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Historical Perspectives on Infant Care and Child Education Emmi Pikler, Infant Homes, and the Politics of Child Welfare in 20th Century Hungary

Venue: CEU Democracy Institute (1051 Budapest, Nádor str. 15.)

Date: October 10-11, 2025

Language: The event will be held in Hungarian and English.

The Conference is organized in collaboration with CEU Democracy Institute, Österreichisches Kulturforum Budapest, Ludwig Boltzmann Institut für Kriegsfolgenforschung, Graz – Wien – Raabs, and Institut für Geschichte, Universität Graz.

During the conference, the exhibition “[Calliope. Join the Dots](#)” will be on display in the CEU foyer. The exhibition is sponsored by the Österreichisches Kulturforum Budapest.

DAY 1: October 10, Friday

9:45-10:00 Registration

10:00 Opening

Andrea PETŐ (CEU Vienna, CEU Democracy Institute)

Fabian ORTNER (Österreichisches Kulturforum Budapest)

10:10-10:30 Keynote

Barbara STELZL-MARX (Ludwig Boltzmann Institut für Kriegsfolgenforschung, Universität Graz): *Growing Up Under Extremes: Childhood Experiences and their Transgenerational Legacy* [ENG / On-site]

10:30-11:45 I. Ideology, Law and the State

Chair: Borbála JUHÁSZ (Hungarian Women's Lobby)

Veronika LEHOTAY (University of Miskolc, Faculty of Law): *Áldozat és/vagy elkövető? Jogi válaszok a gyermekek és a fiatalok problémáira a 20. század első felében* (Victim and/or perpetrator? Legal responses to the problems of children and juveniles in the first half of the 20th century) [HUN / On-site]

Béla PUKÁNSZKY (University of Szeged): *Gyermekkép-változatok, gyermekideológiák a 19-20. század pedagógiai szakirodalmában* (Changes in the image and ideology of the child in the pedagogical literature of the 19th-20th centuries) [HUN / On-site]

Erzsébet GORTKA-RÁKÓ (University of Debrecen, Faculty of Education for Children and Special Educational Needs): *A gyermekvédelmi gondoskodás kora gyermekkort érintő fejlődéstörténete* (The early childhood development of child protection care) [HUN / On-site]

Coffee Break

12:00-13:30 II. The Legacy of Emmi Pikler Across Shifting Political Contexts

Chair: Andrea PETŐ (CEU Vienna, CEU Democracy Institute)

Judit KÓNYA (Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem): *The war years of Emmi Pikler. The significance of the forgotten Mother and Nurse Training Course (1940-1944) in Pikler's oeuvre* (Pikler Emmi háborús évei. Az elfelejtett Anya- és Nevelőképző Tanfolyam (1940-1944) jelentősége Pikler életművében) [ENG / Online]

Annina GAGYIOVA (Department of Modern Transnational and Intellectual History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic): *Promoting women's emancipation in socialist Hungary. Pediatrician Emmi Pikler, early childhood care and transnational knowledge circulation, 1950s–1960s* [ENG / On-site]

Krisztina PLENTER (Apor Vilmos Catholic College, Vác): *The Pikler approach in the light of contemporary circumstances and challenges* (A Pikler-módszer a mai körülmények és kihívások tükrében) [ENG / On-site]

Mária HERCZOG (Family, Child and Youth Association): *Ideologies, policies and practices of infant homes in Hungary after WWII. The role and impact of Emmi Pikler and her followers* [ENG / Online]

Lunch Break

14:15-15:30 III. Children's Homes, Children's Rights

Chair: Maria HERCZOG (Family, Child and Youth Association)

Erika KATONÁNÉ PEHR (University of Pécs, Faculty of Law): *Gyermejk jogi szemlélet megjelenése a csecsemőotthoni és bölcsődei ellátásban, tekintettel annak történeti aspektusaira* (The emergence of a children's rights approach in nursery and crèche care, with regard to its historical aspects) [HUN / On-site]

Izabella GREXA (HAS Secretariat of the II. Section of Philosophy and Historical Sciences): *Gyermekvédelmi intézményrendszer és egyéni tapasztalat az 1940-1950-es években* (Child protection institutions and individual experience in the 1940s-1950s) [HUN / On-site]

László TRENCSENYI (Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Education and Psychology): *Hol is vagyunk "benn"? A "bentlakás"-hoz fűződő pedagógiai remények és kockázatok*. (Where do we "reside"? Pedagogical hopes and risks associated with "residential care") [HUN / On-site]

Coffee Break



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15:45-17:00 IV. Pioneering Women in Alternative Education

Chair: Bence László BARI (CEU Democracy Institute)

Anna BORGOS (Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience and Psychology, Budapest):

“Psychoanalysis has thrown a heavy stone into the long-stagnant waters of child-rearing theory.” Issues of child analysis and education in the works of Hungarian women psychoanalysts [ENG / On-site]

Friederike KIND-KOVÁCS (Hannah-Arendt-Institute, Dresden): *From the Vajkai Sisters to Emmi Pikler. Women’s Child Care Activism in the Wake of the two World Wars* [ENG / On-site]

Judith SZAPOR (McGill University, Montreal): *Motherhood and childrearing in the shadow of politics. The socio-political context and clientele of the Pikler method* [ENG / Online]

Reception

DAY 2: October 11, Saturday

9:45-10:00 Registration

10:00-11:15 V. International Perspectives on Post-War Institutional Care

Chair: Judit SÁNDOR (CEU Vienna, CELAB Budapest)

Teresa WILLENBORG (Department of History, Ethics and Theory of Medicine, Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg): *Healing a Nation’s Future. The Role of Institutional Care in Post-War Poland* [ENG / Online]

Ieva BALČIŪNĖ (Lithuanian Institute of History, Department of the Twentieth-Century History): *“No one can replace a mother, but it is possible to cover for her” Children’s homes in Soviet Lithuania* [ENG / Online]

Masha BRATISHCHEVA (independent scholar): *Free Movement, Infant Homes, and the Politics of Care: Montessori and Pikler in Comparative Perspective* [ENG / Online]

Coffee Break

11:30-12:30 VI. Marginalization, Poverty and Contemporary Challenges

Chair: Fanni SVÉGEL (independent researcher)

Borbála JUHÁSZ (Hungarian Women’s Lobby): *Az emberkereskedelem áldozatául esett lányok és az anyaság, intézményi válaszok* (Trafficked girls and motherhood, institutional responses) [HUN / On-site]

Sára SZABÓ (Institute for Political Studies, Centre for Social Sciences): *Koragyerekkori intézményekben dolgozó szakemberek „jó anyja” képének és lokális pozíciójának összefüggései* (Relationships between the image of “good mother” and the local position of early childhood professionals) [HUN / On-site]