

Summary of Case Report AJB-4635/2021

OPCAT visit to the Assisted Living Centre for the Elderly of the “Gondoskodás” Social Care Centre in Csáfordjánosfa

On 5 August 2021, the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights acting in his capacity as National Preventive Mechanism (hereinafter: NPM) and his staff visited without announcement the Assisted Living Centre for the Elderly of the “Gondoskodás” Social Care Centre in Csáfordjánosfa (hereinafter: “Elderly Home” or “Institute”).

The residents in the Elderly Home have been isolated from the outside world due to the prohibition of visits and leave introduced because of the Covid-19 epidemic. The NPM, considering the “do no harm” principle, visited the Elderly Home only after the slowdown of the third wave of the epidemic. The aim of the visit was to inspect the living circumstances of the residents, and whether their protection against the Covid-19 infection was ensured. The aspects of the inspection covered the health and psychological condition of the residents, their activities, catering, and also the number and working conditions of the staff caring for them.

During the visit, the NPM made 29 interviews with the members of the staff and the residents.

From the residents, 15 persons lived with dementia, 3 of them with a serious condition, 1 person in mid-stage dementia. Another 5 persons had visual impairment, 1 person had hearing impairment, 11 residents lived with motoric disabilities, while 8 residents had intellectual disabilities.

The rooms of the Elderly Home are in two buildings surrounded by a big park. Within the old castle building, there lived 31 residents, those who were confined to bed were placed in this building. The castle building was not accessible, the second floor could only be reached by stairs. Within the pavilion-building there lived 19 residents.

As far as the personnel is concerned, 4 nurses, 5 carers and 2 assistant carers worked in the Institute. The number of nurses and carers did not reach the number prescribed by SzCsM (Ministry of Social and Family Affairs) Decree No. 1/2000 (I. 7.) on the technical tasks and operational conditions of the social institutions providing personal care. The employment of one social worker was in compliance with the headcount required by the provisions of the SzCsM Decree but this staff member also performed the tasks of the head of unit. It would be advisable to employ a mental hygiene expert in a full-time position, in order to do the tasks related to the mental health of the residents. With regard to the number of residents with reduced mobility and male residents, it was unacceptable that no male carer worked at the Elderly Home at all.

The Institute managed to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 infection, they localized the disease in the appropriately equipped isolation room. The residents who caught the disease were properly cared for, by the carers wearing protective equipment and relatives could visit the patients who were in their terminal stage as well.

With regard to catering, the visit established that the food made in the kitchen of the Home was delicious, and it was consumed with pleasure by the residents and by the members of the personnel as well. The visit also established that the breakfasts and dinners, and also, the fruit given to the residents in the afternoon were not varied enough.

There were many residents who did not have contact with their relatives because they could not handle the mobile phones, or the signals were not received in the area. In the case of several residents, the emotional links to the relatives were terminated since the move into the Elderly Home. The technical difficulties could be overcome with the broader use of the landline

phone of the Home. The personnel of the Institute could help contact the relatives of the residents and re-establish their relationships.

Those residents who could not get into the wheelchair on their own could not go outside. The leisure time activities organised for the residents were suspended due to the pandemic and had not been relaunched until the date of the visit. The residents usually spend their days watching the television or doing individual activities (reading, needlework), there are no joint programmes.

In order to encourage the development of emotional ties and bonding, it is advisable to establish a conjugal room within the Home.