

# INVOLVEMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL WORKERS IN THE DEFENCE SECTOR DURING THE FIRST WAVE OF COVID-19 IN KÖBÁNYA, BUDAPEST

**DOI** <https://doi.org/10.29068/HO.2024.1-2.36-47>

**AUTHOR** Zoltán Dániel, Municipality of Kőbánya, Defence and Public Safety Officer (ORCID: 0000-0002-0338-6178, MTMT: 10083944)

**KEYWORDS** COVID-19, public safety officer, kindergarten, school, lockdown, municipal defence

**ABSTRACT** *In the course of its measures to curb the spread of the epidemic, the government has decided to close numerous institutions<sup>1</sup> or handed over the decision to the mayors in charge of defence.<sup>2</sup> On 17 March 2020, following the decision of mayors in several districts, the local government of the capital decided to close the lockable playgrounds in addition to the educational institutions and draw parents' attention to avoid using the playgrounds temporarily.<sup>3</sup>*

*In addition to implementing the decision, mayors had to do something to ensure the livelihoods of many institutional workers. In Kőbánya, this problem was remedied by involving institutional workers in defence. In this article, the author intends to present this process and its effects.*

## INTRODUCTION

A few days after the state of danger had been declared on 11 March 2020,<sup>4</sup> the government issued a resolution calling on the Minister of Human Resources

and the Minister of Innovation and Technology to take action in schools – with a few exceptions – from 16 March 2020 and organize education outside the

1 1102/2020. (III. 14.) Korm. határozat a koronavírus miatt a köznevelési és szakképzési intézményekben új munkarend bevezetéséről.

2 46/2020. (III. 16.), Korm. rendelet az élet- és vagyónbiztonságot veszélyeztető tömeges megbetegedést okozó humánjárvány megelőzése, illetve következményeinek elhárítása, a magyar állampolgárok egészségének és életének megóvása érdekében elrendelt veszélyhelyzet során teendő intézkedésekről (III.).

3 „BUDAPEST Portál,” 2020.03.17., Gyermekétkeztetés, játszótér bezárás, nyári menetrend a BKV-nál. Letöltés dátuma: 2020.05.22., forrás: <https://budapest.hu/Lapok/2020/gyermeketkeztetes-jatszoter-bezaras-nyari-menetrend-a-bkv-nal.aspx>.

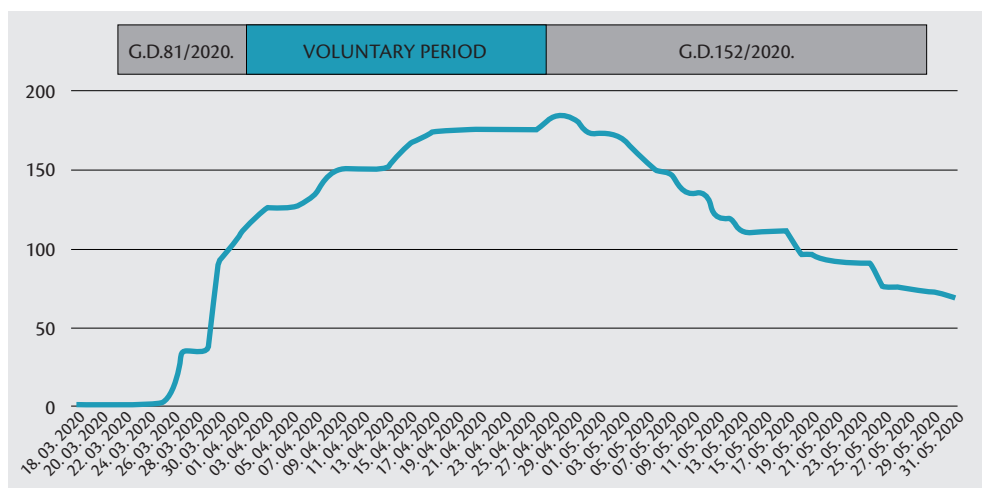
4 40/2020. (III. 11.) Korm. rendelet veszélyhelyzet kihirdetéséről.

classrooms with a digital work schedule,<sup>5</sup> so that the territorially competent School District Center can organize the day-to-day supervision of children and pupils in small groups.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, it provided an opportunity for mayors to close their kindergartens and nurseries if they thought it necessary.<sup>7</sup> Thus, all educational institutions in Kőbánya were closed.

On 1 April 2020, the time and legal possibility to close nurseries and kindergarten institutions also came, which could be decided by the mayors responsible for defence.<sup>8</sup> During the lockdown

of nurseries and kindergartens, the mayor of Kőbánya offered the institutional workers of the municipality the option of counting their days spent as volunteers as working days if they registered as volunteers to help the residents of the district in order to prevent the institutional workers from earning less in this situation than their usual salary. This led to a mass application, as shown in Figure 1.

According to a government decree issued at the end of April 2020, in municipalities where the mayors had decided to close kindergartens and nurseries,



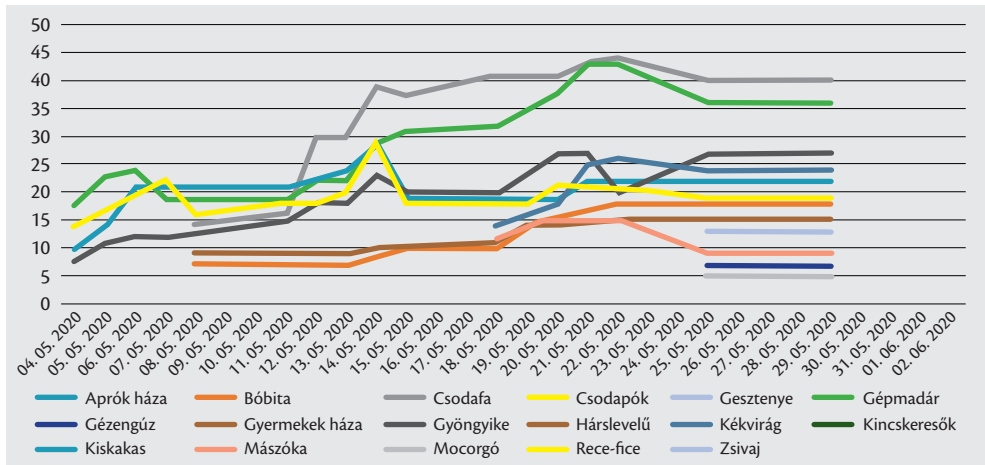
**Figure 1.** The evolution of the registration of institutional volunteers between 18 March 2020 and 31 May 2020 (source: Municipality of Kőbánya; created by Zoltán Dániel)

5 1102/2020. (III. 14.) Korm. határozat a koronavírus miatt a köznevelési és szakképzési intézményekben új munkarend bevezetéséről.

6 1102/2020. (III. 14.) Korm. határozat a koronavírus miatt a köznevelési és szakképzési intézményekben új munkarend bevezetéséről.

7 46/2020. (III. 16.), Korm. rendelet az élet- és vagyonsbiztonságot veszélyeztető tömeges megbetegedést okozó humánjárvány megelőzése, illetve következményeinek elhárítása, a magyar állampolgárok egészségének és életének megóvása érdekében elrendelt veszélyhelyzet során teendő intézkedésekről (III.).

8 81/2020. (IV. 1.) Korm. rendelet az egészség és élet megóvása, valamint a nemzetgazdaság helyreállítása érdekében elrendelt veszélyhelyzettel kapcsolatos rendkívüli intézkedésekről.



**Figure 2.** Changes in the number of children in need of care by institution (date/person/institution) (source: Municipality of Kőbánya, created by Zoltán Dániel)

there was a need for providing care for children<sup>9</sup> who meet the criteria set out in the government decree,<sup>10</sup> with a view to improving the epidemiological situation. Thus, within the on-call system, we also opened the institutions in the district, always only in the required amount, gradually,<sup>11</sup> as shown in Figure 2.

This led to a gradual decrease in the number of institutional volunteers, as shown in Figure 1.

Secretary of State for Public Education Zoltán Maruzsa announced in a video statement on 20 May 2020 that kindergartens and nurseries would gradually reopen and return to normal

operation.<sup>12</sup> This was the date of 2 June 2020 for Kőbánya.<sup>13</sup> With the complete reopening, we lost almost all of our institutional volunteers of defence, as shown in Figure 1.

As you can see, Figure 2 shows a decrease in the number of children in need of care in a few institutions. This is not because fewer children would have required the on-call system, but due to the fact that, in accordance with legal requirements, only on-call groups could be provided. So, if the number of group rooms required exceeded the number of group rooms available, another institution was reopened, and thus the num-

9 152/2020. (IV. 27.) Korm. rendelet a veszélyhelyzet során a gyermekek napközbeni felügyeletével kapcsolatos intézkedésekről.

10 152/2020. (IV. 27.) Korm. rendelet a veszélyhelyzet során a gyermekek napközbeni felügyeletével kapcsolatos intézkedésekről.

11 152/2020. (IV. 27.) Korm. rendelet a veszélyhelyzet során a gyermekek napközbeni felügyeletével kapcsolatos intézkedésekről.

12 koronavirus.gov.hu, „Fokozatosan nyitnak az óvodák, a tanév végéig marad a digitális munkarend,” 2020. Letöltés dátuma: 2020.05.22., forrás: : <https://koronavirus.gov.hu/cikkek/fokozatosan-nyitnak-az-ovodak-tanev-vegeig-marad-digitalis-munkarend>.

13 215/2020. (V. 20.) Korm. rendelet az óvodák és bölcsődék újranyitásáról, valamint a nyári táborok megszervezéséről.

ber of children in the given institution decreased. Opening more institutions triggered further decline in the number of institutional volunteers (Figure 1), especially if the institution that was reopened was the original institution attended by the children concerned.

However, in the middle phase of the chronology outlined so far, we involved our institutional employees who applied for volunteer work in several defence tasks. What kind of defence tasks were these? I set up hypotheses about the expected tasks.

## HYPOTHESES

At the start of the pandemic, following the declaration of a state of danger in March, several tasks were left to local governments, and even more problems awaited to be resolved by those in charge of defence. In a situation unprecedented in the last hundred years, they had to endure. In the absence of experience, it was necessary to set up hypotheses about the different tasks. It was not different with our institutional workers either.

H1: I thought that in order to stop the spread of the epidemic, it would be necessary to close educational institutions and restrict their services. This would bring the forced release of our institutional staff. In my opinion, the majority

of workers would benefit from the opportunity provided to them by the municipality, i.e., the offer to recognize volunteering as normal temporary work, and their majority would be technical workers due to the lower wages and more precarious livelihoods.

H2: I assumed that volunteers who could be involved would be out of the younger age group, under 50, due to the nature of the tasks and the vulnerability.

H3: Besides defence, the municipality also had to think about the socially deprived residents. I thought that many residents would request hot lunch delivery, a task that our institutional workers would perform to ensure the safety of residents requesting assistance.

## RESEARCH METHODS

In my article, I try to present the work of the defence planner and organizer by analyzing local regulations and measures based on the changing government measures during the time of defence, while analyzing and comparing the data collected during this period, or even comparing them with the values in my hypotheses.

Data were collected between 11 March 2020 and 18 June 2020. Unfortunately, I was not able to collect data throughout

the whole two years because the government measures affecting local governments did not include many tasks in the period after June 2020. Therefore, local governments did not continue to perform many defence tasks and take measures that could have provided additional data; or that the safeguard measures developed on the basis of previous data could have been confirmed or refuted.

During the research in the above-mentioned period, I collected and systematized

data from the Municipality of Kőbánya (the 10<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest) and its human service provider. Some of these data are of public interest and the rest could be published only with authorization received from the local government, considering data protection aspects. This article does not contain protected or encrypted data.

While supporting or refuting my hypotheses, I examine governmental regulations, decrees, and measures, and compare them with statistical data obtained from the local government, bearing in mind the changes in this examined legal environment. I evaluate the collected data with basic mathematical and statistical methods and I represent them in diagrams.

## INSTITUTIONAL VOLUNTEERS IN DEFENCE

Government decrees issued during the announced state of danger classified first those over the age of seventy as at-risk<sup>14</sup> but later the government modified access restrictions as the defence progressed, introducing an access period from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. for those over the age of sixty-five to protect their health.<sup>15</sup> To be able to fulfill its obligation to protect the residents, our local government started to register the applicants for help from the district on 18 April 2020. The registration could be made by the person in need or a close relative at an email address (segitseg@kobanya.hu) specially created for this purpose or by dialing the municipal landline number (+36 1 4338 364) designated for these calls. Our municipality tried to help the registrants with shopping, buying medicine, postal services, walking dogs, etc.

The number of volunteers out of the civilian residents increased gently from the day the registration was opened, and did not decrease significantly during the first wave. In comparison, the

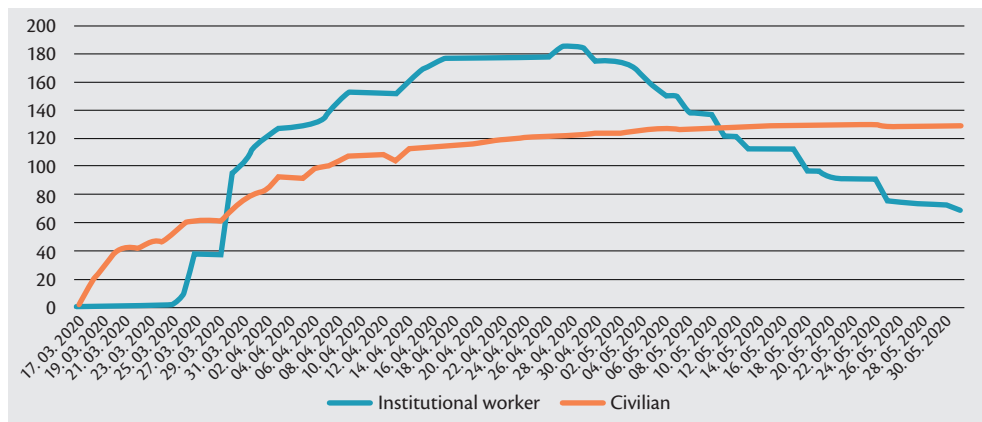
registration of our institutional volunteers increased abruptly from the time they were given the opportunity, then this desire to apply significantly slowed down, and for the reasons discussed in the introduction, it started to decrease significantly. These registration curves are illustrated in the diagram below (Figure 3).

I had to keep an accurate, up-to-date database of our registered institutional volunteers because their salary and livelihood depended on the number of residents in need connected to them and their performance during the volunteer hours they worked. As for civilian resident volunteers, accurate and up-to-date knowledge of their data was needed to plan and organize protection tasks to provide safety care for those in need.

The main task of the civilian resident volunteers was to provide care to the registered people in need (shopping, buying medicine, etc.), while the main tasks of the institutional volunteers were to deliver hot meal, distribute masks, disseminate public information, and provide

---

14 45/2020. (III. 14.) Korm. rendelet az élet- és vagyónbiztonságot veszélyeztető tömeges megbetegedést okozó humánjárvány megelőzése, illetve következményeinek elhárítása, a magyar állampolgárok egészségének és életének megóvása érdekében elrendelt veszélyhelyzet során teendő intézkedésekről (II.).  
15 71/2020. (III. 27.) Korm. rendelet a kijárási korlátozásról.



**Figure 3.** *Distribution of volunteers by type (Institutional worker/Civilian)*  
(source: Municipality of Kőbánya; created by Zoltán Dániel)

nursing services in the Municipality’s Home for the Elderly. Of course, there was an overlap between the main tasks performed by the two types, so there were civilian volunteers who sewed

masks, but there were also institutional volunteers who, in addition to their main task, also helped the residents of the district with shopping and bought medicine (Figure 5).

### *Hot meal delivery*

In addition to the ones listed above, our municipality also tried to take care of those who asked for help by preparing and delivering hot lunch. The mayor informed the applicants about this option, which was available from 14 April 2020, in a letter delivered by the volunteers.

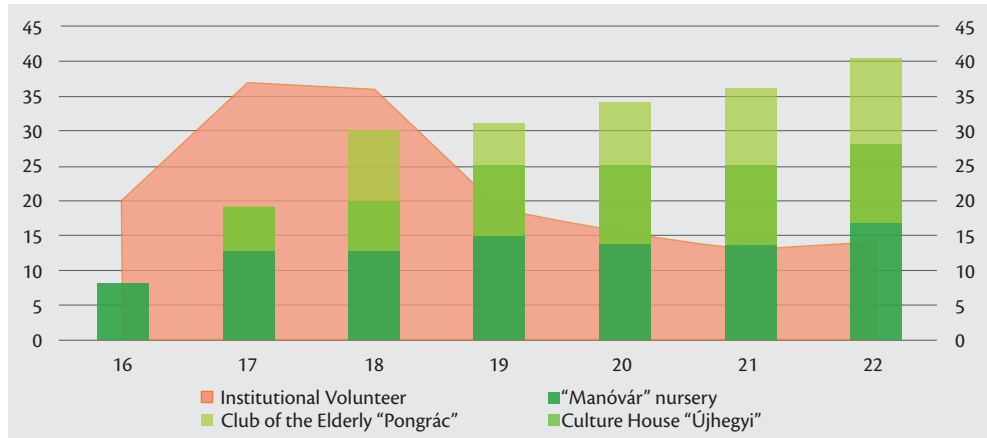
Hot lunch was cooked and packed in the kitchen of our nursery, named “Manóvár”, which already met the appropriate health standards, from where the ordered portions were delivered to the addresses of those who asked for help via our institutional volunteers. In preparation for being able to deliver lunch to all corners of the district on time, we designated distribution points. In the end, only three points needed to be opened.

One was the “Manóvár” nursery itself, the second was the Club of the Elderly

located in the “Pongrác” housing estate, and the third was the Culture House located in the middle of the “Újhegyi” housing estate.

The combined chart below (Figure 4) shows how many volunteers delivered how many lunches from which distribution point between week 16 and week 22. This chart also shows the decrease in the number of volunteer institutional workers, which was mentioned earlier and can also be seen in Figure 1.

As it can be seen in the diagram (Figure 4), there was an increasing emphasis on resource efficiency in the organization of volunteers, as opposed to the former “quasi-waste”. The change in the “Institutional Volunteer” data in the chart fully reflects this change. While initially there were plenty of volunteers every day, even for each food delivery, by



**Figure 4.** Hot meal delivery distribution (Weekly serving/Volunteer/Distribution point) (source: Municipality of Kőbánya; created by Zoltán Dániel)

the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> weeks we could barely organize enough volunteers, and the initial volume of food orders also increased fivefold.

As defence progressed in line with the government measures,<sup>16</sup> our municipality maintained the voluntary system of care for applicants until 2 June 2020 but did not leave district residents in need. The mayor informed them in a letter

that anyone who feels that they still need help due to their age or health condition as part of their normal care, should contact the Bárka Municipal Human Services Center with confidence and seek help. Between 14 April and 29 May, the municipality delivered a total of 962 servings of hot meals to the residents in need, with a total of 154 institutional volunteers employed.

#### *Providing the residents with protective equipment*

The declared state of danger handed over protection tasks to the mayors,<sup>17</sup> so the management was obliged to provide protective equipment in the home for the elderly and the district health care system

and to consider providing the residents with protective equipment, as the spread of infectious diseases could be avoided by using these tools.<sup>18</sup> It is true that in the event of an epidemic, in the event of a

16 211/2020. (V. 16.) Korm. rendelet a fővárosi védelmi intézkedésekről.

17 1997. évi CLIV törvény az egészségügyről, Magyar Közlöny, 1997.

18 18/1998. (VI. 3.) NM rendelet a fertőző betegségek és a járványok megelőzése érdekében szükséges járványügyi intézkedésekről.



health emergency,<sup>19</sup> care is a state task<sup>20</sup> carried out through government offices;<sup>21</sup> nevertheless, the available reserve of resources, which is far from sufficient in relation to the population, justified the involvement of local governments.

The Municipality of Kőbánya tried to get as many suitable masks as it could, but it was not always possible to buy the one that provided maximum protection. Therefore, we bought several masks from several sources, and our municipality also received masks as a donation to perform its tasks. From the end of May 2020, our local government also started making its own masks, for which the raw material, printed with the “X” logo of the district on it, was provided by the local government to the volunteers applying for mask sewing. But as a result

of the work of enthusiastic volunteers, several institutions of the district sewed and donated hundreds of masks to the local government so that it could fulfill its defence obligations and tasks.

One of the defining tasks of our volunteers who applied after the lockdown of our institutions was to provide the residents with protective equipment on a weekly basis. Our local government fulfilled this mandatory task<sup>22</sup> via distributions coordinated by the public security officer at more popular sites in the district. Following the reopening of the institutions and the abolition of the purchase time zone, this distribution of protective equipment ceased. Instead, our staff who returned to their institutions provided the parents accompanying their children with masks in the morning.

### *Nursing services in the Municipality’s Home for the Elderly*

Unfortunately, during the first wave of the pandemic, the virus also appeared in many nursing homes. To curb this, a ban on visits to institutions was imposed. This measure was also introduced to protect the inmates in the municipally-maintained nursing home in the district. Quarantine rooms were set up in the institution and a disinfection station was set up at the entry. In addition, all workers were subjected to regular PCR testing. It took 24 hours while the results arrived, so additional human resources were needed to take care of the elderly.

To meet this need, the municipality provided additional volunteer staff for the nursing home from among the institutional staff who had a valid health booklet and a medical degree.

In addition, a minibus was provided with chauffeur service (also by the help of an institutional volunteer) in order to avoid traffic-related infections. The minibus transported the workers from their homes at the beginning of the working hours and then took all workers home at the end of the working hours. It protected both the workers and the residents of the nursing home.

19 18/1998. (VI. 3.) NM rendelet a fertőző betegségek és a járványok megelőzése érdekében szükséges járványügyi intézkedésekről.

20 18/1998. (VI. 3.) NM rendelet a fertőző betegségek és a járványok megelőzése érdekében szükséges járványügyi intézkedésekről.

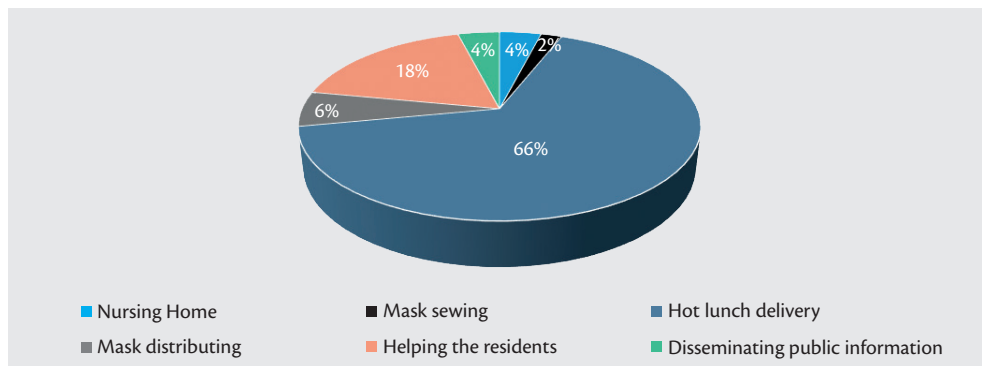
21 18/1998. (VI. 3.) NM rendelet a fertőző betegségek és a járványok megelőzése érdekében szükséges járványügyi intézkedésekről.

22 1997. évi CLIV törvény az egészségügyről, Magyar Közlöny, 1997.



This type of volunteer employment was maintained by our municipality until the ban on visiting nursing homes was lifted. With these protec-

tion measures, we managed to ensure that none of our elderly inmates or employees got infected with the coronavirus.



**Figure 5.** Distribution of institutional volunteers by the performed tasks (source: Municipality of Kőbánya; created by Zoltán Dániel)

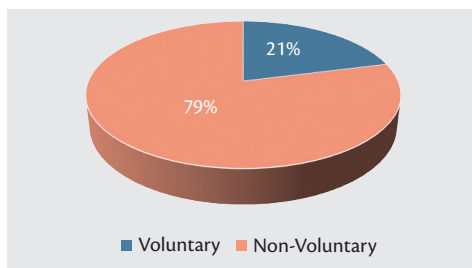
## CONCLUSION

Regarding institutional workers, I believed at the start of the first wave of the pandemic that due to institutional lockdowns, the majority of workers would take advantage of this opportunity and most of them would be technical workers due to lower wages and more precarious livelihoods (H1). The first of the two diagrams below (Figure 6) shows the distribution of our institutional workers involved in volunteering and those who did not volunteer. Based on the data in this chart, it is clear that only 21% of our institutional workers participated in any activity as volunteers of defence, while the second chart (Figure 7) provides an answer to the question as to which occupation the members of our institutional staff involved in volunteering in defence follow. According to this, 69% of our institutional volunteers were technical workers.<sup>23</sup>

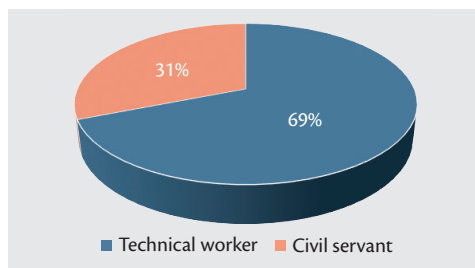
Based on these data, my attitude to the number of volunteers was too positive, which could have caused a significant shortage of human resources in the planning of defence. Fortunately, it was possible to defend with this number of people.

Regarding the age groups of institutional volunteers, I believed that those volunteers who could be involved would come from the age group under 50 due to the nature of the tasks and the vulnerability (H2). To test this assumption, it was necessary to examine the age of the applicants and summarize it in a graph. The chart (Figure 8) shows that those in their 40s were represented the most and those in their 10s and 60s the least. This is because people in their 10s (18 and 19) are present in our institutions in small numbers as employees, while the vast

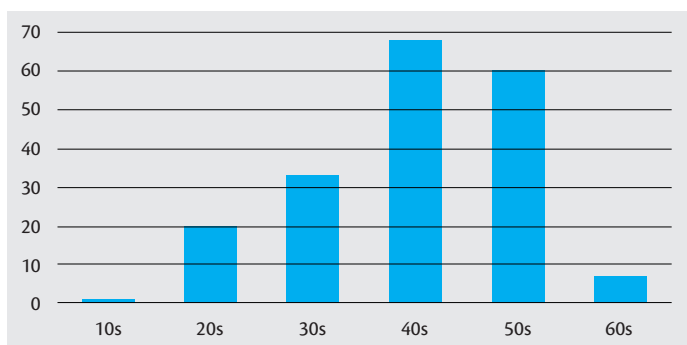
<sup>23</sup> Data from the HR Department of the Municipality of Kőbánya in 2020.



**Figure 6.** Distribution of voluntary and non-voluntary institutional staff (source: Municipality of Kőbánya; created by Zoltán Dániel)



**Figure 7.** Job distribution of institutional volunteers (source: Municipality of Kőbánya; created by Zoltán Dániel)

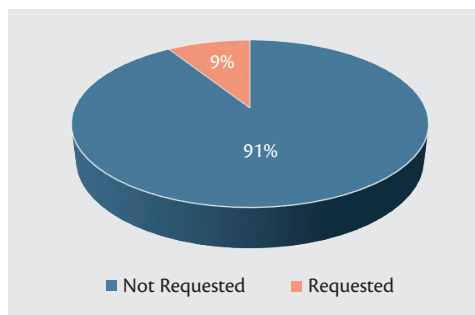


**Figure 8.** Age distribution of institutional volunteers (source: Municipality of Kőbánya; created by Zoltán Dániel)

majority of people in their 60s can retire, so their employment at the Municipality ends.

In the case of my third hypothesis (H3), I believed that many residents in need would ask for hot lunch delivered. During normal operating order, the Bárka Municipal Human Services Center provides hot meals to those in need. This meant providing regular lunches for 180 people throughout the whole year in 2019.<sup>24</sup> During the first wave of defence, for three months in 2020, volunteers from institutional staff provided lunch for 137 people. During this period, the Bárka Municipal Human Services Center continued

to provide hot lunch to its employees. The municipality has thus delivered a total of 962 servings of hot meals to its



**Figure 9.** Percentage distribution of hot lunch orders (source: Municipality of Kőbánya; created by Zoltán Dániel)

<sup>24</sup> BÁRKA Municipal Human Services Center's report from 2019.

residents in need of assistance, which may seem outstanding.

The chart (Figure 9) shows that although based on the figures described above, the number of claimants and hot lunches delivered may seem large, in fact it fell far behind my expectations, with only 9% of registered helpers requesting daily hot lunch delivery.

Summarizing the evaluation of my hypotheses, I can state that my suggestions based on inexperience were supported by the figures to a very small extent. However, the examination of these issues, the discovery of the errors in the assumptions, and the collected data can provide a good basis for planning future defence tasks.

#### REFERENCES

1997. évi CLIV törvény az egészségügyről, Magyar Közlöny, 1997.
- 18/1998. (VI. 3.) NM rendelet a fertőző betegségek és a járványok megelőzése érdekében szükséges járványügyi intézkedésekről.
- 40/2020. (III. 11.) Korm. rendelet veszélyhelyzet kihirdetéséről.
- 45/2020. (III. 14.) Korm. rendelet az élet- és vagyonbiztonságot veszélyeztető tömeges megbetegedést okozó humánjárvány megelőzése, illetve következményeinek elhárítása, a magyar állampolgárok egészségének és életének megóvása érdekében elrendelt veszélyhelyzet során teendő intézkedésekről (II.).
- 46/2020. (III. 16.) Korm. rendelet az élet- és vagyonbiztonságot veszélyeztető tömeges megbetegedést okozó humánjárvány megelőzése, illetve következményeinek elhárítása, a magyar állampolgárok egészségének és életének megóvása érdekében elrendelt veszélyhelyzet során teendő intézkedésekről (III.).
- 71/2020. (III. 27.) Korm. rendelet a kijárási korlátozásról.
- 81/2020. (IV. 1.) Korm. rendelet az egészség és élet megóvása, valamint a nemzetgazdaság helyreállítása érdekében elrendelt veszélyhelyzettel kapcsolatos rendkívüli intézkedésekről.
- 152/2020. (IV. 27.) Korm. rendelet a veszélyhelyzet során a gyermekek napközbeni felügyeletével kapcsolatos intézkedésekről.
- 211/2020. (V. 16.) Korm. rendelet a fővárosi védelmi intézkedésekről.
- 215/2020. (V. 20.) Korm. rendelet az óvodák és bölcsődék újranyitásáról, valamint a nyári táborok megszervezéséről.
- 1102/2020. (III. 14.) Korm. határozat a koronavírus miatt a köznevelési és szakképzési intézményekben új munkarend bevezetéséről.
- Budapest portál, 2020. március 17.: Gyermekekétkezés, játszótérbezárás, nyári menetrend a BKV-nál. <https://budapest.hu/Lapok/2020/gyermeketkeztetes-jatszoter-bezaras-nyari-menetrend-a-bkv-nal.aspx>. (A letöltés időpontja: 2020. május 22.)
- Koronavirus.gov.hu: Fokozatosan nyitnak az óvodák, a tanév végéig marad a digitális munkarend. <https://koronavirus.gov.hu/cikkek/fokozatosan-nyitnak-az-ovodak-tanev-vegeig-marad-digitalis-munkarend>. (A letöltés időpontja: 2020. május 22.)

## INTÉZMÉNYI MUNKAVÁLLALÓK BEVONÁSA A VÉDEKEZÉSBE A COVID-19 ELSŐ HULLÁMA IDEJÉN (BUDAPEST, KÖBÁNYA)

### SZERZŐ

Dániel Zoltán, Budapest Főváros X. kerület Kőbányai Önkormányzat, honvédelmi és közbiztonsági referens, Nemzeti Közszolgálati Egyetem Katonai Műszaki Doktori Iskola doktorandusza

### KULCSSZAVAK

COVID-19, közbiztonsági referens, óvoda, iskola, lezárás, önkormányzati védekezés

### ABSZTRAKT

*A kormány a járvány terjedésének megfékezése érdekében hozott intézkedései során számos intézmény bezárásáról döntött, vagy adta a döntés jogát a védekezést irányító polgármesterek kezébe. A fővárosi önkormányzat 2020. március 17-én, a kerületi polgármesterek több kerületben már meghozott döntése nyomán, egységesen úgy döntött, hogy az oktatási intézményeken felül a zárható játszótereket is lezáratja, a többi játszótér esetén felhívhatja a szülők figyelmét arra, hogy a találkozások elkerülése érdekében a játszótereket átmenetileg ne használják.*

*A polgármestereknek a döntés végrehajtása mellett tenniük kellett a számos intézményi dolgozó megélhetésének biztosítása érdekében is. Kőbányán ezt a problémát az intézményi dolgozók védekezésbe történő bevonásával orvosolták. A cikkben ezt a folyamatot és annak hatásait kívánja a szerző bemutatni.*