



# INTEGRATED SUMMER CAMPS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

**Hungarian Red Cross**

## CASE STUDY

Photo description: Children participating in Hungarian Red Cross summer camp activities  
Photo credit: Hungarian Red Cross

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## Background

The Bács-Kiskun county branch of the Hungarian Red Cross has been organizing and implementing an integrated summer camp for children with physical disabilities, other disabilities, and socially disadvantaged backgrounds living in the county for 44 years. Over the decades, the program has become not only a tradition but also an irreplaceable community value.

The camp operates with a consciously integrated approach. Experience shows that the shared participation of children with disabilities and children without disabilities that are socially disadvantaged not only shapes the children's attitudes but also contributes in the long term to building a more inclusive and responsible society. To preserve this balance, the proportion of children without disabilities is set at 10–15% of the total number of participants.

Since 2022, following the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis, refugee children and their mothers have also been welcomed to the camp with the support of interpreters. Having experienced severe trauma, these families benefit from the camp's accepting environment, which provides at least one week of emotional relief, new experiences, and a supportive community, positively influencing their future well-being.

## Who was Supported and How

The camp's program are designed based on the principles of experiential learning and equal opportunities, ensuring that everyone can fully enjoy the camp. Examples include:

- "Fox Hunt" team game
- Arts and crafts sessions (textile utility items, beading, bracelet weaving)
- Face painting, glitter tattoos, hair braiding
- Red Cross competition
- Road safety competition with the contribution of the Bács-Kiskun County Accident Prevention Committee
- Bouncy castle activities
- Camp Olympics (relay and obstacle races on the shore and in the water)
- Pavement drawing
- Celebration of each participant's name day and birthday
- Costume parade
- Group ice cream outings, giant pancake event, walks, swimming, singing, and dancing
- Concert by Mario the accordionist

During the evaluation of the programs, special attention was paid to maintaining equal opportunities among children with different abilities and conditions, as well as to continuously motivating and rewarding participants.

Thanks to the Giant Blanket crocheting community, each child was able to take home a handmade blanket as a gift, symbolizing care, warmth, and community support.

## Successes

In 2026, the camp will be organized for the 45th time, representing one of the most significant social initiatives of the county organization. For many participating children, the camp is one of the few periods of the year when they can experience a sense of belonging in a safe, inclusive, and supervised environment.

Also in 2026, the camp will provide the venue for 110 participants, including 85 children and 25 caregivers, who will attend the camp.

## Challenges and Difficulties

Every year, one of the biggest challenges is finding the resources to make the camp happen. Months of careful planning go into ensuring that everything runs smoothly and that each child has a chance to enjoy a meaningful and fun experience.

Medical issues are almost inevitable. There are always a few participants who need to see a doctor—sometimes for something as simple as a urinary tract infection or an ear infection that requires antibiotics. During the humanitarian crisis, there was a moment that stood out: a refugee child needed medical attention, but it was unclear under what legal framework medication could be prescribed. Situations like this remind us that even routine care can become complicated.

## Lessons Learned

1. **Integration of children with and without disabilities together enhances inclusion** and opportunities of children of different backgrounds to connect.
2. **Local partnerships enhance the quality** and positive experience of the camps. For instance, local Traffic Services to teach children road safety skills or local donors that provide blankets.
3. **There are few summer camp opportunities for children with disabilities** or chronic illnesses. Caring for a child with severe disabilities or significant social challenges is a responsibility many hesitate to take on.. These experiences have underlined the importance of patience, preparation, and creativity to make the camp truly inclusive.