HUF raised through adomanyozz.hu website, and another 4.6 million HUF contributed by OMV.





I September

The Charity Service took homeless people to shelter from the flooding River Danube in Budapest, who were rescued before the peak of the flood waters reached the capital's Hajógyári Island and the riverbank area in September. Those with dogs and cats on the island unwilling to part with their pets were rescued by the Charity Service the day before the area flooded, temporarily accommodating the animals in shelters. In addition to the capital, the Maltese Charity Service helped in flood fighting and relief work in Dunabogdány, Tahitótfalu as well as in the surroundings of Mohács, providing supplies to soldiers deployed to the area. Due to the flooding, the Charity Service's elderly care home in Pilismarót became inaccessible by road, but the institution was not threatened by the flooding. Caretakers were transported to the facility on forest roads temporarily opened by the Pilis Park Forestry, while nurses worked 24-hour shifts to replace those absent due to transport difficulties.

At the invitation of President Tamás Sulyok, Fra' John Dunlap, Grand Master of the Sovereign Order of Malta, arrived in Budapest for an official visit and was greeted with military honours at Kossuth Square. During his programme in Hungary, the Grand Master also attended the unveiling of the statue of Blessed Gerard, founder of the Order, at the specialised hospital of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta in Pomáz. The Charity Service took over one of the largest psychiatric hospitals of the country in 2022, renaming it after the founder of the Sovereign Order of Malta. The statue was consecrated by Levente Balázs Martos, Auxiliary Bishop of Esztergom-Budapest Archdiocese and Honorary Chaplain of the Order of Malta. In his speech, he pointed out that the person of Blessed Gerard conveys an important message even today, as already 900 years ago, the founder of the first hospital was looking at the wholeness in people, administering remedy for their physical as well as spiritual sufferings, and the Charity Service's hospital follows his example.



The last residents of Göd Home for the Disabled have received dignified accommodation by the Charity Service. All 200 residents from the central building of the old institution, taken over from the state in 2018, were successfully placed in new homes, with small communities and family-like conditions. The conversion of the institution, transferred in 2018 to be operated by the Maltese Charity Service, was completed with the handover of the last residential buildings, which were unveiled at the end of September 2024. The final phase of the programme, known as Community Inclusion, saw the last residents move into two newly built properties, one for bedridden people with high health risk and the other for people with severe and multiple disabilities and high behavioural risk, receiving personalised care tailored to their needs.



I October

4 October marked the 20th anniversary of the launch of the Charity Service's Presence programme at the Roma settlement in Monor. The helping approach, established during the everyday work two decades before at the settlement called „Tabán” has since become a social care method taught at universities, and its achievements were recognised with the Hungarian Heritage Award in 2016. Over the last two decades, the Charity Service has launched the Presence programme in many disadvantaged neighbourhoods and settlements, including the György Settlement in Pécs, Miskolc-Lyukóvölgy, the former “Pokoli” Tower in Veszprém, Tiszabura and Tiszabő, and it is the basis of the Emerging Settlements programme, aiming to help the three hundred most deprived villages of the country to catch-up.



The Maltese Symphony programme contributes to the catching-up of disadvantaged children as well as to improving their school performance, according to a study published in the 2024/2 edition of *Educatio* magazine. Two university studies within a year confirmed the positive effects of the Maltese Charity Service's music programme. This time, a staff member of the Institute of Education and Cultural Studies of the University of Debrecen conducted interviews with eight mentors and music teachers working in the Maltese Symphony programme and evaluated the responses using data analysis software.

The Charity Service has expanded its fostering network with new foster parents. Twenty-one applicants responded to the call for applications, twelve of those who got approved after background checks and psychological examinations started foster care training. The Charity Service is continuously expanding its fostering network in various regions of the country - in 2024, recruitment took place in Pest County and the capital. The Maltese Families Foster Care Network has been operating for 26 years, with 105 foster families caring for approx. 300 children, including many children with disabilities and multiple disabilities.

The EU-funded Attila Naszlady Health Development Programme launched by the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta won a prestigious award at the RegioStars competition of EU-funded projects in Brussels. The RegioStars Award recognises high-



impact, innovative programmes, sustainable projects serving local communities. Development programmes from all European countries were entered in the competition. The competition, organised by the EU's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy was open to projects implemented between 2014 and 2018 and attracted a record-breaking 262 applications, of which 25 finalists in five categories were shortlisted by a panel of high-level academics in the respective fields. Following the presentations to the jury, the final category winners were announced on 9 October during the 22nd European Week of Regions and Cities. NAEP - Telemedicine in the Most Deprived Communities project was the winner in the category “Social and Inclusive Europe”. The award was received by Ferenc Nagy, Head of the Health Department of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta and Alpár Lázár, Head of the organisation's Resource Centre.

For the seventh time, a professional conference to save the children of addicted parents was organised by the Charity Service for teachers and professionals in day-to-day contact with children ashamed of and hiding their problems. In 2024, 450 participants attended the conference, which is growing more and more prestigious by the year. Around 400,000 children are estimated to live in households with addicted adults in Hungary.





On 17 October - in the 85th year of his life - Father Imre Kozma, Catholic priest, Founding President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, former delegate of the Hungarian Province of the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God and Chaplain of the Hungarian Association of the Knights of Malta passed away. After his death, vigils and prayer services were held at the Charity Service's Budapest headquarters and regional centres, and a temporary memorial was opened in the courtyard of its Szarvas Gábor street headquarters, where anyone could pay their respects. Hundreds of people, including Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Hungarian President Tamás Sulyok, church and state leaders, diplomats, artists and businessmen paid tribute to him on social media. The Founding President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta was laid to rest on 15 November at St. Stephen's Basilica in Budapest, where a funeral mass was said for his repose and then he was buried. The Basilica was packed for the funeral service, with hundreds of people watching the service on a projector outside the main entrance. Father Imre Kozma's coffin was honoured by President Tamás Sulyok, while Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and several members of the government were present at the funeral mass and service. The funeral of the President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta was attended by state and church leaders, ambassadors, business leaders, public figures, representatives of the Sovereign Order of Malta and the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, members of charitable organisations and church communities, volunteers, social and health workers, as well as hundreds of people whose life had been marked by an important meeting with Father Imre Kozma. After the ceremony, the Founding President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta was laid to rest in a tomb in the wall of the crypt of St. Stephen's Basilica. After the funeral, a long line of people filed past his grave to pay their last respects.





November

A new warehouse was added to the Charity Service's logistics centre. The new 1400 square metre hall built with government support can accommodate 700 pallets of goods, and includes a refrigeration and freezer room, as well. The Maltese Charity Service plays an important role in food rescue operations and has delivered the largest amount of food to the needy among the six major charitable organisations participating in the programme, said Miklós Soltész, Minister of State for Church and Nationality Relations of the Prime Minister's Office, at the inauguration ceremony of the new warehouse. He said that in three years, a total of 8,500 tonnes of food had been delivered to people in need by the major charitable organisations. Since 2023, food rescue organisations are supported by budget funds for warehouse building and machinery purchasing.



A relief consignment of durable food, medical equipment and medicines was sent to Lebanon by the Hungary Helps programme in cooperation with the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta. On the return journey, Hungarian and foreign citizens were evacuated from the fighting-stricken country by a Hungarian Defence Forces aircraft. Since 2017, the Charity Service has been implementing programmes to help refugees in Lebanon, installing mobile medical clinics to provide health care to the population living in the camps and launching programmes to educate the children of refugee families, among others.

"Our Unknown Helpers" campaign and exhibition was launched by the Charity Service to recognise and honour the dedication of a hundred thousand people working in the social sector. The event was opened at a joint press conference by the Charity Service and Játékszín Theater on 11 November. Posters displayed in theatres, churches, libraries and markets shared insights into the service of the helpers through photos by photojournalists and literary works by contemporary Hungarian authors. With this, the Charity Service showed its gratitude and respect to the 100,000 dedicated workers of the social sector on the occasion of Social Work Day in 2024.



An Advent Garden was opened by the Charity Service in the centre of Budapest, where a nativity scene, tea, candle-lighting, evening light painting, a variety of stage programmes and a charity fair awaited the visitors.

December

On 11 December, at the headquarters of the organisation, twenty-two co-workers and volunteers received the Ambrózia Award, an award founded by the Charity Service. Since 2018, the Charity Service has been presenting the Ambrózia Award annually to recognise the outstanding work within the organisation in the social, child welfare, child protection, health and charitable fields: it is given to co-workers and volunteers who, through their dedicated work, can be role models for the entire Maltese community.



The Charity Service organised a six-day Christmas donation campaign in over one hundred and fifty SPAR stores in mid-December. The 28th "Adni Örömi!" campaign involved 3,000 volunteers and resulted in 223 tonnes of non-perishable food products donated by customers at the Maltese tables set up behind the store checkouts, which then were distributed as part of 26,000 gift packages to people in need.



THE LIFE GIVEN AWAY

Father Imre Kozma
1940 – 2024

Father Imre Kozma was born on 4 June 1940 in Győrzámoly. He graduated from the Benedictine secondary school in Győr and then entered a seminary for priests. His decision was a serious commitment, as in 1958 young people who chose the priestly vocation could be sure that they would be harassed and persecuted by the state security authorities.

Father Imre Kozma was ordained a priest in 1963. His sermons appealed to many, and the church was packed to full capacity during his speeches addressing young adults. After his transfer to the parish Church of the Holy Family in Zugliget, hundreds of people attended his classes, where he taught that “Christianity is not only theory, but practice, and we must live out our faith outside the walls of the church in everyday life”. The members of the community had to take on specific tasks of help, thereby establishing a volunteer network, which later came to be the basis of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta.

In 1989, the Charity Service opened the first refugee camp for East German families in the garden of the church in Zugliget, launching the largest humanitarian action in Europe at the time, during which 48,000 refugees were accepted in Hungary. During the Romanian Revolution, the Charity Service delivered aid shipments to settlements in need, and during the Yugoslav wars it resettled hospital wards, residential institutions and large numbers of civilians in Hungary. Hundreds of volunteers responded to Father Imre Kozma’s appeals, while local volunteer groups were set up across the country. In three and a half decades, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta has become one of the largest charitable organisations in Hungary, building up a network of social, educational as well as health care services, caring for an average of 17,000 people a day in its institutions and through its volunteer groups.

In 1997, Father Imre Kozma requested his admission to the Hospitaller Order of Saint John of God, which under his leadership has grown to become a key participant of healthcare through its hospitals. He became a monk at the age of fifty-seven, at an age when most people readily plan their retirement, and set his sights on reviving Christian medicine. He led the Order’s national organisation until the age of 82.

In 2013, in preparation for the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination, he walked the stations of his priestly ministry, making a 140-kilometre pilgrimage at the age of 73, accompanied by a fellow monk. His work has been recognised more than thirty times with prestigious awards. In 1996, he was elected Man of the Year, in 2003 he was awarded the Central Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit, in 2005 he received the Prima Primissima Award, in 2010 he was awarded the French Legion of Honour, in 2016 the European Citizenship Award, and several local authorities have conferred the title of Honorary Citizen on Father Imre Kozma.

