

COUNTRY PROFILES

Hungary

The research into literature on Hungary's approach to international cultural policy suggests a very positive attitude towards cooperation with other European countries vis-à-vis the rest of the world. In fact Hungary clearly supports the development of joint cultural initiatives by EU Member States both inside and outside Europe (evident in its support and leadership of the Visegrád group). It considers associations between cultural institutes and cultural officers of the Member States as one of the best ways to undertake common cultural action and preserve and promote Europe's cultural diversity.

Hungary views Europe not only as a geographical notion, but also as a cultural one that is fed by common cultural values and traditions. It argues that cultural factors of European integration have been ignored, while economical, political and social factors have been emphasised.

In this context, Hungary perceives a demand for the formation of a common cultural identity for Europe and it regards the promotion of Europe's cultural diversity as being of paramount importance, since it is the most characteristic feature of Europe's cultural identity. This common cultural identity for Europe should not influence or diminish national cultural identities, but the preservation of national cultural identities is viewed as the responsibility of the national governments themselves. Hungary values its national cultural identity greatly, as it considers culture to be the only field where it can preserve its national identity within the EU. At the same time Hungary thinks that as a member of a European community of cultures it can better withstand cultural globalisation.

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage dominates the field of culture but in the field of cultural diplomacy the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also plays an important role. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education also plays a role in some trans-national cultural activities.

M i n i s t r y o f C u l t u r a l h e r i t a g e

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage's Department of International Relations manages bilateral and multilateral relations. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage maintains a network of twenty-two Hungarian cultural institutes, under the supervision of the Department for Cultural Institutes. These cultural institutes are responsible for promoting Hungarian culture abroad through exhibitions, lectures, concerts, etc.

Furthermore, the Ministry is responsible for the National Cultural Fund, which was established by the Hungarian parliament in order to support the creation and preservation of Hungarian cultural values and their propagation domestically and abroad. The National Cultural Fund is operating under the supervision of the Ministry of National Cultural Heritage, but also cooperates with the Foreign Ministry. Its tasks are:

- the support of the creation and preservation of national and universal values in the field of culture and their propagation domestically and abroad;
- the support of anniversaries and festivals affecting culture and related events organised domestically and abroad;
- the promotion of organising international cultural relations in a new manner, the assurance of appearance at global exhibitions and international fairs, and the support of participation in cultural events and festivals organised domestically and abroad;
- the support of new trends in artistic creations, new cultural initiatives, and scientific research bearing on culture;

- the support of the activity of culture-creating, culture-propagating and self-teaching individuals and communities.

The Ministry has furthermore supported the establishment of Hungarofest (1st April 2000), a non-profit national association responsible for large-scale cultural events. It organises and transacts cultural programmes in Hungary as well as abroad. Its mission is to contribute to “the mediation of values; we would like to transmit the image of a modern Hungary which has priceless spiritual values. Laying emphasis on the quality and uniqueness we would like to present the local, regional and global role of our culture. We pay attention to the balance of the representation of traditional and cultural values by compiling our programmes.”

The Ministry of Cultural Heritage also founded the Central European Cultural Institute on 1 June 2000 in Budapest. The main objective of the institute is to foster better communication between Central European cultures by organising cultural events. The institute houses exhibitions, literary events and minor concerts.

M i n i s t r y o f F o r e i g n a f f a i r s

Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Culture and Science is responsible for cultural diplomacy. The aim of Hungary’s cultural diplomacy is to achieve a favourable international opinion about Hungary. It considers culture to be the best means to do this.

The department coordinates the work of ninety-two cultural attachés that are working at Hungarian diplomatic representations around the world. It supports cultural projects related to high-level diplomatic and political visits. Furthermore, the department is involved in the supervision of the Hungarian cultural institutes that operate under the Ministry of Cultural Heritage’s Department of Cultural Institutes. Practical experience taught the Department that on the European cultural market there is a great demand for art that has a strong national character. It has therefore adapted its cultural diplomacy in order to present art that is characteristic of Hungary.

P o l i c y f o c u s

The Department of Culture and Science has elaborated a strategy of cultural diplomacy that is founded on the premise that cultural diplomacy is an integral and essential part of foreign policy. It is based on the following principles:

- the aim of diplomacy and cultural diplomacy respectively, is to form favourable international opinion about the country, therefore active cultural presence is Hungary’s essential interest;
- the image of Hungary is determined by culture;
- cultural diplomacy means the safeguarding of Hungarian identity and individuality;
- the cultural basis of the European Union must be strengthened; Hungary adds much to European culture with its values of the fine arts, folk arts and gastronomical traditions - as do other Member States of the EU.

G e o g r a p h i c a l f o c u s

The geographical focus of Hungary could be seen from policy statements to concentrate on fellow EU Member States and neighbouring non-EU countries. Of the neighbouring countries, cultural cooperation is said to be centred on Central European countries, especially the Visegrád countries, with which it shares “common traditions, common cultural values, and common interest.” Hungary currently holds the presidency of the Visegrád group and has outlined its programme for the period 2005-2006 in a policy paper. It is also a member of the World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples.

The Ministry of National Cultural Heritage maintains a network of twenty-two Hungarian cultural institutes and the spread of these seems to follow the geographical policy line. These cultural institutes are responsible for promoting Hungarian culture abroad and twelve of the twenty-two cultural institutes are housed in European Union Member States including: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany (two), Italy, Poland, Slovakia and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, Hungary houses four cultural institutes in other neighbouring European countries including: Bulgaria, Romania, Russia and Egypt.

Hungarian cultural institutes are also present in the United States and India.

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G e n e r a l / b a c k g r o u n d r e a d i n g

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The Visegrad Group reflects the efforts of the countries of the Central European region to work together in a number of fields of common interest within all-European integration. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia have always been part of one civilization sharing cultural and intellectual values and common roots of religious traditions which they wish to preserve and further strengthen.