

## „INTERNATIONAL WEEK” PROGRAM

May 4 - 8, 2026

- Social Work, Care Policy, and Social Pedagogy -

**Pázmány Péter Catholic University Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Institute of Care Policy Department of Social Pedagogy**

### LECTURES

**Lecture 1 — Monday, May 4, 2026, 02:30–03:45 p.m.: „Child Protection and Child-Friendly Institutions”.** Lecturer: Dr. habil. Gábor JUHÁSZ, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Head of Department; Location: 1111 Budapest, Bertalan Lajos u. 2., 3rd floor, Room D 315

In Hungary, social services, as well as basic and specialized child protection services, are provided by the state, churches, local governments, and civil society organizations. In recent years, Hungary has implemented significant legal and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening children's rights. As a result, the child protection care system continues to change.

Highlighting positive examples is essential when discussing changes in the child protection system. This presentation will introduce two child-friendly approaches that are integral parts of the Hungarian child protection framework. The first approach involves listening and therapy centers operating according to the Barnahus method. These centers offer child-friendly, safe environments for interviewing children who are victims of emotional neglect, physical abuse, or sexual abuse. The second approach is the Sure Start Children's House, which supports the healthy development of children facing socio-cultural disadvantages—primarily those receiving regular child protection benefits—and helps compensate for developmental delays by providing services that strengthen parental competencies.

**Lecture 2 — Tuesday, May 5, 2026, 10:15–11:30 a.m.: "Existential Social Work and the Psychological Situation of Young Adults in Europe".** Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Johannes NATHSCHLAGER, Full Professor; Location: 1111 Budapest, Bertalan Lajos u. 2., 6th floor, Room D 615.

The lecture starts from current empirical findings on the psychological situation of young adults in Europe — including the historic reversal of the U-curve of life satisfaction documented by Blanchflower & Bryson (2025), as well as recent data from the Shell Youth Study, the SINUS study, and the COPSY longitudinal research, which together point to an emerging "meaning gap" among young people. Against this background, Existential Social Work is introduced as a theoretical framework drawing on existentialist philosophy (Sartre, Camus, Heidegger, Jaspers) and existential psychotherapy (Viktor Frankl, Irvin Yalom), in order to equip professionals to address questions of meaning, freedom, suffering, and finitude in practice. The third part develops the thesis of a "double meaning-threat" posed by AI-driven labour market disruption and the digital erosion of close social bonds — phenomena that simultaneously destabilise both Frankl's creative and experiential sources of meaning. The lecture concludes by sketching the contours of a *Sinnpädagogik* (pedagogy of meaning) and opens a discussion on whether, and how, meaning-making belongs to the core mandate of social work in the 21st century.

**Lecture 3 — Thursday, May 7, 2026, 02:30–04:00 p.m.: "Current Challenges in Social Work in Germany and the Role of Open Child and Youth Work".** Lecturer: Prof. Dr. Johannes NATHSCHLAGER, Full Professor; Location: 1111 Budapest, Bertalan Lajos u. 2., 10th floor, Room D 1002.

The lecture offers a structured overview of three interlocking challenges currently shaping social work in Germany: (1) demographic change and the workforce crisis (an ageing society, severe shortage of qualified social workers, persistent child poverty); (2) growing psychological pressures on children and young people (post-pandemic mental health trends from the COPSY longitudinal study, waiting times of 6–12 months for child and adolescent psychotherapy, digital overload); and (3) the increasing complexity of social problems at the intersection of migration, poverty, and digitalisation. Building on this, the second part introduces Open Child and Youth Work (*Offene Kinder- und Jugendarbeit*, OKJA) as a distinctive pillar of the German welfare system — its legal foundation in § 11 SGB VIII, its core principles (openness, voluntariness, participation, low threshold, relationship orientation, non-formal education), and its practical formats from youth centres to mobile street work. The lecture closes by connecting the strands: OKJA, with its non-mandatory and relational approach, may be uniquely positioned to respond to the existential needs of young people today. A final discussion segment invites comparative perspectives between Germany and Hungary

**Lecture 4 — Friday, May 8, 2026, 10:15 – 11:45 a.m.: „Digitalization of Social Services in Hungary: Ethical and Professional Issues”.** Lecturer: Dr. Szabolcs FEKETE, Ph.D., External Lecturer; Location: 1111 Budapest, Bertalan Lajos u. 2., 5th floor, Room D 502

The lecture examines digitalisation in social services not as a simple technical upgrade, but as a transformation of access, professional judgement, institutional responsibility and the helping relationship. It starts from the dilemma that online forms, client portals and electronic case management may make services faster from the institution’s perspective, while creating new barriers for older people, digitally excluded clients or those with complex needs. The lecture introduces key concepts such as the digital welfare state, datafication and platformisation, and reviews the main areas of digitalisation: online administration, remote counselling, decision-support systems, predictive tools, telecare technologies and generative AI. It then presents the potential benefits of digitalisation — efficiency, improved coordination, earlier identification of needs and more flexible access — while critically discussing its risks, especially the weakening of personal contact, algorithmic bias, opaque decision-making and the reduction of clients’ complex life situations to data categories. The lecture concludes that digitalisation can improve social services only if it remains hybrid, human-centred, transparent, rights-based and professionally supervised. Its central question is not whether social services will become digital, but whether they can remain genuinely social while doing so.

**Lecture 5 — Friday, May 8, 2026, 02:30 – 04:00 p.m.: „Addictions and Care for People with Addictions in Hungary”.** Lecturer: András SZABÓ, Ph.D. student, External Lecturer; Location: 1111 Budapest, Bertalan Lajos u. 2., 5th floor, Room D 518.

The presentation titled "Addictions and Care for People with Addictions in Hungary" provides a comprehensive overview of the domestic situation regarding addictions, ranging from professional theories to the practical care system. The introduction clarifies fundamental paradigms, pointing out the differences between the purely medical (biomedical) model and the modern bio-psycho-social approach. A primary focus is placed on the duality of social and legal judgment, especially the "criminal versus addict" dilemma, the lack of decriminalization, and the

social paradox that there is high social tolerance towards legal drugs, while the perception of illegal substances is completely rejective. Furthermore, the theoretical foundation distinguishes between substance dependency and behavioral dependency, and regarding the quality of abstinence, it contrasts active recovery with mere substance-free existence (dry alcoholics).

Among the definitions, exact descriptions are given for relapse, tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and overdose, followed by the presenter breaking down the process of substance use into three distinct stages. In the phase of social usage, the individual consumes mostly connected to events, is always able to refuse, and controls the process. In the stage of problematic usage (substance abuse), denial of the problem, finding reasons to use, and subsequent regret or guilt already appear, and although bio-psycho-social problems emerge, the person still retains control to some extent. However, the third phase, dependency, is characterized by craving, increasing tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and the complete loss of control, resulting in the addict giving up their social, occupational, and recreational activities to spend a lot of time on substance-related behavior.

The second half of the presentation models the pyramid-like structure of the domestic care system (The Pyramid). At the lowest level are the low-threshold services—such as street work, drop-in centers, and harm reduction—which focus on anonymity, building trust, and still accept active usage. This is followed by the drug ambulance level, where therapeutic treatments, substitution programs (methadone, suboxone), and authority-mandated medical treatments (diversion) take place; at this professional point, active usage is not accepted. At the top of the pyramid are therapeutic communities, halfway houses, and recovery-supportive workplaces that aid long-term resocialization, while self-help groups provide essential support in maintaining sobriety, avoiding relapse, and achieving reintegration.

The concluding part of the presentation outlines the exact situation in Hungary in light of statistical data. Alcohol consumption is a massive problem: 329,000 alcoholics and 420,000 abusive alcohol users are recorded. The contrast is particularly shocking that while legal drugs (alcohol and nicotine) claim 15,000-30,000 and 20,000-25,000 lives annually respectively, the number of deaths linked to illegal drugs is merely 23 per year. These figures sharply highlight the main shortcomings of the system, namely the lack of a drug strategy, the lack of prevention programs, and the lack of needle exchange programs.

After the presentation, an interactive problem-solving session will follow with the involvement of the students.