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Validating a Computational Legal Corpus: Doctrinal Foundations for Quantitative Research on Hungary's Deputy Ombudsman for Future Generations (2012–2026)

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the Hungarian Deputy Commissioner for Fundamental Rights responsible for the interests of future generations, using it as a case study to test how legal-doctrinal validation should ground computational governance research on environmental institutions. The public trust doctrine and the non-derogation principle that anchor Hungarian environmental constitutionalism have already been established in prior scholarship; this article's contribution is threefold and empirical rather than purely descriptive. First, it reconstructs, through primary-source verification against a full-text corpus of 6,484 Constitutional Court decisions, how these doctrines were extended across three previously untraced steps—from forests to water resources, to climate mitigation targets—and surfaces three substantively relevant decisions absent from prior indexes. Second, it builds and reports a multi-layered digital research corpus (a retrieval-augmented report corpus, an AI-assisted case database, and the full-text decision corpus) and documents specific, reproducible failure modes of AI-assisted legal corpus construction—context bleeding, index-page label contamination, and full-text boundary defects—that carry methodological relevance beyond this case study. Third, it confronts an effectiveness tension the doctrinal narrative alone would obscure: the institution's most sustained campaign, a nine-round legislative cycle on well-permitting, concluded in materially unconstrained deregulation despite five years of doctrinal consolidation, a result situated here within Beckman and Ugglá's, Tattay's, and Gardiner's theoretical accounts of the structural limits of future-generations representation. The article concludes by specifying legal-validation preconditions for a future quantitative Sustainability Ombudsman Index, which this study does not itself construct.

Keywords: environmental constitutionalism; future generations; ombudsman institutions; public trust doctrine; computational legal research; corpus validation; Hungary

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1. Introduction

Governance institutions created to represent the interests of future generations occupy an unusual position in comparative constitutional law: they are simultaneously legal actors bound by conventional doctrinal constraints and natural objects of quantitative, longitudinal governance research, since their annual reports, case interventions and legislative proposals accumulate into structured, dateable, classifiable records over long institutional lifespans. Hungary offers a particularly suitable case for bridging these two research traditions. The Deputy Commissioner for Fundamental Rights responsible for the protection of the interests of future generations (hereafter, the Deputy Commissioner) has operated continuously within the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights since 1 January 2012, publishing thirteen consecutive, structurally comparable annual

reports, and has been credited by Sulyok and Bárdi as the first national institution to hold an express constitutional mandate for future generations^[1], a comparative claim this article relies upon rather than independently re-verifies.

This article pursues three connected research questions. The first is doctrinal: through which specific sequence of decisions has the Hungarian Constitutional Court extended its foundational public trust and non-derogation doctrines beyond their original forestry and water-resource context, and what does the resulting sequence reveal about doctrinal expansion in environmental constitutionalism more generally? The second is empirical and methodological: what specific, reproducible failure modes arise when AI-assisted tools are used to construct and label a case-level legal research corpus from a heterogeneous, multi-year report series, and how can these be detected and mitigated—a question of direct relevance to the wider computational governance research agenda this journal serves? The third is theoretical: how should an apparent tension between doctrinal consolidation before a constitutional court and continued legislative non-compliance in the same policy domain be interpreted, and what does this tension imply for the institutional-design literature on ombudspersons for future generations?

Producing answers to the first two questions required building, validating and cross-checking a multi-layered digital research corpus: a retrieval-augmented corpus of the annual reports, an AI-assisted case-identifier database, and a full-text validation corpus of the Constitutional Court’s entire 2012–2026 output. Rather than treating this infrastructure as invisible scaffolding, this article reports it as research finding in its own right, because the validation process surfaced specific, reproducible error patterns directly relevant to anyone attempting to build computational corpora for environmental or public-law governance research. The third question is addressed by confronting the doctrinal narrative with the institution’s own record of legislative non-compliance rather than allowing narrative coherence to obscure that tension.

The remainder of the article proceeds as follows. Section 2 outlines the institution’s normative foundations. Section 3 presents the doctrinal case-law analysis, distinguishes this article’s specific contribution from established prior scholarship, and confronts the effectiveness tension directly. Section 4 documents the computational corpus-construction and validation methodology, including its technical limitations. Section 5 situates the Hungarian model comparatively. Section 6 specifies legal-validation preconditions for a future quantitative Sustainability Ombudsman Index, which this article does not itself construct. Throughout, the article distinguishes explicitly between claims established through direct primary-source verification and claims that remain provisional, a distinction that is itself a methodological output of the validation exercise reported in Section 4 rather than a conventional caveat appended after the fact.

2. Institutional background

Hungary’s engagement with future-generations representation predates the current institution. Between 2008 and 2011, an independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations operated outside the general ombudsman structure, building considerable professional authority under its first holder, Sándor Fülöp. The Fundamental Law, which entered into force on 1 January 2012, abolished the specialized ombudsman system and consolidated all thematic mandates—including future generations, national minorities, and data protection—within a single Commissioner for Fundamental Rights, with future-generations matters delegated to a Deputy Commissioner who lacks the general Commissioner’s independent standing to petition the Constitutional Court. Contemporary Hungarian scholarship was divided on this reform: writing during the parliamentary debate itself, one legal adviser to the outgoing Commissioner argued that the reform’s declaratory expansion of substantive environmental protection under Article P) was accompanied by a structural weakening of the office through which that protection would have to be enforced^[2,3]. Whether the Deputy Commissioner model has in practice compensated for this structural weakening is one of the questions the case-law analysis in Section 3 is designed to test, and Section 3.4 returns to it directly in light of the

effectiveness tension identified there.

The Deputy Commissioner's formal toolkit is investigatory and advisory rather than adjudicatory: *ex officio* or complaint-based inquiries, reports, position statements, legislative proposals, and—critically—the power to recommend that the Commissioner petition the Constitutional Court, without an independent right to do so. This design corresponds to the general theoretical distinction in comparative ombudsman scholarship between the classical ombudsman, understood as a horizontal accountability mechanism over the executive, and the human-rights-mandated hybrid ombudsman that also channels international and domestic fundamental-rights norms into administrative practice^[4,5]; the future-generations mandate arguably constitutes a third, distinct sub-type, representing a constituency that is by definition unable to participate in the political process that determines its interests—precisely the legitimacy puzzle explored in the theoretical literature on ombudspersons for future generations and taken up directly in Section 3.4 below^[6-9].

Article P) (1) of the Fundamental Law designates natural resources—in particular arable land, forests and water resources, biological diversity, and cultural values—as the common heritage of the nation, whose protection, maintenance and preservation for future generations binds the state and everyone. Article XXI (1) guarantees the right to a healthy environment, and Article 38 (1) requires that management of national assets take the needs of future generations into account. As shown below, the Constitutional Court has read these provisions together to construct two interlocking tests that jointly define Hungarian environmental constitutionalism.

3. Doctrinal case law, 2012–2025

The public trust doctrine and the non-derogation principle discussed below are not, individually, new discoveries of this article: both have been identified and analyzed in prior scholarship, most thoroughly in Sulyok's doctrinal study of the Forest Act line of cases^[10,11]. What this section adds to that literature is threefold: a primary-source-verified extension of the doctrinal timeline through 2025, including a previously undocumented plenary decision (16/2022) and two further decisions surfaced only through full-corpus validation (3104/2017^[12]; 3034/2021^[13], both discussed in Section 4.3); an explicit tracing of a three-step subject-matter expansion of the public trust construction that, to the author's knowledge, has not previously been named or documented as a single sequence; and, in Section 3.4, an explicit confrontation of this doctrinal narrative with the institution's own recorded history of legislative non-compliance, which prior doctrinal accounts of the same case law do not address.

3.1. The non-derogation principle and the public trust doctrine

Building on its own pre-2012 jurisprudence, the Constitutional Court has developed a public trust construction under which the state administers natural and cultural heritage on behalf of future generations as beneficiaries, permitting present-generation use only to the extent that it does not endanger the living conditions of successors. Attached to this construction is a non-derogation principle: once a given level of statutory environmental protection has been achieved, the legislature may only reduce it where reduction is indispensable to enforcing another constitutional right or value, and only to an extent proportionate to that end. Three decisions mark the principle's consolidation. In 28/2017 (X. 25.)^[14], concerning the disposal of state-owned Natura 2000 land, the Court found an unconstitutional omission and expressly grounded the state's protective duty in intergenerational justice, citing Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato si'* alongside Edith Brown Weiss's tripartite theory of intergenerational equity — the requirements of preserving options, preserving quality, and preserving access^[15]. In 13/2018 (IX. 4.)^[16], the Court annulled a 2018 amendment that would have removed permitting requirements for wells up to 80 meters deep, holding that precaution and prevention now operate as a self-standing constitutional principle alongside non-derogation. In 14/2020 (VII. 6.)^[17], it annulled substantial portions of a 2017 amendment to the Forest Act, holding that clear-felling causes

irreversible harm that a compensatory afforestation obligation cannot cure.

A plenary decision the present research corpus specifically surfaced—16/2022 (VII. 14.)^[18], on the review request of fifty-one members of parliament—extends this line of authority to spatial planning: the Court annulled provisions of the 2018 Balaton Priority Resort Area planning act that would have allowed ministerial or governmental decrees to override the statutory thirty-meter unbuilt lakeside buffer, grounding the decision explicitly in Article P) (1) and in Brown Weiss’s tripartite framework^[18]. Although the Deputy Commissioner was not a party to this particular petition, its subject matter and reasoning correspond closely to concerns the Deputy Commissioner had raised in draft form in late 2019 regarding the same statutory provisions—an instance, discussed further in Section 4, of a multi-year, cross-actor doctrinal continuity that a purely petitioner-indexed database would fail to capture.

3.2. Procedural guarantees and institutional standing

A second doctrinal strand concerns procedural guarantees in environmental decision-making. In 4/2019 (III. 7.)^[19], the Court found an unconstitutional omission in the failure to require environmental findings within administrative permitting decisions. Two later decisions extend this logic: 3196/2020 (VI. 11.)^[20] grounds a state duty to guarantee access to adequate drinking water in the state’s objective institutional-protection obligation, a position the Deputy Commissioner reinforced in 2021 by invoking the WHO’s recommended daily minimum of fifty liters per person; and 19/2023 (VIII. 7.)^[21], on the President’s request for prior review, held that ministerial-decree deviation from statutory rules may be constitutionally permitted only within precisely delimited, safeguard-supported categories — reasoning the Court applied to reject any comparison, for weighting purposes, between future-generations interests and unqualified economic or investor interests, which it held to be of categorically insufficient constitutional weight to be placed on the opposite side of the balance.

The Deputy Commissioner’s own standing has evolved considerably over the period studied. Early practice (2012–2018) consisted of recommending that the Commissioner petition the Court; a documented case is the ministry’s 2012 refusal to accept the Deputy Commissioner’s objection to a proposed “combined siting procedure” in construction law, which led the Commissioner to file a petition later that year. By 2024, the toolkit had diversified into amicus curiae interventions in third-party constitutional complaints (e.g., AJB-1729/2024 on the deficient scientific basis of the national groundwater-risk map; AJB-553/2024 on emergency decree provisions permitting continued failure to control invasive species in protected forest) and, for the first time recorded in the institution’s own annual reporting since 2012, a self-standing constitutional complaint filed by the Deputy Commissioner personally (AJB-1106/2024), challenging a 2023 relaxation of well-permitting requirements. This last case is the culmination of what the research corpus documents as a nine-round legislative cycle running from 2013 to 2024, in which successive attempts to deregulate well construction were repeatedly opposed by the Deputy Commissioner, invalidated once by the Court in 2018, and finally enacted largely unchanged in 2023—a sequence the 2024 annual report itself acknowledges did not follow the Court’s 2018 holding, and which the Deputy Commissioner’s April 2024 public remarks confirm is again before the Constitutional Court, making this the institution’s most sustained and, on present evidence, least successful campaign. Section 3.4 returns to this case as the central evidentiary basis for an effectiveness tension the preceding doctrinal narrative would otherwise obscure.

3.3. The 2025 climate act decision

The doctrinal arc reaches its most significant recent point in 5/2025^[22] (VI. 30.), in which the Constitutional Court, on the petition of fifty members of parliament, annulled Section 3(1) of the 2020 Climate Act—the 2030 emissions-reduction target, by then already superseded and substantively hollow—and separately found an unconstitutional legislative omission in Parliament’s failure to regulate mitigation, adaptation and resilience instruments tailored to Hungary’s and the Carpathian Basin’s specific circumstances,

setting a remedial deadline of 30 June 2026. That deadline passed without replacement legislation under the government then in office, reproducing the pattern of unfulfilled remedial deadlines already documented for water-resource legislation^[23,24]. Following the April 2026 parliamentary election and the resulting change of government, the newly created Ministry for the Living Environment announced that it was drafting replacement legislation, with a parliamentary vote realistically targeted for November 2026 rather than the original deadline^[25]. As of this article’s revision, that replacement law had not yet been enacted; its content and its fidelity to the Court’s mitigation-adaptation-resilience mandate remain to be assessed in future work and are not claims this article makes. The decision’s reasoning rests explicitly on intergenerational justice, precaution and prevention — the same doctrinal core traced through Sections 3.1–3.2—and its rapporteur judge, Marcel Szabó, is the same jurist who, as Deputy Commissioner from 2012 to 2016, personally laid the doctrinal groundwork for the Court’s early Article P) jurisprudence before joining the Court itself in 2022. In the Deputy Commissioner’s own submission to the Court in this case, the 2030 target was reframed explicitly within the public trust construction traced in Section 3.1, extending it for the first time from forests and water resources to climate mitigation targets—a third step in the doctrinal expansion (forests → water → climate) identified in this article, achieved without a new foundational decision at each stage. This domestic doctrinal development is best read alongside the International Court of Justice’s contemporaneous advisory opinion on climate change, which likewise grounded states’ climate obligations in intergenerational equity, requiring due regard for the interests of future generations and the long-term implications of conduct^[26,27].

Table 1. Summarizes the principal decisions discussed.

Year	Decision	Subject	Outcome
2017	28/2017 (X. 25.)	State-owned Natura 2000 land	Unconstitutional omission
2018	13/2018 (IX. 4.)	Well-permitting deregulation	Annulment; precaution as self-standing principle
2019	4/2019 (III. 7.)	Environmental permitting safeguards	Unconstitutional omission
2020	14/2020 (VII. 6.)	2017 Forest Act amendment	Substantial annulment
2020	3196/2020 (VI. 11.)	Access to drinking water	State duty affirmed
2022	16/2022 (VII. 14.)	Balaton shoreline planning (MATrT)	Partial annulment (plenary)
2023	19/2023 (VIII. 7.)	Ministerial-decree deviation limits	Partial unconstitutionality
2024	9/2024 (IV. 30.)	Emergency forestry decree	Retroactive annulment
2024	13/2024 (V. 30.)	Prosecutorial standing in animal welfare	Rejection with legislative call
2025	5/2025 (VI. 30.)	2020 Climate Act	Partial annulment; omission found

3.4. The effectiveness tension: Doctrinal continuity versus structural dependency

The narrative constructed in Sections 3.1–3.3—a continuous, self-reinforcing doctrinal line running from 2017 to 2025—sits in tension with the record of the institution’s single most sustained campaign, the nine-round well-permitting cycle documented in Section 3.2, which concluded not in a further judicial victory but in the legislature enacting in 2023, largely unchanged, the same deregulation the Court had annulled five years earlier, with the Deputy Commissioner reduced by 2024 to filing its own constitutional complaint against the outcome. This tension deserves explicit treatment rather than narrative smoothing, because it is precisely the legitimacy concern anticipated in the theoretical literature. Beckman and Uggla’s foundational critique of the ombudsman-for-future-generations model warns that an institution lacking coercive power or independent standing is structurally dependent on the receptiveness of other institutional actors; Tattay’s jurisprudential analysis of the Hungarian case goes further, questioning whether future generations can coherently be said to hold a “represented” interest at all, given the impossibility of feedback from the represented party.

Gardiner’s account of climate change as a “perfect moral storm”—in which the temporal dispersion of costs and benefits systematically favors present-generation interests regardless of the formal doctrinal

framework in place—supplies a structural explanation for why a doctrinally coherent public trust construction can coexist with a materially unconstrained legislature: doctrine constrains courts, not legislatures acting through ordinary majoritarian politics. Gosseries’s institutional-design analysis identifies exactly this gap between representative and enforcement mechanisms as the central design problem for any future-generations institution, ombudsman-type or otherwise^[8,9,28]. Read against this literature, the well-permitting cycle is not an anomaly within an otherwise successful institutional history but direct empirical confirmation of the theoretical prediction: doctrinal consolidation before the Constitutional Court has not, on this evidence, translated into a materially binding constraint on ordinary legislative action, and the institution’s most recent innovation—self-standing constitutional complaints—is better read as an attempt to close this enforcement gap than as evidence that it has already been closed. The 2025 Climate Act decision (Section 3.3), whose own remedial deadline also passed without timely legislative compliance, extends rather than resolves this pattern, and should accordingly temper any reading of the doctrinal narrative in Sections 3.1–3.3 as an unqualified institutional success story.

4. A computational methodology for corpus construction and validation

The analysis in Section 3 depended on building and cross-validating three distinct digital research layers, each with a different function and a different, empirically observed failure profile. Reporting this infrastructure explicitly, including its limitations, is the article’s second contribution, since AI-assisted legal corpus construction is increasingly common in computational governance research but is rarely subjected to the kind of systematic, source-level validation reported here.

4.1. Layer one: A retrieval-augmented annual-report corpus

The first layer was a page-referenced, retrieval-augmented corpus of approximately 1549 text chunks drawn from the Deputy Commissioner’s thirteen annual reports (2012–2024)^[29], each chunk carrying a stable citation label (report year and PDF page range) and a short section-context descriptor. This layer supported the primary-source case-law reconstruction in Section 3 and allowed exact, page-level verification of every quotation and paraphrase against the original report text.

4.2. Layer two: An AI-assisted candidate case database

The second layer was an independently produced, case-identifier-level candidate database of 1888 records extracted from the same thirteen reports, each keyed to an explicit case identifier (e.g., AJB-1234/2019) and carrying keyword-derived labels for topic, affected fundamental right, measure type, outcome, and a three-page context excerpt. The database’s own codebook explicitly characterizes it as a discovery aid requiring legal validation before any record is relied upon, since its labels are produced by automated keyword matching rather than legal analysis. Validating this warning empirically, systematic review found that automatically assigned outcome labels for at least one cited case (AJB-1729/2024) were not supported by that case’s own context excerpt and instead reflected content bleeding in from an adjacent, unrelated case discussed on a nearby page—a direct instance of the context-window contamination risk inherent in fixed-size, page-proximity text extraction. The review also found that roughly one quarter of all records (447 of 1888) originated from the reports’ index sections, where dozens of unrelated case identifiers are listed together on a single page; automated topic and outcome tagging applied to such records is systematically unreliable, since it inherits the topical content of whichever substantive case happens to appear nearest on the same page rather than the tagged case’s own subject matter. These two findings jointly demonstrate that label reliability in AI-assisted case databases cannot be assumed even at reported per-record confidence scores in the 0.8–0.95 range; systematic legal review of the underlying excerpt, not the automated label, remains the operative unit of verification. A further, more encouraging finding is that measure-type labels—a narrower, more mechanically extractable category than topic or outcome labels—proved considerably more reliable: for the nine case identifiers

independently traced through primary sources in Section 3, the database’s automated measure-type tags (e.g., “constitutional court petition”, “amicus curiae submission”) matched the primary-source characterization in every instance. This asymmetry suggests a general design principle for AI-assisted legal corpus construction: automated labelling is comparatively trustworthy for categories tied to a narrow, formulaic vocabulary near the case identifier itself, and comparatively unreliable for categories requiring synthesis of the surrounding narrative content, which is exactly where page-window contamination does the most damage.

4.3. Layer three: A full-text constitutional court validation corpus

The third layer was a full-text corpus of 6484 Constitutional Court decisions and orders (2012–2026), compiled from the Court’s official published decisions, with formally distinct decisions and orders issued within a single consolidated proceeding retained as separate, independently keyed records rather than merged, reflecting standard Hungarian citation practice; each record carried structured metadata—cited constitutional articles, cited statutes, cited prior decisions, and source pagination—extracted per-decision from the decision’s own citation apparatus rather than inferred from surrounding narrative text, which is the principal reason these metadata fields proved more reliable in validation than the narrative labels discussed in Section 4.2.

This corpus served two functions. First, it validated every Constitutional Court citation used in Section 3: all eleven decisions cited (**Table 1** plus 16/2015) were confirmed present with matching decision numbers, dates and subject matter, and none of the direct quotations drawn from them exceeded conventional fair-use length thresholds once cross-checked against the corpus’s exact wording. Second, metadata-filtered discovery—searching first for decisions citing Article P) and then ranking candidates by frequency of the phrase “future generations” in the full text—surfaced three previously unindexed but substantively relevant decisions: the plenary Balaton shoreline decision (16/2022) discussed in Section 3.1, a 2017 heritage-protection decision citing a joint Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner report on listing procedures (3104/2017), and a 2021 order concerning thirty-year data secrecy provisions in the legislation authorizing the Paks nuclear power plant capacity-maintenance investment, in which the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner jointly objected that withholding decision-preparatory data for three decades foreclosed present-generation participation in a decision that would shape national energy strategy across generations (3034/2021).

This discovery process also surfaced a data-integrity defect worth reporting on its own terms: the full-text field for at least one decision (16/2022) was found, on manual inspection of its terminal content, to run past that decision’s own closing signature block into the beginning of an unrelated, subsequently indexed press-freedom case, without a reliable internal boundary marker separating the two. Automated keyword search across the unbounded full-text field would in this instance misattribute the second case’s content to the first. The safe mitigation applied here—always locating and reasoning from the decision’s own operative part and signature block before treating any full-text passage as authoritative—is a specific, transferable methodological recommendation for computational legal research relying on similarly page-extracted corpora.

4.4. A note on reproducibility and technical limitations

The digital layers described above were produced through interaction with a general-purpose large language model (Claude, Anthropic) applied to source PDF text via natural-language extraction instructions, rather than through a dedicated, fine-tuned classification pipeline with disclosed hyperparameters. No sampling-temperature setting was exposed by the underlying tool, and the per-record “extraction confidence” scores in the candidate case database (Section 4.2) are documented by their own codebook as heuristic completeness estimates rather than calibrated model-probability outputs. This is a genuine limitation for computational reproducibility in the conventional machine-learning sense: a third party could not exactly reproduce the specific labels generated by this process. What the validation exercise in this article substitutes for that form of process reproducibility is source-level reproducibility: every claim retained in the final analysis

was cross-checked against page-identified primary-source text or against the independently structured 6484-decision corpus described above, such that a reviewer can verify each claim without needing to reproduce the extraction step itself. Future iterations of this research program should adopt a fixed-model, fixed-prompt, versioned extraction pipeline with disclosed parameters to close this gap; the present article’s contribution is to document, ahead of that step, exactly which failure modes such a pipeline would need to guard against.

4.5. Summary of validation findings

Across all three layers, the validation exercise reported one substantive factual correction (the 2015, rather than 2016, first documented use of a named legislative initiative), two copyright-related corrections to direct quotations exceeding conventional length thresholds, one overstated comparative claim regarding third-party intervention in international climate litigation, and three newly discovered decisions integrated into the doctrinal analysis, alongside confirmation of all previously identified case citations. **Table 2** summarizes the observed failure modes by corpus layer. No statistical hypothesis testing was performed at this stage of the research program; the validation reported here is qualitative and source-level, consistent with the corpus’s present role as a foundation for, rather than an instance of, quantitative analysis—a distinction Section 6 returns to.

Table 2. Observed failure modes of AI-assisted legal corpus construction, by corpus layer.

Layer	Function	Observed failure mode	Mitigation
Report corpus (chunks)	Primary-source retrieval	None material observed	Page-level citation labels
Candidate case database	Case discovery, labelling	Context bleeding; index-page label contamination (~24% of records)	Read excerpt, not label; distrust index-page provenance
Full-text decision corpus	Citation validation, discovery	Full-text field boundary bleed between adjacent decisions	Anchor on operative part and signature block

5. Comparative international context

The ombudsman-for-future-generations model is one of several institutional strategies observed internationally, and these strategies can be organized along a single underlying dimension: the strength of the standing or enforcement power granted to the future-generations representative, running from advisory review, through complaint-based ombudsman mandates of varying independence, to directly justiciable rights. Wales’s Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 created a Future Generations Commissioner exercising primarily advisory and strategic-planning review functions over public bodies, structurally distinct from the ombudsman function proper and situated at the advisory end of this spectrum. Germany’s Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development operates as a legislative-advisory body rather than a complaint-receiving institution, occupying a similar position^[30], while several U.S. state constitutions (Hawaii, Illinois, Montana) sit at the opposite end, directly entrenching justiciable rights or state duties toward present and future generations, enforceable through ordinary courts rather than any specialized institution^[31,32]. The Hungarian model occupies an intermediate position on this spectrum: it combines a formal ombudsman mandate with an evolving, but still dependent, capacity to trigger constitutional review, which is precisely why the effectiveness tension identified in Section 3.4—doctrinal consolidation without reliable legislative compliance—is diagnostic of a structural feature of the intermediate category as a whole, rather than a defect specific to the Hungarian implementation.

A significant 2023 soft-law development, the Maastricht Principles on the Human Rights of Future Generations, adopted after a six-year drafting process involving nearly two hundred human rights experts and former UN special rapporteurs, expressly requires that representatives of future generations possess genuine standing before domestic, regional and international fora. Measured against this benchmark, the Hungarian model’s 2024 evolution—the first such complaint documented in the institution’s annual reporting—represents

concrete, if still structurally limited, movement in the direction the Principles require, since the Deputy Commissioner continues to lack an independent right to petition the Court and remains dependent on the Commissioner's cooperation^[33].

The Hungarian institution's practical influence on international climate litigation is more circumscribed than sometimes suggested: in *Verein KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland* before the European Court of Human Rights' Grand Chamber^[34], oral submissions among the case's twenty-three third-party interveners were heard from only two—the Government of Ireland and the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)—of which the Hungarian ombudsman institution is a member but not itself an independent oral intervener. The more direct and better-documented Hungarian contribution to international climate jurisprudence is domestic: the Deputy Commissioner's 2023 submission in the Climate Act proceedings culminating in decision 5/2025, discussed in Section 3.3.

6. Toward a validated quantitative research agenda

The doctrinal and computational findings reported above jointly support, but do not by themselves constitute, a quantitative research agenda of direct relevance to this journal's scope. A natural next step is the construction of a longitudinal Sustainability Ombudsman Index, coding each documented case by policy domain, affected right, measure type, and outcome, and tracking these variables across the thirteen-year period. This article deliberately stops short of constructing that index, for three reasons directly evidenced by the validation exercise in Section 4. First, coding-category validity cannot be established from automated labels alone: the demonstrated unreliability of keyword-derived outcome and topic tags, particularly for index-page-sourced records, means that index construction without prior legal review of underlying excerpts would encode systematic measurement error rather than signal. Second, several of the most doctrinally significant patterns identified in Section 3—the nine-round well-permitting legislative cycle, and the three-step extension of the public trust doctrine from forests to water to climate—are multi-year, cross-report phenomena that a purely annual, cross-sectional coding scheme would fragment and obscure; any index methodology must therefore include an explicit multi-year linkage variable alongside conventional annual coding. Third, source heterogeneity across the study period—earlier reports (2012–2014) are markedly less structurally granular than later ones—requires an explicit structural-break variable to avoid misattributing reporting-format changes to substantive changes in institutional activity.

With these preconditions specified, the resulting research design is one in which legal-doctrinal validation functions as a necessary input to, rather than a peripheral quality check on, computational governance research: the coding scheme, the multi-year linkage variable, and the structural-break variable are all outputs of the doctrinal analysis in Section 3, and the validated corpus and documented failure modes in Section 4 constitute the tested infrastructure on which any subsequent quantitative index-construction and statistical-analysis phase—properly a distinct research undertaking requiring dedicated computational and statistical expertise—would need to be built. To be unambiguous about the present article's own contribution: it reports a validated corpus, a documented doctrinal sequence, and a specified set of coding preconditions; it does not report index values, statistical estimates, or any quantitative test of the effectiveness tension identified in Section 3.4, which remains a qualitative, primary-source-grounded finding pending that future quantitative phase.

7. Conclusion

Fifteen years into its operation, Hungary's Deputy Commissioner for the interests of future generations has produced a body of practice that has visibly shaped, and been shaped by, a coherent and self-reinforcing line of Constitutional Court jurisprudence centered on the non-derogation principle and the public trust doctrine, most recently extended to climate mitigation targets in the 2025 Climate Act decision. Systematically validating this doctrinal narrative against a 6484-decision full-text corpus not only confirmed its factual

accuracy but surfaced three previously undocumented decisions and several specific, reproducible failure modes of AI-assisted legal corpus construction—context bleeding, index-page label contamination, and full-text boundary defects—that are of direct methodological relevance to computational governance research generally, well beyond this particular institutional case study. At the same time, the institution’s own record of legislative non-compliance in its most sustained campaign—the nine-round well-permitting cycle—shows that doctrinal consolidation and practical effectiveness are analytically distinct outcomes that a purely doctrinal narrative risks conflating, a distinction the theoretical literature on ombudspersons for future generations anticipates and this article’s primary-source record confirms. The resulting validated corpus and documented coding preconditions constitute, this article argues, the necessary and non-substitutable doctrinal foundation for the quantitative, longitudinal Sustainability Ombudsman Index that this research program’s next phase should construct—a phase this article deliberately leaves for dedicated future work rather than anticipates with unvalidated numbers.

Ethical approval

Not applicable.

Informed consent statement

Not applicable.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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