



Long Profile
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HUNGARY

Cultural Policy Profile

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1. Cultural policy system

1.1 Objectives, main features and background

Hungary (like most EU countries) fits into the 'architect model' of cultural policy, in which an intervening state actively supports cultural production. Markets play a weak role in many cultural areas, given the small size of the Hungarian-speaking audience and a low level of internationalisation. Like in other Eastern European countries, no strong system of private investment in the arts emerged in the post-communist period, and they strongly rely on state support.

Hungarian cultural policy from 1990 to 2010 could be classified as belonging to the 'democratic elitist' paradigm. By providing forms of institutional autonomy for key actors, competing elite groups establish a situation where particular forms of expertise are seen as the basis for making policy choices. This type of cultural policy model operates through arm's-length governmental organisations and through forms of governance arrangements.

After 2010, when *Fidesz*, the governing party gained constitutional power at the elections, the accent from European integration and values moved towards national traditions and conservatism. This included, among others, increased care about the culture of the altogether about two million ethnic Hungarians in the neighbouring countries. The objectives of cultural policy have nevertheless not been enacted in official policy declarations. The statements of the Prime Minister suggest the main clues to the subsequent priorities also in the cultural arena.

The conventional starting point of the Orbán government's cultural policy is his 2009 speech given at the exclusive annual meeting for his loyal cultural and economic elite. Here, he argued that culture is not a distinct sphere separated from politics and described the function of cultural policy as creating and maintaining the political community. Therefore, cultural policy under the Orbán-governments represent the 'cultural diffusion' model, which focuses on the role of culture in strengthening national identity.

Nationalist ideology goes along with religious (Christian) allusions, an anti-LGBT agenda, However, this does not mean that cultural policy is ideologically coherent. Rather, a double structure can be observed, with a certain division of tasks inside the government structures of policy implementation: while the ministerial structure is responsible for the general management of cultural issues and maintaining institutions, ideological issues and 'culture wars' have been assigned to the Prime Minister's own loyal intellectuals.

One of the most conspicuous institutional features of Hungarian cultural policy is the weakness of formal structures. No written document could be found to determine the principles of and governmental priorities for cultural policy. There had not been an independent Ministry of Culture in the governmental structure between 2010 and 2022, although it had existed before 2010 under the Socialist-Liberal governments. Prime Minister Orbán merged it into a broad Ministry of Human Resources, along with education, health and employment affairs. In that period, the highest position connected to cultural policy was a State Secretary in this ministry. Cultural State Secretaries were changed every two years on average and did not announce articulated vision or profile of cultural policy. Their main task was to run the cultural infrastructure. Real policy-shaping actors could be found outside the ministerial structure, directly controlled by the Prime Minister.

There have been periods when culture was one of the top priorities in the evolution of the System of National Cooperation (*Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere – NER*), as the current political power identifies itself. A new era began in 2018, when the Prime Minister pronounced to focus on the cultural transformation of the country, in the political sense of the term. From the ideological content

the emphasis shifted towards competitiveness: the programmes and institutions connected to the ruling power are expected to achieve and exhibit excellence.

In 2022, a new Ministry of Culture and Innovation was established, led currently by Balázs Hankó. The state secretary responsible for culture is currently Magdolna Závogyán.

The Hungarian cultural policy system does not operate along the conventional algorithm of defining cultural policy priorities, preparing, and executing implementation. A politicised culture without policies. Participatory planning and negotiated decision-making are almost entirely absent. The state secretariat for culture in the Ministry for Culture and Innovation, or the Committee for Culture of the Parliament have negligible roles, and the same applies to the own bodies of the system: the Hungarian Arts Academy – *Magyar Művészeti Akadémia, MMA*, or the National Council for Culture. Fundamental changes occur overnight and are often linked to influential personalities.

Continued centralisation is an important feature of the system. Mandates and resources of local governments are limited, social and professional partners are little consulted. Annual budgets reveal little of next priorities as their provisions are significantly overwritten by ad hoc government decisions during the year. The lack of detailed manifest strategies does not mean financial neglect: on the contrary, the public cultural spending of the government is among the highest in the continent. Particularly much is spent on preservation and reconstruction of built cultural heritage and new buildings.

Background:

1918- 1945:

A relatively small East-Central European country, whose cultural performance reflected the legacies of a once momentous middle power of a thousand-year-old kingdom, and the features of a semi-feudal societal arrangement.

1945-1956

Up until the revolution of 1956, a crude, schematic political course prevailed, slavishly imitating the Soviets, oppressing every kind of autonomy in the cultural life, applying nevertheless important measures in the democratisation of culture.

1960-1989

Cultural dogmatism began to melt away in the early 1960s. Up until 1989, in culture, like in other areas of life, a protracted process of revision was in progress and the most gradual transition within the entire communist bloc had taken place. As a result of state subsidies, culture was accessible at low cost, and cultural consumption (reading of books, attendance at the theatre, cinema, concerts, libraries, museums, and exhibitions) was growing. Under dictatorship, art acquired a specific political significance, which contributes to the view of many that culture has been one of the losers in the transition.

1990-2010

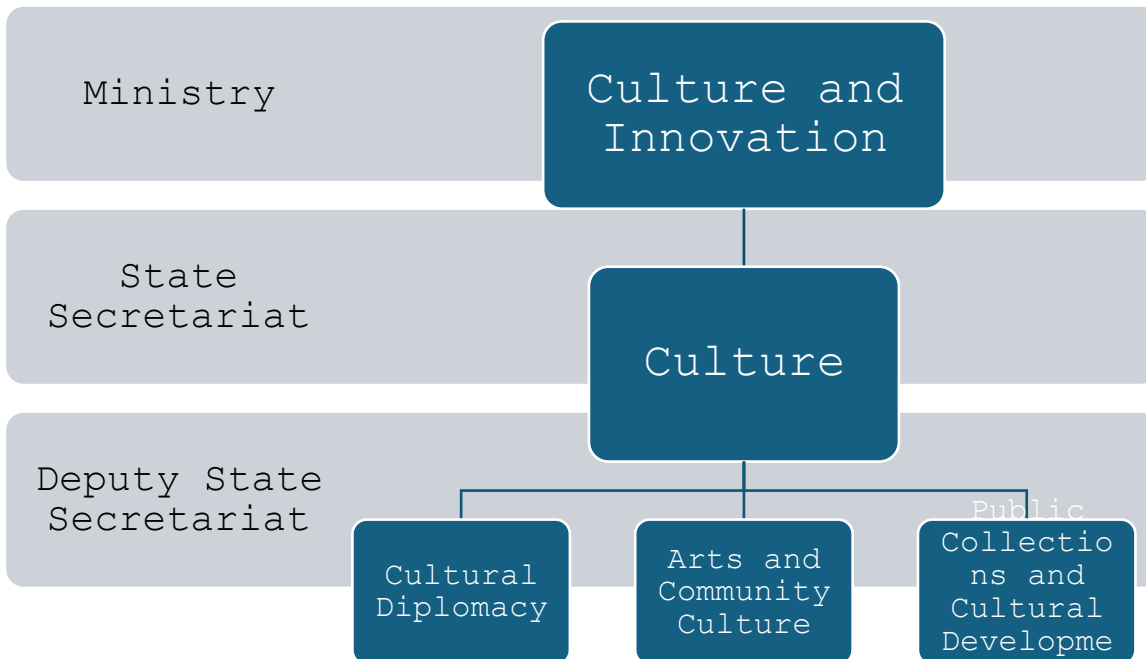
Transition from communism took place amidst great economic difficulties. The national objective of European integration defined the priorities and modalities of cultural policies. Nevertheless, a fatigue of the decades of reforms and expectations led to increasing economic and social crisis in Hungary – aggravated but not really caused by the 1998 world crisis. Those years did not favour concerted action for culture.

Since 2010

The System of National Cooperation (*Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere – NER*) has prevailed.

1.2 Domestic governance system

1.2.1 ORGANISATIONAL ORGANIGRAM



As discussed in the next chapter, heritage and other important remits are administered in other sections of the government.

1.2.2 NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

The single-chamber Parliament does legislation. In addition to its role in preparing laws, the Committee for Culture and Press also fulfils supervisory functions by occasionally putting various issues related to culture on its agenda. Overall, however, since spring 2010 when *Fidesz* gained 2/3 of parliamentary seats, the Parliament and its Committees have limited autonomy, and reflect the will of the government or *Fidesz*, which is dominated by its leader, the Prime Minister.

The Ministry of Culture and Innovation (since 2022) is responsible for government science policy, science policy coordination, vocational training, higher education, family policy, children and youth policy, culture, cultural diplomacy and Hungarian cultural institutions abroad, and adult education. It is important to note however, that public education, as a problematic policy area remained under the supervision of the Ministry of Inner Affairs. Instead of full-range education affairs, family, children and youth policy is paired with culture under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture and Innovation. In the ministry, there is a separate State secretariat responsible for culture.

There are also some government commissioners with ministerial rank directly under the Prime Minister, with temporary/specific responsibilities, who are responsible for cultural tasks. Currently these are:

- Government Commissioner responsible for certain tasks relating to government investments in cultural heritage sites: the Buda Castle District, the Citadel at the top of Gellért Hill and the Visegrád Monument Complex.

- Government Commissioner for the Development of the Hungarian National Cinematographic Industry.
- Government Commissioner responsible for the preparation and implementation of the Hungarian programmes of the Hungarian-Turkish Year of Science and Innovation.

The Ministry of Construction and Transport is responsible for the protection of cultural heritage. The tasks relating to the protection of monuments, world heritage sites and archaeological sites, i.e. immovable cultural heritage, are carried out by the Deputy State Secretariat for Architecture and Monument Protection within the State Secretariat for Architecture. Within the State Secretariat for Architecture, the Department for Cultural Heritage is responsible for the protection of artefacts and works of art, i.e. movable cultural property. This ministry also supervises the National Castle Programme.

In the Ministry for Economic Affairs a ministerial commissioner oversees the creative industry.

It is not an easy task to get information about the structure of cultural government. The respective ministries appear as chapters of the common government web portal. Apart from news, the top official's introduction, and a contact list of subordinate institutions the sites do not contain further information about policies, plans and statistics. Decisions and new pieces of legislation are presented as news items but are not stored in a structured fashion. A separate service portal displays official communication and management issues. The official government web portal is only in Hungarian, English version is not available. Clicking on the icon of 'English version' takes the reader to *abouthungary.hu*, which is a completely different website presenting the achievements of the government.

The National Cultural Fund is a semi-autonomous institution since 1993 and is in charge of financing projects. The Fund is chaired by the Minister of Culture and Innovation. The Vice-President of the Fund is appointed by the Minister, after consulting the President of the Hungarian Academy of Arts (MMA), for a maximum term of four years. In order to achieve the objectives of the Fund, a National Cultural Fund Committee is established by the Minister. One third of the members of the Committee are appointed by the Minister on his or her own authority, one third by the MMA and one third based on proposals from the professional organisations concerned. The Minister, with the participation of the MMA, also sets up permanent colleges of experts in the field of the arts and other cultural fields to use the resources of the Fund.

The implementation of the state cultural strategy is the task of the Petőfi Cultural Agency, owned by a public interest trust (Foundation for Hungarian Culture, founded in 2021). The agency owns significant real estate assets and coordinates and finances several cultural institutions. The mission of the Agency is: "to ensure access to Hungarian culture. The aim of the Agency is to convert Hungarians from being consumers of culture to becoming bearers of culture. To this end, it emphasises the community-building function of culture." Various cultural brands of the agency include among others:

- *kultura.hu*, the main brand of the Petőfi Cultural Agency. It is an online cultural portal that presents the cultural values of the whole of Hungary in the fields of literature, music, film, theatre, visual arts and pop culture.
- HOTS (Hungarian Oncoming Tunes) is to promote Hungarian productions in the international popular music market
- Carpathian Basin Folk Network's aim is to present, promote and incorporate the useful knowledge of folk traditions into daily practice.

- The mission of Fairy Tale Centrum is the promotion of contemporary children's books and literature in Hungarian and the education of reading.

Unlike the National Cultural Fund, Petőfi Cultural Agency distributes public grant money directly, without professional boards of trustees.

1.2.3 REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

The elected assemblies and self-governments of the 19 counties ("vármegye") have no mandate in culture.

1.2.4 LOCAL AUTHORITIES

There are 3178 local governments with mayors and elected bodies in Hungary. The list of their obligatory tasks includes cultural services, especially securing access to public library services, the support of art organisations and community cultural activities, as well as the protection of local cultural heritage. The content of these tasks is little defined and on account of the centralising policies the current government, the relevant competences and resources of local governments have been reduced. Libraries, museums, theatres were transferred to the towns with county rank.

1.2.5 MAIN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ACTORS

The current constitution (The Fundamental Law of Hungary), which entered effect in 2012, positions the Hungarian Arts Academy (*Magyar Művészeti Akadémia – MMA*) at the same level as the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. This latter was founded in 1827 while MMA was upgraded to the rank of a public foundation by Act CIX in 2011 from a non-governmental association which had been in existence since 1992.

Main professional bodies:

- Hungarian Music Council / *Magyar Zenei Tanács*
- Association of Hungarian Filmmakers / *Magyar Filmművészek Szövetsége*
- Association of Hungarian Librarians / *Magyar Könyvtárosok Egyesülete*
- Association of Hungarian Fine and Applied Artists / *Magyar Képzőművészek és Iparművészek Szövetsége*
- Association of Hungarian Dancers / *Magyar Táncművészek Szövetsége*
- Hungarian Publishers and Booksellers Association / *Magyar Könyvkiadók és Könyvterjesztők Egyesülése*
- Association of Hungarian Orchestras Magyar / *Szimfonikus Zenekarok Szövetsége*
- Hungarian Festival Association / *Magyar Fesztivál Szövetség*

In two important fields the political dividedness of the country led to the existence of two nationally representative entities:

- Hungarian Theatre Association / *Magyar Színházi Társaság* vs Hungarian Theatre Society / *Magyar Teátrumi Társaság*
- Hungarian Writers association / *Magyar Írószövetség* vs Society of Hungarian Authors / *Szépírók Társasága*

1.2.6 Transversal co-operation

As described above, different cultural affairs are under different ministries. In particular, the management of cultural heritage is separate from the rest. It is typical that the Prime Minister himself creates government commissioners, public foundations and agencies to distribute funds for the management of what he considers to be important issues. This can have the advantage of efficiency, but the disadvantage of unpredictability and lack of transparency. Of the non-governmental organisations, the government only cooperates with those over which it has control. In the absence of structured communication about the operations of the cultural government, the details of the co-operation are not transparent.

1.3 Cultural institutions

1.3.1 Overview of cultural institutions

As a legacy of the communist period, the state is expected and indeed is performing as the main sponsor of cultural institutions. That applies also to those connected to local governments, including the vast network of local cultural centres (*művelődési házak*). With the regime change opportunities for private investments and initiatives opened up and they led to fundamental overhaul in the cultural industries, such as publishing, design, art galleries etc. – festivals can be added to this list.

Decisive is the role of independent art groups, which in drama and dance have challenged the primacy of large public ensembles already since the late communist era. In the popular music scene, spontaneous bottom-up emergence and independent operation are the rule.

1.3.2 DATA ON SELECTED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

Table 1: Cultural institutions financed by public authorities, by domain

Domain	Cultural institutions (subdomains)	Number (Year)	Trend (++ to --)
Cultural heritage	Cultural heritage sites (World Heritage List)	8 (2024)	0
	Museums (organisations)	702 (2023)	0
	Archives (of public authorities)	95 (2023)	+
Visual arts	Public art galleries / exhibition halls	1 167 (2021)*	+
	Art academies (or universities)	5 (2023)	0
Performing arts	Symphonic orchestras	27 (2023)	+
	Music / theatre academies (or universities)	5 (2023)	0
	Dramatic theatre	240 (2023)	+
	Music theatres, opera houses	3 opera 1 operetta and 1 music house (2023)	0
	Dance and ballet companies	58 (2023)	+
Books and Libraries	Libraries (including school libraries)	6583 (2023)	--
Audiovisual	Broadcasting organisations	..	
Interdisciplinary	Socio-cultural centres / cultural houses	5964 (2023)	0

Sources: <http://www.ksh.hu> except *: <http://www.artportal.hu>

1.3.3 PUBLIC CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS: TRENDS AND STRATEGIES

The trends of change in public cultural institutions can be summarised as follows:

- The share of state spending on culture is particularly high, partly due to the construction of representative cultural institutions. One of these is the museum district being built in Budapest's City Park: House of Music Hungary (2021), Museum of Ethnography (2022) and the planned new National Gallery. The other major cultural project in Budapest is the restoration of the lost architectural heritage of the Castle District: the Royal Palace, the Palace of Joseph the Prince, the Royal Riding Hall. The government also aims to restore historic buildings across the country through the National Castle Programme. However, this programme also involves privatisation, as it is not profitable for the state to maintain more castles.
- Another trend affecting public cultural institutions is centralisation: the Museum of Applied Arts, the National Museum, the National Széchényi Library, the Petőfi Literary Museum, the Museum of Trade and Hospitality, and the Museum of Natural History have been merged into a Hungarian National Museum Public Collection Centre. (See 3.1.) There was also a plan to centralise local cultural institutions (theatre, library, local museum). In this plan, the local institutions would have been placed under a national umbrella body (National Theatre, National Museum) with administrative / financial accountability. The proposal of the Minister of Culture, which was met with great protest from the cultural community, was not implemented.
- The government is placing a strong focus on the development of a unified cultural strategy, as indicated by the 2019 law on the so called priority cultural strategic institutions. These are 17 items that range from the National Theatre to the Film Institute. Besides 11 budgetary institutions, these include 4 nonprofit limited companies and 2 nonprofit shareholding companies. Next to 16 customary cultural institutions the Institute for Hungarian Studies (*Magyarságkutató Intézet*, in fact a research centre) belongs to the group of 17. They are financed by the national budget based on five-year agreements with the government. The same Act established the National Cultural Council chaired by a minister and comprising the heads of the cultural strategy institutions plus the chairman of the Hungarian Arts Academy – MMA.

1.4 International cooperation

1.4.1 Public actors and cultural diplomacy

In 2024, 26 Hungarian Institutes (named after Franz Liszt since 2021), operate in 24 countries. Since 2014 the Hungarian Liszt Institutes are managed directly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The oldest one was established in Vienna in 1924, the latest additions were Ljubljana in 2016, Tokyo and Seoul in 2019. Besides, educational and cultural diplomats work in those countries where there is no cultural institute, but the improvement of educational and cultural relations is a priority for Hungary (Amman, Baku, Hanoi, Kiev, Madrid, Shanghai, São Paulo, Tel-Aviv). According to its mission statement, the network of the Institute strives to promote Hungarian cultural values internationally, to spread the good reputation of Hungary to the community of nations, and to foster and build cultural relations between Hungarians from within and beyond the borders.

The common web portal of the network is <https://culture.hu>. It reflects the customary performance of foreign cultural institutes, which is primarily the display of national culture. Bearing the title of

Collegium Hungaricum, the Institutes in Berlin, Rome, and Vienna also have facilities for providing scholars with fellowships and residence.

Since 2021-22, government attempts to strengthen the role of cultural diplomacy. Bilateral cultural agreements, usually in conjunction with educational and scientific co-operation are managed by a separate deputy state secretariat for cultural diplomacy of the Ministry of Culture and Innovation. The exchange of experts is still of some importance in the agreements, especially in the heritage field. In the arts, most co-operation projects are realised through other channels.

The Petőfi Literary Agency runs several projects for promoting Hungarian Culture abroad such as a popular music export agency (HOTS) and The Continental Literary Magazine, a quarterly, English-language, thematic literary and social magazine. The Agency offers grants to foreign publishers for the translation and the production of Hungarian authors abroad. It also runs the Hungarian Translators House for residencies in the city of Balatonfüred.

The International Department of the National Film Institute represents Hungarian films abroad and handles their festival and sales activity. The government fosters the shooting of films in Hungary – several studios receive regularly large multinational productions – which is a solid segment of the international cultural cooperation of the country (and a not negligible item in foreign trade).

In the last 15 years, the spectacular exhibitions organised by the Museum of Fine Arts and the National Gallery require great efforts of international cultural co-operation.

The Ludwig Museum curates the country's exhibits at the Venice Biennale, where Hungary has had a pavilion of its own since as early as 1909. Hungarian galleries have enjoyed a limited presence at the leading world events which is improving slowly.

Attracting major sport events is top priority for the government, absorbing large amounts of public subsidy and related investments. These are sometimes accompanied with impressive cultural performances like the opening celebrations of the 2017 World Aquatics Championships and the 2023 World Athletics Championships in Budapest. Also, the idea of an Olympics Game in Budapest has been raised again and again by the government.

1.4.2 EUROPEAN / INTERNATIONAL ACTORS AND PROGRAMMES

Hungary has been a member of UNESCO since 1948; its General Conference was presided by Hungarian women both in 1974 and 2011. A staff of three operates the Secretariat of the Hungarian National Commission for UNESCO within the Ministry of Culture and Innovation. In the cultural domain, among others, eight Hungarian sites were added to the World Heritage List between 1987 and 2002 (two of them are transborder sites). An international project on The Danube Limes line of the frontiers of the Roman Empire was adopted as World Heritage in 2021 but the Hungarian government withdrew its involvement in it in the last minute.

Hungary ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006 and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2008. The body responsible for the implementation of the Convention in Hungary is the Hungarian Open-Air Museum in Szentendre; a national inventory was also set up. Currently ten items are inscribed on the UNESCO world list of Intangible Cultural Heritage, two of them with other countries. The national inventory of intangible cultural heritage contains 48 items.

Hungary is also party to the Memory of the World Register. In 2015, the 7th Hungarian item was added to the Memory of the World Register.

The Structural Funds of the European Union finance a considerable number of cultural heritage projects, the largest amounts going to built heritage restoration and upgrading.

Hungarian operations have been active at applying for European cultural grants ever since Culture 2000. In the latest seven-year period they coordinated 12 Creative Europe projects and participated in about 70 more. Winners can get matching funding from the National Cultural Fund (NKA) to cover part or all of their own contribution.

Hungary also takes part in the cultural co-operation programme of the Visegrad Fund, as well as of the Central European Initiative and the EU strategy for the Danube Region.

After 2010 Pécs, in 2023 Veszprém was European Capital of Culture. The successful series of events, which also covered the Balaton region, saw more than 3,500 cultural events in 24 different genres, with more than one and a half million visitors.

1.4.3 NGO'S AND DIRECT PROFESSIONAL COOPERATION

Most of the mainstream institutions (museums, galleries, theatres, symphonic orchestras, and especially large festivals) have rich programmes of international exchange. Outstanding venues attracting international artists and works of art are the Opera House, *Müpa* (also called the Palace of Arts, a concert hall which also houses the Ludwig Museum), The House of Music Hungary, the *Modem* in Debrecen, the Kodály Centre at Pécs. *Trafó*, the *A38* ship, the *Jurányi Ház*, the *MU* theatre are popular and well-functioning spaces especially for innovative and experimental productions, both from Hungary and abroad, which regularly participate in EU projects and are financed by a variety of sources.

Sziget, the largest international popular music festival on one of the Danube islands of Budapest, had the highest attendance (560,000) in 2018. In 2023, 420,000 visitors from Hungary and abroad attended the festival.

Independent operations are well integrated into their respective international communities, and they are active in several European networks, both as individuals and as creative groups.

2. Current cultural affairs

2.1 Key developments

In the last few years, most of the major cultural institutions and public universities have been restructured by the government into public interest foundations. This does not change the fact that they are funded by the Hungarian state. It has, however, reduced institutional autonomy by placing boards of trustees over the institutions, whose members cannot be recalled. Because of this reform, the European Union has launched infringement proceedings against Hungary. One criticism was that politicians were appointed to the boards of trustees. After this, the Hungarian government recalled the active politicians. However, the issue remains that the board members cannot be dismissed, and the EU does not see it as ensured that these institutions make transparent decisions regarding EU funds. Therefore, public trust universities were excluded from the Erasmus and Horizon programs, causing enormous damage to Hungarian higher education. The exclusion remains in effect.

Among art universities, these structural reforms affected the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, the Hungarian Dance University, and the University of Theatre and Film Arts (*Színház- és Filmművészeti Egyetem, SZFE*). Interestingly, only two art universities showed resistance out of all Hungarian universities. At SZFE, the management, faculty and the students deemed the process a limitation of academic autonomy and carried on a months-long sit-in the academy campus in 2020; some of them opted for an independent secession academy of theatre and film studies: *Free SZFE*. In 2024, the leadership of Moholy-Nagy University resigned as a result of student protests.

The large cultural investments initiated by the government have also sparked much debate. The public has ultimately accepted the newly built museums in Budapest's City Park. However, in the Buda Castle, a reconstruction project is underway that aims to repurpose historic buildings—previously functioning as cultural institutions such as theatres, museums, and libraries—for government use. Critics refer to this process as the “deculturalization” of the Castle. If cultural functions are removed from the area, citizens will no longer have access to these buildings, and tourists will only be able to view the castle from the outside.

Another controversial issue is cultural heritage protection. In economic investments, heritage conservation aspects are not considered, as the state tends to favour investors instead. The independent heritage protection office was abolished years ago, and although experts now work within the ministry, they are unable to prevent demolitions and reconstructions because political decision-makers override their professional opinions.

The Ministry of Construction and Transport oversees the National Castle Programme mentioned in Section 3.1. Within this programme, castles that are in poor condition and unsustainable are privatized, with a mandatory renovation requirement. Criticism of the programme mainly focuses on the fact that the tender winners are business circles with close ties to the government. This group includes friends and family members of the Prime Minister (such as his son-in-law), who are influential players in the tourism industry.

There is an ongoing debate between the state and the Budapest municipality over the funding of theatres in the capital. Most recently, the spotlight has turned to the successfully operating Kolibri Children's and Youth Theatre. The Minister of Culture appointed a new director who was not supported by the theatre's ensemble or the professional committee. In the ensuing debate, the minister stated that the „European orientation” of the Kolibri Theatre must be discontinued.

Citing the 2021 Child Protection Act (the full, cynical name is “Act on tougher action against paedophile offenders and amending certain laws to protect children”), the state restricts artistic freedom of expression (see Section 2.5.5 for details). At the World Press Photo exhibition held in the National Museum, a far-right politician filed a complaint against the museum over a photo

depicting men in women's clothing. The museum's director, although a pro-government politician, refused to enforce the law and was consequently dismissed from his position.

The dependence of cultural actors on the state currently causes the most problems in the field of filmmaking. In the one-stop system of the National Film Institute, filmmakers are highly vulnerable because if their projects are rejected, they have very few opportunities to make a film. Media reports frequently highlight cases where successful directors' films were denied state support, while those of inexperienced but politically loyal producers received funding. The most successful films of recent years, measured both in terms of festival awards and box-office revenue, have been made without state support.

A feature of the current cultural policy is the key role of some personalities who fulfil multiple tasks:

- László Baán is director of the now combined Museum of Fine Arts and the National Gallery, he manages the Budapest City Park Project (involving the erection of several new cultural institutions).
- Csaba Káel is CEO of the *Műpa* art centre, the director of the new Bartók and Liszt Festivals, is government commissioner for the National Film Institute and the Eszterháza Palace and Cultural Centre.
- Szilárd Demeter is director of the Petőfi Literary Museum and the subsidiary Petőfi Cultural Agency, the anchor of the gigantic endowment destined to serve the Foundation for Hungarian Culture. Demeter is also the leader of the Hungarian National Museum Public Collection Centre, recently merged from five big museums (see 1.3.3 for details). He is ministerial commissioner for the integrated development of libraries and of the renewal of the rock scene.

2.2 Cultural rights and ethics

Hungary is party to all relevant international agreements, except the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence which the government refused to ratify.

The Hungarian constitution explicitly protects the freedom of science and art. The principles of rights and equal treatments are fully included in the relevant documents down from the Constitution (the Fundamental Law), and the respective institutions and officials are in place. These guarantee, among others, the right of information and communication with the media in focus as well as the right to association. These two areas are subject to constant political debate. The government keeps referring to the above-mentioned legal guarantees and presents documented arguments about their fulfilment in practice. National and international critics cite numerous instances and indicators on the limitation of the media and on the biased attitude of the government to NGOs. The civic organisations that consistently monitor the decisions of the government are labelled as Soros agencies regardless if they have had relationship to the Hungarian born philanthropist. "To counter attacks on national sovereignty", the government established the Office for the Defence of Sovereignty in early 2024. The office cannot yet apply legal sanctions, but it writes reports against international human rights, anti-corruption, democracy NGOs. However, in early 2025, the government plans to introduce a law to protect sovereignty against organisations receiving foreign funding (including EU grants), including media critical of the government; these will be banned from accepting foreign funding.

Obstacles to civil society organisations and the independent press therefore remain unchanged, and the new law on the protection of national sovereignty further undermines civil society space. The role of the state in funding civil society remains a matter of concern.

2.3 Role of artists and cultural professionals

In the communist times artists were considered a privileged group. A large network of holiday resorts and artist residences served the members of the official professional associations. Their professions were held in official esteem and the system promoted the cults of the most eminent. Many of today's awards and fellowship grants originate from the communist era. Dissidents and those whom the power kept alien to the communist conception of culture were nevertheless excluded from such favours.

The current *NER* System of National Cooperation has returned to placing special emphasis on individuals. The number of artists and cultural professionals who are entitled to lifelong annual annuities above the age of 65 is well above a thousand, and those having reached this age threshold and drawing the monthly annuities total a few hundred persons at any time. The various groups and their gratifications are listed at 4.1.3.

Between the above-mentioned provisions for the elderly and the impressive array of public art fellowships the lately established Térey Grants offer existential backing to 45 middle-aged writers

These signals of the recognition of the role of artists in society are in contrast with the modest conditions and indeed precarity of the greater part of employees in cultural institutions and the artists in self-employed status. The advantageous self-employment tax scheme (*kata*) was abolished in 2022, which also caused significant disadvantages for workers in the cultural sector.

Beyond financial hardships, most of the independent art groups complain about signs of demonstrative neglect on the part of the cultural administration of the state. This is a major difficulty in theatre and film, where many independent companies have disappeared. Well-known theatre and film directors have been forced to leave the country due to lack of jobs.

2.4 Digital policy and developments

Based on a National Info-communication Strategy, conceived in line with EU principles, the government launched the National Digital Development Programme in 2014. Government decisions 1404/2017 and 1175/2018 constituted the Digitising Strategy for Public Collections 2017-2025 (*Közzgyűjteményi Digitalizálási Stratégia - KDS*), earmarking 15,2 billion forints (cca 50 million euros) for the first four years.

The text of the strategy is available at the *KDS* portal <https://kds.gov.hu/>. It discusses all aspects of the issue, including preceding and related projects, relevant EU measures, foreign samples, and a detailed design of the procedures to follow. An additional White Book elaborates on the standards and technicalities of digitisation. The portal displays the progression of the programme at detail. In August 2021, the counter marked 5,033,801 documents having made accessible in the programme. Beyond museum, library, and archival items, this also includes 27 virtual exhibitions.

The National Film Archive contains 423 films considered as Hungarian Classics. This archive includes an online pay-per-view film library but also has free opportunities for educational purposes. The

nemzetiarchivum.hu (national archive) is an online, pay-per-download photo and press (TV, radio) collection, containing 304 007 photos and 987164 press materials.

The Petőfi Literature Museum runs the Digital Literary Academy, which keeps digitised oeuvres of contemporary writers who make their works available on the Internet by contract. Created in 1998, this unique endeavour has between 30 and 40 members at any time. New members are co-opted by old members once a year to replace deceased ones. The full oeuvre of new members is digitised, put on free display, and their authors receive a monthly allowance four times the value of the official minimum wage. In 2025, the programme hosts the works of 174 past and current members. In addition, the works of earlier writers (as posthumous members) are digitised: their numbers are close to those of past and present members.

The *Hungaricana* project of the Library of Parliament aims at sharing Hungarian cultural heritage amassed in various collections. Its special features are historical maps, postcards. This is a free service unlike the huge digital collections of *Arcanum* Ltd. This private enterprise specialises on Hungarian language periodicals and books but also features a variety of maps. *Fortepan* is a highly popular open access, community photo archive containing over 200,000 downloadable archive photos for free.

2.5 Cultural and social diversity

2.5.1 NATIONAL / INTERNATIONAL INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Intercultural dialogue is not a priority of cultural policies in Hungary. There are no specific state programmes to support intercultural dialogue.

On the cultural arena, especially on the alternative scene, there are ample international and intercultural interactive projects. Some genres lend themselves to such fusions, e.g., jazz and world music, in which Roma musicians play an eminent role. The government (and the National Fund) subsidise these projects without placing special emphasis on interculturalism.

A special feature of cross-border co-operation is the lively interaction that takes place with the ethnic Hungarian artistic communities and public living across the border in the neighbouring countries – which, by definition, is not "intercultural".

In Hungary there have been no significant migrant communities; the number of migrants and their rate within the entire population has been very low: about 2% of the entire population is of foreign origin. Hungary has not been a popular or attractive final destination of migrants.

Due to the rapid processes of assimilation of those minorities (Germans, Slovaks, Croats, Serbs etc.) that remained after various forms of cleansing, their culture goes little beyond folkloric nostalgia acts. The only intercultural relationship that has been an issue in today's Hungary is the one between the Roma and the majority society. The large number and the geographic spread of this minority group produces occasions for interaction, opportunities for exclusion, inclusion, and assimilation; however, it is difficult to quote proven good practices of conscientious intercultural dialogue on the state level.

There is another relationship that is heavily laden with historical legacy and remains a latent source of tension: that of Jews who are estimated to represent around 1% of the population. Regardless of the recent phenomena of displaying or reconstructing Jewish art (there are Jewish festivals, cultural centres etc.), one cannot speak of a separate Jewish culture inside the Hungarian society, with which to pursue intercultural dialogue.

In terms of international intercultural relations, Hungary has announced a policy of opening up to the East in the 2020s. This policy has primarily political and economic objectives, but it is accompanied by cultural rapprochement. Hungary has become a member of the Council of Turkic Peoples. The Kurultaj (Tribal Assembly of the Turkic Peoples), originally a completely grassroots event, receives significant government support. Kurultaj is the largest event in Europe with the goal of reviving ancient nomadic folk traditions. It is organised with the participation of more than 100 traditionalist civil organisations from the Carpathian Basin. Hundreds of horsemen and thousands of other traditionalists (mainly in ancient Hun, Avar and Hungarian costumes and armour) actively participate.

2.5.2 DIVERSITY EDUCATION

Intercultural education is part of the general framework curricula however no specific subject is dedicated to this issue. The main goals of intercultural education programmes are common national values and identity, world cultures, religions, and traditions in general, and more specifically the Roma integration. Yet Roma culture and history are not an integral part of the national curricula (i.e., history lessons); instead, Roma are mentioned as a challenge in separate chapters; this caused recent debates about the curricula, which has remained on the civil level.

2.5.3 MEDIA PLURALISM AND CONTENT DIVERSITY

Media pluralism is at the centre of political controversy, receiving international attention. The ruling power asserts that all constitutional and European norms are observed and claims about a balanced offer. As to critics, some of the main arguments are as follows:

- All five members of the top authority Media Council are selected by *Fidesz*, the ruling party, and are appointed for nine years
- Important independent media outlets have been liquidated or coerced into serving the government
- Public service media allow minimum space to voice other than the government
- Most advertisements from the state and its enterprises go to pro-government media
- Government advertisements absorb exceptionally high share of the budget, and their content is propaganda rather than information, creating an air of permanent campaign for the ruling party

Some of these critical points are touched upon in the 2024 Rule of Law Report of the European Commission: "The threats to media pluralism highlighted in previous rule of law reports remain unaddressed. Measures to regulate the channelling of state advertising to media organs, to guarantee the functional independence of the media authority and the editorial and financial independence of public service media have not been adopted and are not envisaged. Journalists and independent media organs continue to face several challenges, including seemingly coordinated smear and delegitimation campaigns and selective access to government premises and events. Further legislative changes have introduced restrictions on freedom of information" – from the Hungarian country chapter of the 2024 Rule of Law Report.

The legal fundament of the media is the Act on Media Services and Mass Media (CLXXXV/2010). The highest-level competence is embodied in the Media Council. Its chairperson is the CEO of the National Media and Infocommunication Authority which carries out the regulation and supervision of public and private media in the country.

Public media, including the National Radio, the National Television and the Hungarian Press Agency, are governed by a body called the Public Service Body (*Közszolgálati Testület*).

Public TV broadcasts on six channels, while public radio uses seven channels. Their main source is the (generous) state budget.

The long-term licences of private – commercial and community – channels are awarded by way of public tenders, submissions are evaluated and decided by the Media Council. All media service providers must abide by the programme quotas in the Media Act.

Linear audio-visual media (television) must broadcast European works in over 50%, and Hungarian works in over 33% of their time, and at least 10% of European, and at least 8% of Hungarian works must be ordered from independent producers; On-demand media the minimum quota is 25% European and 10% Hungarian works; and public media must broadcast European works in over 60%, and Hungarian works in over 50% of their time, and at least 15% of these must be ordered from independent producers;

Radio stations must broadcast Hungarian musical works in at least 35% of time, at least 25% of which should be more recent than 5 years old.

Complementing the above measures that protect Hungarian culture, at one point the Media Act promotes cultural diversity: "Linear media service providers with significant market power shall ensure that at least one quarter of the cinematographic works and film series originally produced in a language other than Hungarian, broadcast between 7 pm and 11 pm, shall be available in their original language, with Hungarian subtitles."

Despite the advances of the Internet, about half of Hungarians still regularly watches television, especially the two leading commercial channels. The four channels of the national television (this includes a sport channel) and a variety of thematic, movie and entertainment channels are lagging behind.

2.5.4 LANGUAGE

The population relocations during and immediately after World War II accelerated the process of linguistic assimilation of the cultural minorities. This homogenisation culminated the century-old deficit in mother tongue teaching of minorities, the disappearance of closed communities and the growing uniformity caused by mass communication.

In 1995 the government ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in respect to Croatian, German, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak, and Slovene, but not to Romani (as opposed to at least 11 countries in this last respect).

To counterbalance these factors, the National Radio's Nationalities Channel broadcasts 12 hours (from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.) in the same 13 minority languages each day: two hours in Croatian, German, Romanian, Serbian and Slovak, and half an hour for Slovene, Polish, Greek, Armenian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Gypsy (Romani and Boyash), and Ruthenian. There is a 57-minute special programme for Roma every weekday—all Roma in the country speak Hungarian and only 17% of them speak Hungarian as a second language.

The national public television broadcasts 4 regular weekly programmes for Croatian, German, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak minorities, one more for the Roma, and a combined programme for 6 more cultures – these all carry Hungarian subtitles. The average length of all these is 16 hours per month.

Since 2019, a commercial entertainment channel on Roma culture (*Dikh Tv, Radio and Youtube Channel*) has been broadcasting, partly using the Romani language.

Hungary has not had an official language policy or strategy. In 2014 the new Hungarian Language Strategy Institute was set up which currently operates as a division of the Institute for Hungarian Studies.

The practice of bilingual street-signs is increasing in villages of mixed ethnicity.

2.5.5 GENDER

In the past couple of years “gender” has been in the very centre of Hungarian politics and media attention in various connotations.

The word itself irritates the government, often reduced to representing atypical sexual behaviour. Gender studies have officially been removed from higher education curricula.

The proportion of women in decision-making positions in cultural life is below 20 percent (the last exact figure is from 2018, but it has not increased since then). Women ministers are very rare in the Hungarian government, and at the time of writing there are none. The Prime Minister suggests that politics is too hard for women. In the cultural government, women can reach the level of state secretary, the state secretary for culture is currently a woman. This lack of representation in decision making do not affect the status that women have over the past century achieved in culture and related fields in our society. The outstanding performance of Hungarian women is acknowledged within and without the borders in filmmaking, fine arts, literature, theatre, and other cultural areas, including science and sports.

Despite frequent divorces and scandals linked to prominent members of the governing elite, the conventional family pattern is proactively promoted: the 9th amendment of the constitution establishes that “the mother is a woman, the father is a man”. At the beginning of 2025, the government plans to write into the constitution that “people are either male or female.” A change of sex is legally forbidden and same sex marriages are not allowed in Hungary. In 2025, the Pride parade, which has been held every year for 30 years, is also planned to be banned, following the Russian example.

Under the 2024 amendment of the Child Protection Act, minors must be protected from “propaganda of homosexuality” and “self-serving depictions of sexuality.” This legislation piece has direct bearing on culture. All children's books with LGBTQ themes should be sold in bookstores only within a plastic cover, and not at all within 200 metres of churches and schools. Bookshops have been fined tens of thousands of euros for breaking this law. The law is deliberately vague, it is not clear what constitutes a self-serving depiction of sexuality or the propaganda of homosexuality. The aim is to keep cultural actors in the dark and impose discretionary penalties.

2.5.6 DISABILITY

The obligations enabling access and availability for people with disabilities connected to development projects of the European Union have had direct and indirect effects in the cultural arena and beyond. They have accelerated the processes whereby physical and info communication accessibility is the norm in construction, programmes, and design.

Nevertheless, in the cultural field, no significant regulation, guidelines, or campaign have emerged regarding disabilities in the past period.

2.6 Culture and social inclusion

An Act on National and Ethnic Minorities was passed in 1993 (*Act LXXVII*), declaring minorities to be constituent elements of the state, defining their collective and personal rights. National and ethnic minorities – or, since an amendment in 2011, "nationalities" – are defined as ethnic groups that have been living in Hungary for at least one hundred years and differ from the majority by language and culture. There are 13 recognised nationalities. In Hungary ethnicity is considered a private matter: systematically collecting data according to ethnic background is not allowed under the Personal Data Protection Law. National censuses and elections of minority governments are all based on voluntary self-identification. In the 2022 census, 2.5 percent of the population declared that they belong to the Roma minority and 1.7 percent to the German minority. All the other minorities are under 1 percent in the population.

As was discussed above, nurturing the cultural and language requirements of the rapidly dwindling percentage of ethnic minorities is a priority. Its function is the opposite of inclusion, the aim being to reduce the pace of assimilation. To certain extent this serves to justify the country's involvement in the protection of the Hungarian minorities over the border. This is also why Hungary was among the first to sign and ratify the framework agreement of the Council of Europe on the protection of national minorities. Hungary also takes part in discussions which raise the issue of minorities within the political principles and priorities of the European Union.

In 2022, 218 thousand foreigners lived in Hungary, about 2% of the population (KSH). Their number has increased by 52% since 2011. Most of the foreigners living in the country, 76%, came from European countries, and 82 thousand were nationals of neighbouring countries (mainly ethnic Hungarians from a neighbouring state (Romania, Ukraine, Serbia, Slovakia), who do not constitute a cultural minority). After the outbreak of the Ukrainian war, a significant number of ethnic Hungarians living in Transcarpathia moved to Hungary.

Asians (Chinese) are the most dynamically growing minority group, with 19.7 thousand double the figure in 2012.

In a society where the current ethnic homogeneity is politically a stated asset no wonder that cultural inclusion of immigrants is out of the agenda. This even applies to Hungarian-speaking Transcarpathian Roma fleeing the war in Ukraine. Ngo-s active in intercultural activities feel the stigma of Soros agents upon them.

The issues of social deprivation and cultural inclusion overlap regarding the Roma or Romanies, one of the 13 recognised minorities. Although considered as politically incorrect, the old name of Gypsy (*cigány*) is still widely used, both in their own community and in official documents. The inclusion of the Roma population is a fundamental challenge in Hungary. During the 2022 census, 201 000 Roma were recorded, i.e., about 2.5 percent of the population; However, according to the 2015 estimation of the European Roma Rights Centre approximately 750 000 Roma live in Hungary today. That is over 7.5% of the population, many of the living in poverty and exclusion. On the other hand, the greatest number of Roma with full higher education in the whole of Europe is in Hungary, both in absolute and relative terms. Among the first 24 Hungarian members of the European Parliament, two were Roma: one of whom was the rapporteur for the EU strategy on Roma inclusion. Hungarian Roma artists are especially famed in music, both individually and in ensembles.

National federations of minorities have consultative status and often veto rights in relevant legislative matters. Their elected local government representatives in the villages and towns, and on the national level, have significant rights and growing resources – which, by nature, are primarily spent on culture. There are a total of 2098 local minority governments in Hungary, of which 1121 are Roma and 403 are German. There are 9 national minority representatives (*nemzetiségi szószóló*) in parliament.

2.7 Societal impacts of arts

Tourism and urban development are sectors where the contribution of culture is acknowledged by the government. The main argument in favour of building the Budapest Museum Quarter is to promote cultural tourism. Similarly, Veszprém, the European Capital of Culture 2023, has received significant support for the renovation of its city centre and for brownfield cultural investments for tourism.

Reducing social inequalities can be a major policy goal in which culture can play a role. Unfortunately, it is not among the government's priorities. However, there are many NGOs working to help children in deprived areas and in deep poverty to integrate. A good example is the *Igazgyöngy* foundation in Eastern Hungary. This foundation has started to help Roma children in small villages to catch up in school through visual art education. The art education was then used to develop complex school and social economic integration programmes. Objects decorated with the children's works are sold in many museum shops, even in Austria.

2.8 Cultural sustainability

The principle of cultural sustainability is subordinated to the political goals of government. Cultural institutions that are politically forced into loyalty, such as public universities or priority cultural strategy institutions, receive increased funding. Institutions that have not undergone government reforms, especially if they are in some way critical of the government, are difficult to sustain, for example because they are maintained by financially depleted municipalities or simply do not receive enough state subsidy. In any case, the condition for cultural sustainability is the surrender of institutional autonomy. This is made explicit by the government when it publicly argues for institutional changes by promising wage increases and adequate funding.

2.9 Other main cultural policy issues

Cultural politics is in a flux, bringing about unpredicted important developments any moment.

3. Cultural and creative sectors

3.1 Heritage

Monuments

Investments and real estate are priority issues for the government in office since 2010. The area of monuments – built heritage – therefore received attention and was subject of restructuring from early on. The National Office of Cultural Heritage – the top institution of monument protection that had existed since 1872 with different names – was dissolved in 2012. Its functions, mandates, assets and personnel have been subject to a series of reorganisations until a relative consolidation has come about with the enacting of Act C /2023 on Hungarian Architecture. This law transfers responsibility for monuments to the Minister for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage which currently lies with the Minister for Construction and Transport. This ministry oversees the list of protected monuments, administered by the Lechner Knowledge Centre Nonprofit Ltd. (Among others, this institution runs the European Heritage Days in Hungary, in conjunction with the National Committee of ICOMOS.)

Since 2017, the bulk of the monuments in public ownership, more than 50 listed buildings, have been operated by *NÖF nkft* (*NÖF National Heritage Protection and Development Non-Profit LTD*). Among others, *NÖF* oversees the National Palace Programme and the National Castle Programme, generously financed by the government, with due attention to their inclusion on the tourism strategy of the country. In this connection the reconstruction of hilltop fortresses is a special focus.

The valuable archive containing the registry of tens of thousands of monuments between 1872 and 1992 has been transferred to the Hungarian Museum of Architecture and Monument Protection Documentation Centre, owned and supervised by MMA, the Hungarian Academy of Arts. Lately, this institution has consolidated its position as a centre of scientific activities on the protection of built heritage.

Hungarian achievements in cultural heritage protection are repeatedly acknowledged with EU awards. Two projects have received European Heritage Labels, the Living Heritage of the city of Szentendre being the latest in 2019.

Among the European Heritage / Europa Nostra prizes, the restoration of the Liszt Academy of Music and of the Museum of Fine Arts stand out in the recent past. The latest prize for “Citizens Engagement and Awareness-raising” went to a unique bottom-up initiative in 2023. The ‘Budapest 100’ project celebrates buildings and their memory that were built a hundred years earlier.

The government is committed to the built heritage of Hungarians living beyond the border. Teleki László Foundation, a private non-profit organisation, with roots in the 1980s, gets regular support from the National Cooperation Fund of the government for related projects. The key institution in this remit is the Foundation for the Preservation of the Central European Built Heritage (*Közép-európai Épített Örökség Megőrző Alapítvány*). At its establishment in 2020, in addition to financial donation, the government endowed shares of two state-owned enterprises. The Foundation has acquired and maintains more than 25 buildings in five neighbouring countries, especially in Slovakia and Romania.

Museums

Responding to the proposal of the newly appointed General Director of the National Museum, in May 2024, the government declared the Museum of Applied Arts, the Museum of Natural History, the Museum of Trade and Hospitality, the Petőfi Literary Museum and the National Széchényi Library as its member institutions, together constituting the Hungarian National Museum Public Collection Centre (*Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Közgyűjteményi Központ*). Including the external components of

all constituting members, the centre oversees 30 more museums and related institutions across the country, like the Esztergom Castle Museum or the Semmelweis Museum of Medical History (see 1.3.3).

Preventive archaeological explorations before investment projects offer opportunities for excavations and subsequent activities. Besides their scientific significance, such exercises also produce additional revenues for museums. In 2011, however, conditions took a U-turn, benefiting investors in terms of financial burden and deadlines, which in 2012 were crowned by withdrawing primary responsibility for the entire scope of built heritage, including archaeology, from the minister of culture. Since 2018, this domain is overseen by the Ministry of Construction and Transport; since 2022, the top institution is the National Institute of Archaeology at the National Museum

The Museum of Fine Arts and the National Gallery, a combined institution since 2012, continue to host exhibitions that attract masses of visitors, including foreign tourists, and enjoy a considerable academic reputation.

In terms of public museum development, the government has announced and is implementing a comprehensive investment plan for the Budapest City Park (Liget Project). From 2022, two new buildings have been completed, the House of Music and the Museum of Ethnography, and the Museum of Photography will move to a reconstructed villa nearby. The new Museum of Contemporary Art is also promised to be built in the coming years. This part of the project has been criticised by those who are concerned about the congestion of the City Park.

In addition to the Museum of Photography founded and still operating in Kecskemét, there are two other public photography collections in Budapest, the Robert Capa Contemporary Photography Centre and the Mai Manó House.

On the negative side the list begins with the 150-year-old Museum of Applied Arts: its art nouveau building has been closed for renovation for more than a decade.

EU funds have facilitated the reconstruction of the Hungarian Museum of Natural History which shares the building with a public college. The longer-term solution is still in the air: lately the controversial idea of relocating to the city of Debrecen has been mooted.

The Architecture Museum and the Technology and Transport Museum, which are now united, have all three been waiting since the last century for the decision to erect their buildings.

Hungarikums

A Hungarian speciality is the pyramid of “values”, regulated by a special law since 2012. Towns and villages are encouraged to set up their Committees of Values which select and administer their Repositories of Values. These include buildings, objects, foods, customs, phenomena etc. on a very broad scale. Committees on county level choose items into the regional repositories. Parallel to this, values important for the Hungarian people abroad are also collected by seven committees in the neighbouring countries. The top level is the 21-strong national Hungarikum Committee that decide on the repository of Hungarikums. Currently, in January 2025 this list contains 60 items, with a high proportion of intangible cultural heritage. The collection includes the Hungarian members in the Unesco lists of World Heritage and Intangible Heritage, with which the system is in undeclared relation.

3.2 Archives and libraries

The nationwide network of public libraries operates upon strong professional tradition, with coordination and guidance of the Library Institute within the Széchényi National Library. The services

of small settlements of less than 5 000 inhabitants are overseen and assured by the county libraries. Local libraries have adapted to the current protocols of European public libraries: they run programmes for the inhabitants, with children in focus, librarians are active on social media and thus pose a challenge to the network of houses of culture. The digital shift of library operations has advanced, profiting also from EU funds. At the same time, librarians complain about restricted resources on salaries, running costs and acquisition.

A burning issue is the location of the National Széchényi Library (now part of the Hungarian National Museum Public Collection Centre). Its main building in Buda Castle is less and less adequate for its needs but no decision and plans have emerged about the future of this national institution.

The law on archives merged the 19 county archives into the structure of the National Archive. This among other means that they can be accessed through one common website. Budapest and a few more cities have their own archives. Operations of the libraries have been streamlined and become increasingly open and user-friendly.

As far as the canon of national culture is concerned, literature is an area in which conservative and/or nationalist authors of the interwar period are promoted by the authorities, including in school curricula. However, the debates on this subject lost momentum as the opposing camps became entrenched; in literature, the canons of the two national writers' associations did not borrow from each other.

3.3 Performing arts

The performing arts, more specifically theatres, can be considered representative and indicative of the cultural policy developments in Hungary. The theatre profession is sharply divided along political lines, the role of a few – or rather one – influential person is symptomatic about the patronal character of the society. This is not counterbalanced by the composition of the 24-member National Performing Arts Reconciliation Council, several members of which are delegated by organisations outside the *NER* halo: its majority, nevertheless, votes in support of the government.

The division became manifest by sharing the public theatres in Hungary between the government and the municipality of Budapest when in 2019 the opposition won at the local government elections (earlier joint supervision and financing was the rule). As a symptom, the once common open-air theatre was divided into two, with two different venues: one for the state and one for the city. The second venue of the Opera (with more seats) has also been separated and converted into a commercial concert hall: but in this case both halves belong to the state. The formerly consensual national showcase of theatres (*POSZT* – National Theatre Reunion in Pécs) was discontinued, and loyalty appears to bias the distribution of financial resources and distinctions. Independent ensembles, which play an important role in the Hungarian performing arts, are dispreferred, especially if they put critical content on stage. On the other side, shows and performers of dubious value are in disproportional favour. A particularly controversial phenomenon is sponsored concerts and biopics of old rock singers from the communist era, which respond to the belated attention with loyalty. In addition, talent shows, popular with viewers also absorb massive public subsidies.

The political and cultural division has spilled over to the top-level educational institute, the University of Film and Theatre Arts *SZFE*, the account of which described in chapter 2.1.

3.4 Visual arts and crafts

There is no special strategy and no peculiar developments in this area. Relevant processes in the museum and higher education sectors (especially the exhibitions in the National Gallery and the upgrading of the MOME Moholy Nagy University) have important impact on this area.

The annual Art Market has established itself as an emerging regional art fair in east-central Europe. The top 10 prices for 2024 auctions at the largest houses ranged between 300 and 900 thousand euros (with a Titian in first place).

3.5 Cultural and creative industries

3.5.1 GENERAL DEVELOPMENTS

Despite frequent reference to the strategic importance of the creative industries, no coherent strategy of legislations exists. It does not occur in the communication of the state secretariat for culture. A Creative Industries Strategy 2020-2030 was presented in November 2020, endorsed by the Ministry for Innovation and Technology, but the document is inaccessible, and no follow-up took place. During its presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2024, Hungary chose competitiveness as the number one priority of its agenda. In this context, the government published a Competitiveness Strategy 2024-2030; two out of the 28 pages are dedicated to the creative industries. The 520 words, however, contain no target indicators, benchmarks or deadlines.

3.5.2 BOOKS AND PRESS

In 2023, the Hungarian Publishers and Booksellers Association, nominally 8% more than a year earlier, estimated the total sales of the book market at 64.2 billion HUF. In 2023, the average number of copies sold per title was 2 320. Despite some growth recorded in the past couple of years, sales revenues of digital books are about 3% of the total turnover (audiobooks stand at 0.7%).

Table 2: Number of published titles, 1990-2023

	Number of titles	From this textbooks	Million copies	From this textbooks
1990	8 322	1 230	125.7	22.2
2000	9 592	1 595	36.9	11.1
2010	12 997	2 135	34.4	11.8
2020	14 694	2 115	28.0	10.3
2023	15 866	1 417	36.8	13.7

Source: Central Statistical Office.

In 2024 Parliament regulated the price of books. Prices are fixed for 365 days after publication, during which time a maximum of 10% discount is allowed.

To counter the continuous shrinking of the print runs of printed quality magazines - which try to survive by running website versions or transferring entirely on the internet the government has dedicated 1,8 billion forints for help annually from 2021.

3.5.3 AUDIOVISUAL AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

Most media portals, including the ones with important cultural content, are gradually shifting toward various payment models.

3.5.4 MUSIC

The music branch can boast of strong institutions of its own that have developed and consolidated over the last decade. The annual Music Hungary conferences, the ProArt Music Industry Reports and the statistics of the Mahasz (Hungarian Record Industry Association) provide detailed and up-to-date overviews of the sector.

Concert life is catching up after the interruption caused by the pandemic, but the number of live performances in 2022 still reached 80% only of the 2019 figure. Nearly twenty thousand new compositions were registered in 2022 (3% labelled as "classical" music); two thirds brought in less than one euro in royalties.

Table 3: Sales of recorded music, 2018-2020

	2018	2020	2023
Physical sales (vinyl, cd etc.)	1.43	1.31	1.83
Digital sales (streaming, downloads etc.)	2.15	4.15	7.51

https://www.mahasz.hu/piaci_adatok

Table 4: Composition of digital sales in 2023

Digital Sales	International	Domestic	Classical	Not musical content	Total
Single	48%	45%	6%	0%	100%
Album	29%	10%	26%	35%	100%
Video	15%	85%	0%	0%	100%
All downloads	40%	34%	13%	13%	100%
Digital content					
Mobile phone	98%	1%	1%	0%	100%
Subscription audio	76%	22%	1%	0%	100%
Advertisement based	73%	25%	1%	0%	100%
Video	41%	56%	2%	1%	100%
All streaming	67%	31%	2%	0%	100%

All digital sales	67%	31%	2%	0%	100%
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https://www.mahasz.hu/piaci_adatok

Classical music occupies strong position in cultural policies. 16 symphony orchestras receive regular public support. Care is taken about the condition of national and local concert halls and over 3000 pianos of orchestras, concert halls and music schools have been lately restored from public funds.

The House of Hungarian Music in the Budapest City Park opened in a futuristic building in 2022. Besides its concert hall it houses an attractive exhibition and facilities for meetings and research.

3.5.5 DESIGN AND CREATIVE SERVICES

The government-owned Hungarian Fashion and Design Agency organizes the Budapest Design Week every October, which includes over a hundred events throughout the country. These include 360 Design Budapest, which has become a major regional design exhibition in Central and Eastern Europe.

In Budapest, two nonprofit centres run rich programmes and have important impact on contemporary architecture: one is *KÉK* – Contemporary Architecture Centre, the other *FUGA* – Budapest Centre of Architecture.

The Hungarian Museum of Architecture was established in 1968, and the scope of its collection encompasses materials related to architecture and architectural history. It has no permanent building and currently exists in combination with the Monument Protection Documentation Centre, and is maintained by *MMA*, the Hungarian Academy of Arts.

3.5.6 CULTURAL AND CREATIVE TOURISM

Tourism is one of the top priorities of the current government. The Hungarian Tourism Agency disposes of sizeable funds with which investments into accommodations ranging from luxury hotels to rural tourism are subsidised. High level sports events like the 2017 World Aquatics Championships or UEFA Euro 2020, and events like the International Eucharistic Concerts and a Hunting and Nature Exhibition (both in 2021) absorbed billions of forints. Regarding cultural tourism, in the National Tourism Development Strategy 2030, adopted in 2017 and amended in 2023, cultural tourism is positioned behind gastronomy, health, business and religion. Until 2020 – before the capital was taken over by the opposition – the Budapest Spring and Autumn Festivals had a separate line in the central budget. Today they are replaced by the government-organised Bartók Days in spring and the Liszt Festival in autumn.

Next to one-dimension festivals of rock, classical music, or theatre, events that combine all these and more (films, circus, literature, debates etc.) and offer an environment of popular festivities are a valuable feature of the Hungarian festival scene – catering for domestic tourists in majority.

4. Law and legislation

4.1 General legislation

4.1.1 CONSTITUTION

The two-thirds majority in the Parliament, which is required to effect changes in the text of the constitution, and which *Fidesz* (officially in coalition with the Christian-Democratic *KDNP* party) gained at the 2010 elections, was used to fully re-write and adopt the basic law by spring 2011. The preamble of this new Fundamental Law of Hungary, the National Avowal of Faith, contains references to culture:

We commit to promoting and safeguarding our heritage, our unique language, Hungarian culture, the languages and cultures of national minorities living in Hungary, along with all man-made and natural assets of the Carpathian Basin... We believe that our national culture is a rich contribution to the diversity of European unity... We respect the freedom and culture of other nations...

Specific references to culture in the text of the Law:

Article P

... cultural assets shall form part of the nation's common heritage, and the State and every person shall be obliged to protect, sustain, and preserve them for future generations.

Article R

(4) The protection of the constitutional identity and Christian culture of Hungary shall be an obligation of every organ of the State.

Article X.

(1) Hungary shall ensure the freedom of scientific research and artistic creation...

(3) Hungary shall defend the scientific and artistic freedom of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian Academy of Arts.

Nevertheless, these passages have little direct impact on actual cultural phenomena in the country. The hundreds of resolutions of the Constitutional Court have almost never touched upon this part of the constitution, and never in relation to culture.

Similarly, the records of the activities of the parliamentary Ombudsman of civic rights contain negligible instances that only relate to cultural rights.

4.1.2 ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The cultural budget of the government traditionally lacks transparency, which renders international comparisons impossible without additional research. In fact, due to the dispersed nature of competences for culture, one cannot talk about one "cultural budget". The budget section under the charge of the state secretary for culture contains aggregations like "public collections" (i.e. libraries, museums, archives directly supervised by the ministry) to which considerable amounts are earmarked without specification or listing.

As another area of opacity, a quarter of the budget of the National Cultural Fund is at the discretion of the minister: the grants from this source are subsequently listed on the website of the Fund. The amount to spend via public calls of the Fund has stagnated at 7-8 billion HUF a year. The Fund,

where the boards are still composed as "coalitions", with one third delegated by cultural associations, has lost its hegemonic role in cultural finances, with the emergence of several competitive financial sources: Petőfi Cultural Agency, *MMA*, and directly from the ministry in charge of culture (now paired with Innovation).

One more aspect that makes a full and clear overview difficult is the high proportion of finances outside the frame of the annual budget. In 2019, as much as a third of the cultural expenditure of the government took the form of ad hoc decrees.

A traditional feature of the Hungarian system of cultural finances is the contribution from the central budget to the "cultural tasks" of the local governments. This does not appear in the chapter of the Ministry for Culture and Innovation in the national budget but in a separate chapter named assistance to local governments. In 2021 it was 35 billion HUF, and for 2025, 55 billion has been earmarked. Beyond subsidising targets like specific kinds of cultural institutions each local government receives general cultural normative assistance; the majority of municipalities nevertheless spend several times more on culture than the "per capita" central redistribution, which has a symbolic role only.

4.1.3 SOCIAL SECURITY FRAMEWORKS

Hungary has moved away from the communist era when nearly all cultural actors were either civil employees or members of the monolithic artistic associations who enjoyed benefits comparable to salaried persons. After the regime change, many people found themselves on the margins of the social security frameworks because they had been coerced into the position of quasi entrepreneurs instead of the more secure employee status, so that the employer (often a public institution like a theatre or a museum) could save on the social insurance fees. It is estimated that today over 75% of actors, dancers, musicians, arts organisers, technicians, designers, and other cultural operators working for a variety of clients are self-employed.

This issue was behind the introduction of *EKHO* in 2005, a regime tailored to taxpayers in the creative sector, allowing for simplified tax contributions. The scheme has so far survived the many changes in the taxation system. In 2024, the condition of this status is that the annual income of the person remains below HUF 60 million (about EUR 140 000). The *EKHO* Law (Act CXX/2005) states that the minimum mandatory tax base for social security contribution payments is the minimum wage, while the rest of the citizen's income should be taxed at a 15% rate, which includes social security duties. *EKHO* is open to both employees and self-employed people, including pensioners.

Independents are not able to claim unemployment benefit. Sickness benefit may be covered by paying into a private insurance policy. Self-employed people in the cultural sector can pay into a private pension fund to top up the state pension; nevertheless, many of them tend to pay social insurance only after the mandatory minimum monthly wage upon their own choice, risking their old-age care. The several hundreds of holders of all state awards listed under 7.2.3, however, enjoy lavish complementary pension after the age of 65.

This arrangement is crowned by the life-time allowances of the members of *MMA*. In 2021, full *MMA* members get 410,000 HUF a month, about 1,150 EUR, close to the average income in the country, on top of their regular pension or salary. Corresponding members' monthly allowance is 340,000 HUF. The Artists of the Nation (see 7.2.3.) receive 23 times the official minimum retirement pension of 28,500 HUF beyond the age of 65. Widows, widowers, and orphans are also entitled to certain allowances.

All these systems historically trace back to the establishment of high life-time allowances to members of the Academy of Sciences, imitating the Soviet model in the 1940s, spreading over to culture.

Beyond the acknowledgment and stimulation of cultural achievement, these allowances develop surreptitious loyalty to the state.

4.1.4 TAX LAWS

There is a single 15% income tax rate for individuals. Family taxation was introduced to provide extra incentives to families having at least one child. Families with three children and are exempt from personal income tax. From 2022, youths below 25 years of age are also non-taxable. State prizes, awards and fellowships are tax exempt. Corporate tax is one of the lowest in Europe at 9%. Social security payments are usually calculated at 27 % above the gross salary and the 15% personal income tax is due to be paid on the "super-gross" salary which includes social security costs.

Artists and cultural operators can choose between a variety of statuses for their work and thus taxation:

- Private individuals with a tax number for activities without special permit.
- Self-employed: in some fields like actors, painters, translators etc. this is the dominant form.
- Member of a limited or limited liability company.
- Employee.
- Public servant: until 2020 people employed at public cultural institutions (museums, theatres etc.) used to be in this status.

The self-employed, including members of limited companies, have simplified tax regimes to choose from:

- *EKHO*, the method of simplified tax contributions was discussed at 4.1.3.
- Flat-rate tax
- Item-based tax on small tax enterprises (*kata*, suspended in 2022)
- Small business tax (*kiva*),
- Regular business/corporate tax (*tao*)

Each regime has its specific conditions (which are occasionally modified) and advantages.

Conversely to corporate tax, vat is the highest in Europe at 27%. From among cultural goods books and journals, and from services live music without entry fee (at restaurants and free community events) benefit from the 5% reduced rate. The intermediate 18% rate applies to paid open-air concerts – achieved by the festival lobby in 2018. The high vat-rate makes entry tickets as well as all expenses linked to cultural activities more expensive.

Associations, foundations as well as nonprofit enterprises can—by adhering to specific conditions—qualify as public benefit organisations. These organisations are exempt from corporate tax if their business income is less than 15% of the total turnover. Other organisations – without the public benefit status – are exempt only if the total annual turnover is less than 10 million HUF, with less than 10% business income.

Businesses – companies and individual entrepreneurs – can deduct 20% of the value of donations given to public benefit organisations from their tax base, and in the case of multi-annual pledges, this rate is 40%.

Philanthropic support to cultural organisations is not particularly widespread. Most of these tax benefits affect other sectors (social and health care, education etc.), and the bureaucratic regulations

attached render donation complicated both for the donator and receiver. Donating to culture is also negatively affected by the priority that the government gives to tax benefits to supporting sports, football teams above all. Similar tax credit arrangement was introduced for theatres and orchestras between 2012 and 2018, which with time became an important income for the performing arts sector. Due to blatant frauds and abuse the government abruptly stopped that scheme.

Regarding sponsorship proper, tax exemption is difficult to conceive: the entire amount can be deducted from the tax base as marketing expenses anyway. The number of acknowledgements displayed at most projects (exhibitions, theatre performances, festivals, and especially films) indicate that businesses support culture in many ways, including direct financial sponsorship.

Tax legislation has greater significance with investments. In this respect, the Film Law stands out, offering a 20% tax break on film making. The tax credit attracted the shooting of international productions and provided incentives to some local projects. These schemes have been brought in line with the requirements of EU regulations. They have also created a favourable environment for investment in studios, the largest of which is the Alexander Korda Studios at Etyek. Second in size is the new studio complex at Fót, opened in January 2025, built with massive state support.

There is another peculiarity in the Hungarian tax system – Act CXXVI/1996 on “1%” – which has also attracted considerable attention outside the country. When taxpayers submit their annual tax returns, they can allocate 1% of their income tax to a non-governmental organisation of their choice by indicating its tax identification number (also another 1% to a registered church, if they so wish). According to the data disclosed by the tax authorities, about a third of tax-payers channelled 17,3 billion HUF from the tax on their 2023 income to 29,933 organisations. It is next to impossible to identify the share of culture from the spreadsheet of nearly 30 thousand lines as the names of the organisations do not always provide clues about their profile. The share of culture is nevertheless around 1% only in this scheme, the rest is dominated by ngo-s engaged in health (especially children’s), education, animal care, local history etc. Within the scheme, most of the targeted cultural undertakings are groups that are not in the government’s favour.

4.1.5 LABOUR LAWS

Artists and other cultural actors can work in the following forms: as employees, individual entrepreneurs (sole traders), corporate entrepreneurs, as well as freelance workers.

Those employed in public cultural institutions were civil employees until the end of 2020. Their labour conditions were regulated by the acts on civil service and on public finances. These contained the detailed schedules and criteria of salaries and wages – with many direct references to cultural and artistic jobs – updated each year.

Since January 2021, cultural workers at public cultural institutions are employed on the same footing as elsewhere. Everyone had to receive the same initial salary as in 2020, but its amount is less determined by law than before. The minimum net monthly wage in 2025 is HUF 193 382 (about EUR 470), and 232 000 (about EUR 560), for qualified positions, with full secondary education. Net average earning in the country is somewhat below the double of this latter amount.

Social partnership functions relatively effectively on the national level but it is less so, or even non-existent, in respective cultural sub-sectors.

The provisions in the pensions system permit performers to retire early, e.g., dancers and some other performing artists under certain circumstances.

There are no specific provisions concerning the involvement of volunteers that are relevant to culture. Act LXXXVIII/2005 provides the necessary legal environment and protection for public voluntary work.

4.1.6 COPYRIGHT PROVISIONS

Hungary follows the continental, *droit d'auteur* tradition. The *Act on Authors' Rights LXXVI/1999* closely observes requirements of the *acquis* of the European Union. This Law, among others, specifies the rights attached to transmitting and downloading via Internet.

The Law stipulates levies on all kinds of equipments used for recording, storing and playing audio-visual content, such as blank cassettes, mobile phones, personal computers and so on. They are determined by the Minister for Justice each year and collected by Artisjus, the Hungarian collecting society. Importers and manufacturers of copy machines and related equipment pay levies to the Hungarian Alliance of Reprographic Rights. Schools and public libraries are exempt from paying this fee.

In 2020, the net copyright income of Artisjus, the Hungarian collecting society, was 14.8 billion HUF, which due to the pandemic is much less than the 18.3 billion HUF in the previous year. From the 14.8 billion the society paid 15.9 billion to right holders and 2.0 billion to the National Cultural Fund. This latter transfer is regulated by law to finance a programme for young pop-rock talents: the sum corresponds to 25% of the "blank cassette" revenue.

The associations addressing cultural rights management are contained in this table. Focusing on their specific target groups, they address copyright and cultural rights protection as legal bodies.

Name	Name in English	Stakeholders	Web address
<i>ARTISJUS Magyar Szerzői Jogvédő Iroda Egyesület</i>	Society ARTISJUS Hungarian Bureau for the Protection of Authors' Rights	Composers, lyricists, literary authors, audiovisual artists, film writers, film producers, visual and applied artists, performing artists, phonogram producers	www.artisjus.hu
<i>Magyar Reprográfiai Szövetség</i>	Hungarian Alliance of Reprographic Rights	Publishers, film producers, designers	www.reprografia.hu
<i>Művészeti Szakszervezetek Szövetsége Előadóművészi Jogvédő Iroda</i>	Bureau for the Protection of Performers' Rights	Performing artists	www.eji.hu
<i>FILMJUS Filmszerzők és Előállítók Szerzői Jogvédő Egyesület</i>	FilmJUS Hungarian Society for the Protection of Audio-	Cinematic creators (director, cameraman), film writers, film producers	www.filmjus.hu

	Visual Authors' and Producers' Rights		
<i>HUNGART Vizuális művészek Közös Jogkezelő Társasága Egyesület</i>	HUNGART Collecting Society of Hungarian Visual Artists	Visual and applied artists, photographers, architects, industrial designers, creators of creative technical facilities	www.hungart.org
<i>Magyar Hanglemezkiadók Szövetsége</i>	Hungarian Recording Industry Association	Phonogram producers	www.mahasz.hu
<i>Magyar Szak- és Szépirodalmi Szerzők és Kiadók Reprográfiai Egyesülete</i>	Society for the Reprographic Rights of Professional Non-Fiction, Fiction Authors and Publishers	Literary authors, scientific literature authors, book publishers and magazine publishers	www.maszre.hu
<i>Magyar Irodalmi Szerzői Jogvédő és Jogkezelő Egyesület</i>	Hungarian Literary Copyright Protection and Management Association	Literary authors	https://miszje.hu
<i>Repropress Magyar Lapkiadók Reprográfiai Egyesülete</i>	Repropress Association for the Reprographic Rights of Publishers	Publishers of periodicals	www.pressjus.hu

4.1.7 DATA PROTECTION LAWS

Hungarian data protection laws and their implementation are rather strict. Until 2011 there was a special Ombudsman for data protection, whose functions have been taken over by the National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information.

4.1.8 LANGUAGE LAWS

No language law has any effect on cultural or general life in Hungary. (The restriction of mother tongue use of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine has stirred general resentment in Hungary and partly justifies the government's attitude in the Russian war against Ukraine.)

4.1.9 OTHER AREAS OF GENERAL LEGISLATION

Regional division of jurisdiction has been an open issue ever since the regime change. The county system was established by the founding king St Stephen in the 11th century – which makes it hard to exert major structural changes. In 2012, most of the cultural functions, especially maintaining institutions like county museums and libraries, were transferred to cities from villages.

The 19 historical counties (*vármegye*) have elected local governments, differently from the seven NUTS (nomenclature of territorial units for statistics) regions that are the basic units regarding EU regional development programmes.

The 175 districts (*járás*) do not have local governments or chief administrators. The district offices fulfil roles in specific areas of public administration but have no competence in culture.

Besides the central government, the only level that really matters is that of the 3 178 local (municipal) governments. This number includes 348 towns as well as 23 districts of Budapest.

4.2 Legislation on culture

4.2.1 GENERAL LEGISLATION ON CULTURE

In Hungary, there is no comprehensive law on culture or art. *Act CXL/1997* is often referred to as the Law on Culture, but in fact it regulates three sub-sectors only: libraries, museums and local socio-cultural activities. The other fundamental piece of cultural legislation is *Act LXIV/2001 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage*. After 2010, when *Fidesz*, the governing party gained constitutional power, the only constituting cultural policy Act of the *NER* was the Act on the Hungarian Arts Academy – *MMA*. Otherwise, a series of parliamentary acts kept modifying the earlier basic cultural laws, including ones on the archives and films. Between 2010 and 2019, no fewer than eight acts made wide ranging changes to the Cultural Heritage Act of 2001, in connection with the several stages of the fundamental overhaul of this sector.

In 2019, the Prime Minister pronounced to focus on the cultural transformation of the country, in the ideological and political sense of the term. The Acts on the National Council for Culture and the Institutions of Cultural Strategy, as well as on the Foundation for Hungarian Culture brought about a totally new hierarchy of decision-making and of institutions. The accelerated reorganisation of the cultural arena went hand in hand with that of the institutional structures of higher education, research, and media. A large number of government decrees accompanied and specified these two parliamentary acts. However, the last couple of years have been less turbulent in terms of cultural legislation.

The list of the existing cultural legislation:

Title of the Act	Year of adoption
Act on Archives	LXVI / 1995
Act on Libraries, Museums, Archaeology and Local Culture ("cultural law")	CXL / 1997 and LXVII / 2017
Act on the Protection of Cultural Heritage	LXIV / 2001
Act on Films	II / 2004
Act on Performing Arts	XCIX / 2008 and XVII / 2020
Act on the Hungarian Academy of Arts	CIX / 2011
Act on Hungarian World Heritage	LXXVII / 2011
Act on the Special Protection of Borrowed Cultural Property	XCV / 2012
Act on the National Council for Culture and the Institutions of Cultural Strategy	CXXIV / 2019

Act on Modifying the Public Employment Status of People in Public Cultural Institutions	XXXII / 2020
Act on the 2023 European Capital of Culture	CIXII / 2020
Act on the Foundation for Hungarian Culture	XVI / 2021

List of laws with relevance to culture

Title of the Act	Year of adoption
Acts on Public Finance and Public Servants	XXXIII / 1992 and CXCIX / 2011
Act on the Use of a Specified Amount of Personal Income Tax in Accordance with the Taxpayer's Instruction ("1% law")	CXXVI / 1996
Act on Authors' Rights	LXXVI / 1999
Act on the Hungarian Language	XCVI / 2001
Act on Volunteering	LXXXVIII / 2005
Act on Simplified Contribution to Public Charges (EKHO)	CXX / 2005
Act on Media Services and Mass Communication	CLXXXV / 2010
Act on Civic Society	CLXXV / 2011
Act on National and Ethnic Minorities	CLXXIX / 2011
Act on Local Governments	CLXXXIX / 2011
Act on Tourism	CLVI / 2016
Acts on Art University Foundations and Transfers of Assets to them	XXXV / 2020 and LXXII / 2020
Act on Public Interest Foundations Performing Public Functions	IX / 2021
Act on tougher action against paedophile offenders and amending certain laws to protect children	LXXIX / 2021
Act on Hungarian Architecture	C / 2023
Amendment of certain laws for the protection of children	XXX / 2024

Hungary has ratified all the relevant international conventions and is party to all treaties, but they have never exerted significant effect on processes inside the country. The monitoring of those conventions, and the ensuing reporting activities are in most case formal and superficial, which was also the case regarding the obligations of the country within the Soviet Bloc.

4.2.2 LEGISLATION ON CULTURE AND NATURAL HERITAGE

The Act on Archives was passed in 1995, and an Act was passed in 2001 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage, covering the areas of archaeology, built heritage, and protection of movable objects. These Acts define the specific ownership requirements of state, local government and private (including Church) enterprises, and stipulate the rules for the protection and utilisation of heritage. After 2010, the legal environment of archaeological explorations was modified several times; the area is now overseen from the Ministry of Construction. Archaeologists complain about the increase of economic considerations over science in policies and legislation.

The 2011 Act on Hungarian World Heritage aims to put on solid legal and institutional basis the efficient implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Hungary and to ensure the efficient management of the eight Hungarian sites on the World Heritage list.

The modification of the 2001 Cultural Heritage Law in 2011 established the concepts of National Memory Sites and Historic Memory Sites, with 17 items belonging to the first, and 52 to the second list.

XCV / 2012 stipulates a state guarantee to borrowings of such a scale: Act on the Special Protection of Borrowed Cultural Goods.

4.2.3 LEGISLATION ON PERFORMANCE AND CELEBRATION

The Act on Performing Arts in 2008 – prepared in close co-operation with professional organisations – was considered a major achievement in cultural policy of the previous government. It regulated the conditions of access to state subsidies. Theatres and orchestras were registered in categories, the number of performances being the main criterion. A special aspect was the guarantee of at least 10% of public grants for independent, alternative, or experimental theatre groups.

In 2011 substantial amendments were made: the theatre part was practically fully re-written. The categories were reduced to three: National, Preferential, and Other performing art organisations. Several of the automatic decisions in the former Act were removed, giving thereby more room for quality judgement. A 24-strong National Performing Arts Council for Reconciliation of Interests was established. Upon their recommendation – with minor adjustments – the Minister appoints the National and Preferential performing arts organisations. The list is updated each year: in 2021 there were 28 National organisations (10 theatres, 7 dance groups, and 11 orchestras), as well as 60 Preferential organisations (42 theatres, 6 dance groups, and 12 orchestras).

The third group – the independent scene – apply for subsidies in the frame of annual public calls, the total amount of which has decreased in absolute terms in the past few years.

4.2.4 LEGISLATION ON VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFTS

There is no specific legislation in the field of visual art. The Act on Authors' rights stipulates fees after the first sale of art works, and levies after the sales of works in the public domain. The rate is 4%, in the first case going down to 0.25% on a regressive scale.

4.2.5 LEGISLATION ON BOOKS AND PRESS

Hungary has no separate Law to support literature and writers.

The cause of libraries is regulated in detail by the 1997 Act on Culture and the 2011 Act on Local Governments, the latter stipulating that local governments are “particularly” obliged to assure library supply. In settlements with a few hundred inhabitants only, the local governments fulfil this obligation by reaching joint agreements with neighbouring towns or villages. The 1999 Copyright Act regulates public lending right payments, administered by Hungarian Literary Copyright Protection and Management Association (*MISZJE*).

4.2.6 LEGISLATION ON AUDIOVISUAL AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA

The 2010 Media Law contains detailed prescriptions to broadcasters about social and cultural diversity. Special emphasis is placed on the Hungarian minorities living abroad.

The mandatory thresholds of programme quotas are in line with European Union regulations.

Minimum percentage of annual broadcasting time:

	Broadcasters	Public service broadcasters
Programmes of European origin	50%	60%
Hungarian programmes produced in Hungary	33%	50%
Programmes by independent producers or less than five-year-old European programmes	10%	15%
Less than five-year-old Hungarian programmes by independent producers	8%	

There exist no special press quotas in Hungary.

Attracting international productions to shoot films in Hungary is a government priority. This is facilitated with frequent modifications to the 2004 *Film Law* and related government decrees. These improvements benefit Hungarian filmmakers as well.

4.2.7 LEGISLATION ON DESIGN AND CREATIVE SERVICE

There are no laws for design or creative services.

5. Arts and cultural education

5.1 Policy and institutional overview

Art education belongs to the Ministry of Interior. There is a state secretariat for Public Education and another one for Tertiary Education.

In public education, the arts have traditionally had important position in Hungary. Literature – called simply as “Hungarian” – is taught in a relatively high number of weekly hours, thanks to the role that mother-tongue literature played in the historical process of constructing national identity. The strong personal influence of Zoltán Kodály, composer and reformer of music education, resulted in the 1950s in frequent singing classes in the lower grades, which still prevails. The predominance (75 percent) of folk songs in elementary music education is also a Hungarian speciality.

Teaching art and music in Hungary is available at elementary, secondary, and tertiary level schools. At the secondary level there are 47 schools. Higher level professional art education and training have a long-standing tradition: the University of Fine Arts was established in 1871, and the Franz Liszt University of Music, one of the most prestigious music universities around the world, was founded in 1875 (with the personal involvement of Liszt).

5.2 Arts in schools

The main change over the last five years has been the introduction of the new national curriculum in 2020. The curriculum defines key competences, development fields and educational objectives. It states that art education is particularly concerned with the development of creativity, self-expression and cultural awareness and plays a significant role in the development of other competences. The new national curriculum was criticised by art historians because art history as a separate subject was removed and merged it into more modern visual culture education.

Table 5: Required amounts of lessons per education fields, National Curricula in 2020

Arts classes	1-2nd grade	3-4 th grade	5-6th grade	7-8th grade	9-10th grade	11-12th grade
Music and singing	4	4	3	2	2	1/3*
Visual culture	4	3	2	2	2	1/3*
Drama				1		1/3*
Film and video						1
Total amount of arts lessons/week	8	7	5	5	4	2
Total amount of required lessons/week (minimum)	44	45	54	57	64	51(+8)

*Either one of the three. A minimum of two weekly "Singing and music" lessons and one "Drawing" lesson are included in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools.

Basic art schools

Institutions of basic education in art and music are accessible and free of charge all over the country. However, there is a selective entry process, especially in the case of music, due to over-subscription. Education fields are the following: visual arts and crafts, theatre and puppet theatre, dance, music. Within music: classical, folk, jazz and electro-acoustic.

Table 6: Number of pupils and pupils/teacher ratio in basic art schools in 2020

	Pupils (thousand)	Pupils per teacher
Visual arts and crafts	31.0	26.9
Theatre and puppet theatre	9.3	13.5
Dance	59.1	37.8
Music		
Classical	70.8	6.3
Folk	6.0	9.0
Jazz	0.9	7.3
Electro-acoustic music	2.2	7.1

Source: https://dari.oktatas.hu/kozerdeku_index

5.3 Higher arts and cultural education

Both the number and share of art students is around 3 percent in Hungarian tertiary education. However, the share of state-funded places is decreasing (as in all of higher education). Women are overrepresented among art students.

Table 7: Number of art students, 2021-2024

Year	Number of art students	Share of art students within all students (%)	Share of women within art students (%)
2021/22	6 994	2.8	64.0
2022/23	7 210	2.9	64.9
2023/24	7 588	2.8	66.3

Source: Central Statistical Office

At BA level, students could choose from 19 higher educational programmes, while at MA level, 45 are available. These include 8 educational programmes – e.g., acting and painting – that stayed in their old one-tier system apart from the majority within the Bologna system

The latest development were presented in Chapter 2.1: three out of the five art universities have been transformed into nominally autonomous “public interest foundations”:

- Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design
- Hungarian Dance University
- University of Theatre and Film Arts (*SZFE*)

The University of Fine Arts and the Franz Liszt University of Music remained state institutions.

5.4 Out-of-school arts and cultural education

One of the functions of the extensive network of the houses of culture is running training courses in various art forms. Participating in various amateur art groups involves continuous training done by professionals.

5.5 Vocational and professional training

In 2015, a nonprofit limited company was founded with the aim to run a Writer Academy and related activities, subsidised in the next two years with altogether 1,950,000 HUF. The project has since launched and published over a hundred young writers.

6. Cultural participation and consumption

6.1 Policies and programmes

Hungarian cultural policy explicitly links participation in cultural life to the issue of national identity. Both of the state programmes that are aimed to increase participation and eliminate social inequalities in access to culture, explicitly aims the strengthening of national identity as well. *Lázár Ervin Programme*, founded in 2019 is meant for schoolchildren and „aims to pass on the millennial Hungarian culture to future generations.” Once per school year, all pupils in grades 1-8 have the opportunity to attend free theatre, dance, circus, classical and folk music performances under the Programme. Performers must apply to register their productions in the LEP system. Between 2019 and 2024, more than 2.2 million children have attended performances via the programme.

Déryné Programme (since 2020) is aimed for general audience and restricted to theatre productions. The aim of the programme is to bring high quality theatre productions to as many communities as possible in the country, especially to those places where the local population has been lacking in “high culture.” Performances can be seen free of charge or for a maximum registration fee of 200 HUF (0.5 Euro), and the host venues only have to pay a nominal fee for the productions, so that even the smallest settlements can benefit from the programme.

Companies can apply for the Déryné programme with classical and mainly Hungarian plays. The aim is much more to preserve tradition than to promote contemporary culture. In four years, 644 settlements have registered to the programme and 1184 productions have been realised in local cultural centres/open air spots. The programme has been criticised for the fact that the selection of productions is decided by a board of trustees chaired by the director of the National Theatre. Beyond their virtues, critics suggest that both the Lazar and Déryné programmes are symptomatic of clientelism.

The provision of basic cultural supply is a stated component of the cultural policy of the government. Local cultural centres are key in this endeavour, both by involving citizens in their activities and by offering venues. Nevertheless, there is no general strategy dedicated to audience development.

Events such as the World Days of Music, the Day of Open Heritage, ICOMOS international Day on *Monuments and Sites*, the Night of Museums, the Month of Libraries etc., are becoming increasingly vigorous and public subsidy accorded to them is also becoming increasingly well planned. Public relations activity for these events is highly professional and their influence over the public is growing.

Teachers get a significant discount on admission to museums and other public cultural institutions with a teacher’s card. Usually there is a family ticket, but there is a debate about the narrow definition of family (same-sex couples and even single-parent families are excluded).

6.2 Trends and figures in cultural participation

During the communist period, cultural participation in Hungarian society was general and high. After the fall of communism, it declined due to a decrease in state funding. By the 2010s, however, cultural participation showed signs of robust consolidation. It is true that the participation figures for the 1990s and 2000s are not necessarily comparable with later years, as the range of productions included has been broadened since then. However, this change reflects a shift in perception that not only formal, institutionalised productions count as culture.

The downturn during the COVID epidemic has left a strong imprint on participation data for 2020. The latest available data, 2023, shows a post-epidemic recovery in almost all genres.

Table 8: Cinema, theatre, museum and concert statistics, 1990-2023

Year	1990	2000	2010	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
*Theatre (No.)	43	52	143	220	210	233	247	240
*Theatre performances (1 000)	12	13	19	36	19	17	30	31
*Theatre (No. of visits per 1 000 persons)	482	393	458	814	456	337	652	718
Concerts (No.)	1 723	1 281	3 654	6 653	6 821	4 160	6 400	7 429
Concert (No. of visits per 1 000 persons)	72	42	99	218	110	90	152	192
Museums (No.)	754	812	647	700	676	698	702	702
Museum exhibitions	1 909	2 804	4 085	3 969	3 121	3 170	3 664	3 626
Museum (No. of visits per 1 000 persons)	1 349	987	946	1 183	454	594	1031	1180
Cinema halls (No.)	1 960	564	411	428	406	397	407	422
Cinema projections (1 000)	416	372	478	501	261	284	466	487
Cinema (No. of visits per 1 000 persons)	3 495	1 426	1 111	1 559	447	642	1 060	1 168

Source: Central Statistical Office.

Note: * From 2008, statistics include independent / alternative theatres, too. Only classical music is included under concerts; from 2008, statistics cover a fuller range than previously.

Table 9: Library statistics, 1990-2023

Year	1990	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022	2023
Local libraries (number of stocks, 1000)	40 925	43 906	43 806	43 768	45 013	45 110	39 201

Local libraries (number of registered readers, 1000)	1 486	1 357	1 540	1 037	1 054	1 096	1 143
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Source: Central Statistical Office.

The overall number of cultural institutions per 100 000 inhabitants has stagnated over the past five years, with the number of theatres rising slightly and libraries falling.

Public cultural institutions were the most common type of cultural institution, with 62 per 100 000 inhabitants in 2023, compared to 39 libraries. It is becoming increasingly common to move these two types of institutions under one "roof", which helps to optimise their maintenance costs.

The accessibility of cinemas, museums and theatres is more limited and is mainly concentrated in larger cities.

In 2021, a nationally representative survey was carried out that included questions about cultural participation (Table X). The first three rows of the table show participation in cultural activities that are heavily subsidised by the government, while the others show the consumption of more market-based cultural products.

Table 10: Participation in cultural activities, 2021

How often in the past year you have participated in the following cultural activities? (%)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Opera, ballet, classical concert	79	14.5	4.8	1.8
Museum, exhibition	57.7	28.9	10.9	2.5
Theatre	59.5	27.3	10.6	2.6
Reading a book	40.1	26.7	20.5	12.0
Pop concert	46.1	35.9	15.0	3.0
Music festival	54.1	29.8	13.6	2.5
Playing computer /video games	56.8	16.5	15.0	11.7

Source: National representative survey, HUN-REN Centre of Social Sciences, Centre of Social Mobility

According to the data of this survey, all forms of cultural participation show a positive correlation with educational attainment, i.e. higher educated people participate more often. In addition, there is a strong spatial inequality in the consumption of culture: participation is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. Also, the cultural participation of the capital city and its agglomeration, as well as the economically developed North-West Hungary, is higher.

6.3 Trends and figures in household expenditure

Table 11: Household cultural expenditure by expenditure purpose, 2020-2023

Items (Field/Domain)	Household expenditure (in billion Forint and percentages)							
	2020	%	2021	%	2022	%	2023	%
Books and press	158	0.7	183	0.7	227	0.7	282	0.8
Cultural services	55	0.2	126	0.4	149	0.4	159	0.4
Cultural products	2,6	0.01	2,4	0.01	2,0	0.01	2,7	0.01
TOTAL	23 678	0.9	26 475	1.1	32 694	1.1	36 899	1.2

Source: Central Statistical Office

Unfortunately, no more detailed data are available. 2020 as a base year shows the impact of the pandemic. The share of cultural expenditures has slightly increased in the next couple of years.

6.4 Culture and civil society

The strength of Hungarian amateur cultural activities lies in the good infrastructure and the network of "művelődési házak" (local cultural and community centres). The political control of the communist system over them cast a shadow on the institution, yet the network of multi-purpose cultural institutions has re-gained its position all over the country after the fall of the old regime. These centres give home to cultural associations and amateur groups in all sectors of culture. Whether their programmes are described as adult education, social policy or youth policy, local cultural centres in Hungary have always been considered part of the cultural sector. In most smaller towns and villages local cultural policy is almost synonymous with maintaining these centres, absorbing the greater part of the cultural budget. Types of activity in the local cultural and community centres include lectures, workshops, exhibitions, arts events, folklore events, entertainment, training and other community events.

Table 12: Statistics of local cultural/community centres, 2000-2023

Year	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022	2023
Local cultural/community centres (No.)	3 265	2 924	5 841	5 803	5 927	5 964
Events (per 100 000 persons)	1 483	1 745	1 233	1 486	1 945	2 016

Source: Central Statistical Office

The number of local cultural and community centres has been stable in recent years. The number of events organised by them is on the rise again after the years of pandemic.

The activities of the network of local centres were until 2016 coordinated by the National Institute of Public Culture (*Nemzeti Művelődési Intézet*), a state institute. This function has since been outsourced to a nonprofit limited company of the same name, owned by *Lakitelek Népfőiskola Alapítvány*, a private foundation.

Cultivating folk culture is traditionally an important function of these institutions. A particular offshoot of this is the grass root phenomenon of "dance houses" from the 1970s, still popular today, where traditional peasant dances are being learned and enjoyed as present-day entertainment. However, in the 2020ies, folk dance is increasingly only for children.

The Hungarian Heritage House is a national institution founded in 2001 and maintained by the Ministry of Human Resources. It serves as a platform for associations and groups preserving folk culture and citizens to meet through numerous performances and interactive, educative programmes. It also provides further education for cultural managers in the field of folk arts.

The national representative survey mentioned earlier, also contained questions on local cultural activities.

Table 13: Participation in local cultural activities, 2021

How often in the past year you have participated in the following cultural activities? (%)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Local historical /heritage festival	66	23	9	2
Local ball	72	19	7	2
"Village day" fest	44	38	16	3

Source: National representative survey, HUN-REN Centre of Social Sciences, Centre of Social Mobility

The data show that these events are mainly attended by people under 60, with no significant gender differences. The smaller the settlement in which the respondent lives, the more likely they are to attend local cultural events.

7. Financing and support

7.1 Public funding

The first decade of the new millennium brought about economic stagnation, including in cultural funding. This was exacerbated by the global economic crisis.

Important features of the cultural finances of the current government (after 2010) have been:

- centralisation: functions taken over by the state from local governments.
- concentration of resources in selected institution like the *MMA*, lately the Petőfi Cultural Agency.
- frequent ad hoc interventions of scales that significantly alter final balances from initial annual budgets.
- generous resources for selected projects of iconic value for the current administration.

7.1.1 INDICATORS

Indicator 1: 82 000 HUF or 215 EUR. Public cultural expenditure Eurostat – Cofog 08/2, all levels of government, per capita in 2023.

Indicator 2: This corresponds to 1.0% of the GDP (Cofog), or 1.2% (KSH).

Indicator 3: Public culture expenditure in percentage of the total public expenditure in 2022 was 2.1%.

In 2023, the population of Hungary was 9.6 million. According to Eurostat/Cofog, total general government expenditure on culture was 2 061 million EUR. In 2023, among EU countries, Hungary registered by far the largest ratio to GDP of government expenditure on Cofog08, 'recreation, culture and religion', at 2.6% of GDP (after the 2020 peak of 3.9%).

No further detailed information is available on expenditure. The website of the state secretariat for culture is limited to news, announcements and to the presentation of the structure and main responsibilities. Links lead to 18 subordinate institutions only.

7.1.2 EXPENDITURE ON GOVERNMENT LEVEL

The years after the millennium showed continued decentralisation. This trend took a sharp turn after 2010 and by 2012 the central government became a stronger single public funder than the regional and local sources cumulatively. A part of the explanation is the restructuring in the museum sector, whereby the state took charge of many regional and municipal institutions.

In the absence of available statistics in the country, one must resort to Eurostat for the following data.

Table 14: Public cultural expenditure by level of government, 2019 and 2023

Level of government	Total expenditure	% share	Total expenditure	% share

	in million EUR	of total	in million EUR	of total
Year	2019		2023	
State (central)	1 269	67%	1 645	73%
Regional (counties)	0		0	
Local (municipal)	623	33%	618	27%
TOTAL	1 892	100%	2 263	100%

Source: Eurostat Cofog (cultural services)

7.1.3 EXPENDITURE PER SECTOR

Due to the scattered character of public management of culture the combined data of the national statistical agency are used.

Cultural centres (houses of culture, community centres) occupy a decisive position, with folk culture constituting an important segment in their activities. The second biggest item is the safeguarding of historical monuments, overtaking subsidies to theatres.

Table 15: Direct state cultural expenditure by sector, 2019 and 2023, in millions HUF

Field / Domain / Sub-domain	2019		2023	
	million HUF	in %	million HUF	in %
I. Cultural Heritage				
Historical Monuments	70 650	12.4%	98 489	13.3%
Museums & Archives	67 933	12.0%	90 955	12.3%
Libraries	48 018	8.5%	73 551	9.9%
Intangible Heritage / Folk Culture	
II. Visual Arts				
Fine Arts / Plastic Arts	
Photography	
Architecture	
Design / Applied Arts	
III. Performing Arts				
Music and Dance	57 946	10.2%	56 424	7.6%
Theatre, Music Theatre	80 737	14.2%	82 127	11.1%
Multidisciplinary	
IV. Books and Press				
Books	4 232	0.7%	4 638	0.6%
Press	
V. Audiovisual and Multimedia				
Cinema	
Radio & Television	3 121	0.5%	3 649	0.5%
Multimedia	
VI. Interdisciplinary				
Socio-culture	121 027	21.3%	194 666	26.3%
Cultural Relations Abroad	
Administration	
Cultural Education	
VII. Not covered by domains I-VI				
Zoos & Natural Parks	59 794	10.5%	72 044	9.7%
Other Entertainment & Culture	54 084	9.5%	64 966	8.8%
TOTAL	567 542	100%	741 510	100.0 %

Source: http://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/ksp/hu/ksp0003.html

7.2 Support programmes

7.2.1 STRATEGIES, PROGRAMMES AND OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT

Direct payment to individuals is in the focus of cultural support (as compared to financing projects). This includes a large scale of fellowships, awards, and monthly allowances (to MMA members).

7.2.2 ARTIST'S FUNDS

The National Cultural Fund is the main public source for financing projects. Some of the calls target individual artists who can apply for grants for creation.

The state-owned Hungarian Creative Arts Nonprofit Ltd. *MANK* administers over 300 studios with flats across the country, 8 recreation resorts and exhibition facilities etc.

The rights collecting agencies (Artisjus, Hungart etc.) act also as funds that hand out awards and other benefits to artists.

7.2.3 GRANTS, AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS

Awards and prizes:

Hungary has traditionally had a complex system of state awards and scholarships. The basic structure dates back to the communist regime; in addition to the existing list, each minister adds at least one new award. On the latest 15 March and 20 August national holidays 177 awards were handed over to people from the cultural sector in 25 categories. The list is topped by the Kossuth Grand Prize, in 2024 awarded to the composer Péter Eötvös. Besides the recipients of the Cross of Merit, the Excellent Artist and the Worthy Artist prizes, 57 artists were awarded with the 17 prizes that bear the name of a renowned Hungarian artist: e.g., the Liszt Prize is given to 8 musicians each year.

Monetary prizes and various lifetime advantages accompany these awards. The Kossuth Prize brings a financial bonus that is equivalent to half a months' average income (as stipulated by the law). The five artists that are awarded the title of Excellent Artist each year, and the ten Worthy Artists are rewarded with half and one third of the amount of the Kossuth Prize respectively. All these awards are tax free.

On a higher level, the top national distinctions are the Order of St. Stephen (originally founded by Maria Theresa in 1764) as well as the Corvin Chain. This latter is held by twelve persons at a time, about half of whom are usually from culture. This award was originally founded by Admiral Horthy in 1930, renewed by the first Orbán-government (1998-2002), and again in 2012.

Twelve people can enjoy the benefits of the title the Actor (or Actress, the Hungarian language does not use gender) of the Nation at one time. Upon this model, the amended *Film Law* introduced the title Film Artist of the Nation that is given upon the decision of the government to selected artists who had formerly received the Kossuth Prize. Only 15 artists over the age of 65 can have this title at a time. It is at the discretion of the government to decide which of those artists that used to receive an annual allowance as holders of the title called Master of Hungarian Moving Pictures established by the Motion Picture Public Foundation, will be entitled to the new award.

Holders of all the above recognitions can be promoted to the Artist of the Nation award, administered by MMA, the Hungarian Academy of Arts. At any one time 70 people can bear this title, in ten categories. Over their 65th birthday - in the case of dance and circus art the 50th – they receive life annuity, the amount of which is 23 times the current minimum amount of the old-age pension, currently HUF 655 500.

Grants and scholarships:

The system of three-year state grants has been developing and expanding since 1955. Scholarships are available for altogether 100 people in various art fields. Recipients of these grants get 200 thousand forint a month (cca €500).

From 2020, the Petőfi Literary Museum awards the Térey Grant to 30 writers of 35-65 years of age, for up to 5 years, for a monthly grant of around the average salary in the country.

These schemes have been crowned by the allowances that the members of MMA, and senior artists receive, as presented in chapter 4.1.

Artists and cultural operators can also apply for scholarships and grants abroad in the general schemes operated by the Hungarian Scholarship Board Office (*Magyar Ösztöndíj Bizottság*). Senior experts, artists and researchers may seek opportunities to study and work in various countries all over the world through the Hungarian National Eötvös Scholarship (*Magyar Állami Eötvös Ösztöndíj*). There are also scholarships available to artists at the Collegium Hungaricum in Rome, a tradition that dates back to the 1930s.

7.2.4 SUPPORT TO PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS' ASSOCIATIONS OR UNIONS

A most unfortunate manifestation of the dividedness of the society is the doubling of professional associations in major cultural fields like theatre and literature along political lines.

In the 2025 budget, 23.4 billion HUF (approximately 57 million EUR) are earmarked to subsidise cultural organisations. In two other chapters and three other budget lines, 74.8 billion HUF (approximately 182 million EUR) are allocated to support non-profit, social and civil society organisations and public institutions. Their beneficiaries partly pursue cultural goals. Support for Hungarian minorities abroad is a key element. A considerable degree of political bias characterises the distribution of these funds, similar to the various awards discussed in the previous section.

7.3. Private funding

Like everywhere in Europe, the most decisive element of private funding to culture is through citizens' spending on cultural goods and events – see household expenditure at 6.3. Individual citizens' donations and patronage are sporadic and irrelevant.

Citizens can express their choice through the 1% scheme, by channelling 1% of their income tax to selected nonprofit bodies – see 4.1.4.

Crowdfunding is another way of expressing the preferences of individual small sponsors but only generates insignificant sums.

Intermediate cases are private investments in culture, especially when they generate impressive values. An exemplary instance is BMC, the Budapest Music Centre, legally a limited company, financed from public and private sources. A regular exhibitor at the MIDEM in Cannes, BMC mainly focuses on contemporary music and jazz. The government contributed both to the construction and the operation of the institution. The new BMC building in the centre of Budapest has a concert hall, a smaller stage for jazz events combined with a restaurant, residence area, music archive and offices.

Another case is Orlai Productions, a private theatre enterprise with a respectable scale of performances. Art galleries, concert and festival managers, book publishers are almost all private businesses.

Conventional sponsorship is dominated by state companies with Szerencsejáték Rt (lottery and betting), MVM (electricity), and Hungarian Development Bank on top, run with little or no transparency and with tangible political bias.

Statistically difficult to detect, but most cultural projects display impressive lists with names of sponsors and donors, much of which is in nature and have not necessarily entered the budgets. The tax regulations contain certain incentive measures, but this exerts negligible effect.

A peculiar project is the *Prima Primissima Award*, initiated in 2003 by wealthy entrepreneurs and their companies. It includes ten categories: next to science, sport, or media there are art categories as well. Winners – mostly individuals but also organisations - are selected by juries and popular votes, and get important amounts, up to 20 million HUF.

Selected links

<https://www.parlament.hu/web/kulturalis-bizottsag>
<https://kormany.hu/kulturalis-es-innovacios-miniszterium>
[http://szellemikulturalisorokseg.hu/.](http://szellemikulturalisorokseg.hu/)
<https://kds.gov.hu/>
<http://www.kszka.hu/>
<https://alkotomuveszet.hu/>
<https://www.ksh.hu/kultura>
https://hunmedialaw.org/dokumentum/153/Mttv_110803_EN_final.pdf
https://www.eji.hu/cikk/kozterhekrol_egyszeruen
https://www.artisjus.hu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SZ_21_Tarifa.pdf
<https://oroksegvedelem.kormany.hu/nemzeti-emlekhelyek>
<https://www.primaprimissima.hu/>

Selected document:

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