

A vibrant scene of Hungarian folk dancers in a city square. The dancers, both men and women, are wearing traditional white shirts, dark vests, and light-colored skirts or trousers. They are holding hands and performing a dance. The air is filled with a thick shower of red rose petals, creating a festive and celebratory atmosphere. In the background, there are historic European-style buildings with multiple windows and balconies. The ground is paved with light-colored stones, and some circular patterns are visible. The overall lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Hungarian Soft Power Tactics: Cultural Diplomacy in the 21st Century

Max Keating



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Author: Max Keating

Danube Institute Leadership

President: John O'Sullivan

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Designed by: Gavin Haynes

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Image: Folk dance flash mob event in the square in front of St. Stephen Basilica, from Shutterstock.



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About the Danube Institute

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About the Author



Max Keating is a student of history and politics at University College Dublin. He has previously written for the *Daily Caller*, *Gript*, *The European Conservative*, and *The Hungarian Conservative*. He is currently an intern at both the Danube Institute and the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs.

Hungary's Soft Power Tactics: Cultural Diplomacy in the 21st Century

Max Keating

Abstract

This research paper will examine the formation and conduct of Hungarian cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy, or public diplomacy, is essential to the conduct of small nations in a globalised world, in which countries are pressured to define their identities. The use of this soft power as a tool for communicating Hungarian values, culture, and identity internationally has demonstrated substantial successes from which other nations might learn.

Hungary's cultural diplomacy in the twenty-first century relies on a holistic, integrated approach towards its domestic sponsorship of the arts and sciences, encouragement of international education exchange programmes, and the activities of Hungarian cultural institutions abroad. This paper will evaluate the constituent components of Hungarian cultural diplomacy so as to determine where other countries might replicate and so benefit from Hungary's innovative approach.

Hungary's approach to its global image branding is integrated with different sectors of society. This holistic nature is responsible for unifying Hungary's broadcast methods for its cultural promotion internationally, and may be defined as standing on three primary pillars: the flourishing of Hungarian culture domestically, international scholarly exchanges between educational institutions, and the promotional activities of Hungarian cultural institutions or events across the world. These mechanisms are used by Hungary to engage in cultural diplomacy, focusing on the country's achievements with an aim to determine what elements may be replicated by other nations seeking to improve their soft power.

By following Hungary's approach, as laid out here, how can other countries expand the reach of their own cultural diplomacy?

Introduction

Cultural diplomacy is an increasingly important tool for public engagement and national branding in the twenty-first century. As culture has become a saturated globalised commodity through digital communications, countries must engage what the author Simon Anholt describes as nation branding.¹ Nation branding is created for the purpose of building a reputation for a country similar to the way companies create brand identities for their product lines. In a globalised world of digital communication, this creates a sense of competitive identity, due to the vast number of cultures with which a state finds itself competing with to create its brand image.² In creating such a culture-based branding, nations tie their foreign policy and international engagement strategies to their authenticity or trustworthiness.

For social constructivist theorist Alexander Wendt, the importance of culture in international relations is apparent: “the more that culture matters in international politics the more stable the international system becomes.”³ The influence of culture on the structural nature of the international system, according to Wendt, “matters insofar as it affects the calculations of actors.”⁴

Understanding that culture may influence the decision-making process of political actors and structure of the international system, the distinction between soft power tools used to pursue such identity-based international relations must be determined. According to Joseph Nye, the use of “slow media” such as art, books, and scholarly exchanges, constitutes cultural diplomacy, while modern “fast information” such as media, radio, or movies, is recognised as public diplomacy.⁵ The consequence of these tools, Nye argues, is the formation of “a two-way street” which may bridge the distances between cultures and facilitate communication based on mutual recognition of each others’ values.⁶

Nye further defined public diplomacy as “getting others to want the outcomes that you want” through means of attraction rather than influence.⁷ For small nations such as Hungary, the use of attraction via the communication of the country’s values and unique cultural heritage proves itself a useful strategy for building cooperation with stakeholders in the international system. For Nye, soft power is at core built upon culture, political values, and the moral legitimacy of a country’s foreign policy.⁸ According to Nye and Anholt’s descriptions of culture-based nation branding and public diplomacy in the information age, this research paper will henceforth use the term cultural diplomacy to describe the aforementioned concepts.

In the practice of soft power diplomacy, Nye argues that civil society organisations, particularly in the fields of art, education, and sport, are necessary towards creating diplomatic attraction between countries.⁹ However Hungary’s coordinated use of soft power tools through government support and funding in both the culture and education sectors of Hungarian society are distinct characteristics of the country’s successes. As Anholt argues, governments frequently pursue a divided approach to their global image branding, whereby their business, tourism, media, non-governmental organisation, and government Ministry activities are not integrated with one another.¹⁰

The coordination of Hungary’s international cultural institutions through its Ministry of Culture and Innovation is an essential operational component to the conduct of Hungarian cultural diplomacy, serving as the only effective method to create a holistic cultural promotion strategy. Yet in the remit of cultural activity, other Ministries also contribute in the realms of education and the Hungarian diaspora as required with their administrative competencies.

¹ Simon Anholt, (2007) *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities, and Regions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 7-9.

² Ibid, pp. xi.

³ Alexander Wendt, (2003) *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 44.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 161.

⁵ Joseph Nye, (2004) *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs, pp. 102-3

⁶ Ibid, pp. 111.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 5-6.

⁸ Simon Anholt, (2007) *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities, and Regions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 11.

⁹ Joseph Nye, 2021. *Soft Power: The Evolution of a Concept*. ” *Journal of Political Power* 14 (1): 196–208.

¹⁰ Simon Anholt, (2007) *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities, and Regions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 3.



Statue of Attila Jozsef, Budapest. (Shutterstock)

The Formation and Strategy of Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy

To understand the conduct of Hungarian cultural diplomacy in the twenty-first century, its historical origins and strategic formation must be elucidated. Hungarian cultural diplomacy traces its origins to the work of the Minister of Education Kuno Klebelsberg who held the post from 1922 till 1931, and his successor Bálint Hóman.¹¹ Under Klebelsberg and Hóman, Hungary prioritised the promotion of local culture, the growth of Hungarian education institutions, and created the first international network of Hungarian cultural institutions via the Collegium Hungaricum.

Klebelsberg's policies themselves emerged from the environment following the alteration of Hungarian borders under the Treaty of Trianon, as a result of which millions of Hungarians now living outside the borders of the state required support to maintain their way of life. While increasing elementary and secondary education programmes, Klebelsberg presided over the relocation of historical Hungarian universities in cities such as Pozsony (now Bratislava in Slovakia) to within Hungary's new borders.¹²

Though the first Hungarian cultural institution abroad was created in 1916 as the Hungarian Scientific Institute of Constantinople, under Klebelsberg the network of Hungarian organisations abroad expanded to include institutions in major European capitals.¹³ The first Collegium Hungaricum were opened in 1924 in Vienna and Berlin, while in 1927, institutions were formed in Paris and Rome.¹⁴ The Collegium Hungaricum were created with the intention of supporting Hungarian academics abroad and promoting scientific ties between Hungarian and foreign researchers.¹⁵ Hóman continued Klebelsberg's cultural policies domestically, through the creation of local village cultural centres, of which 1,500 were operational by 1938.¹⁶ Further early examples of Hungarian cultural diplomacy include the hosting

of the 1933 World Scout Jamboree in Gödöllő, an international sporting event which saw young attendees from across Europe meet their Hungarian scouting counterparts.¹⁷

In an interview conducted for this research paper, Hungary's Deputy State Secretary of Cultural Diplomacy, Gábor Csaba, placed the contemporary revival of Hungarian cultural diplomacy within the context of the country's isolation under communism. During this era, Csaba said, "Hungary's ability to conduct independent cultural diplomacy was severely constrained, leading to a form of cultural isolation." The Deputy State Secretary added that consequently after the fall of communism, "Hungary revived and expanded its cultural diplomacy, explicitly drawing on the Klebelsberg legacy to re-engage with the world. [Hungary's] current strategy is therefore shaped by lessons from the communist period—there is a conscious effort to reconnect and present Hungary's culture internationally, making up for lost time, and ensuring that Hungarian culture is never again so cut off from global exchange."

From observing the early formation of Hungarian cultural diplomacy, the strategy of Hungary's cultural outreach can be determined to rest on domestic cultural promotion, education, and international engagement. The use of these mediums in an integrated manner may be determined as a unique characteristic of modern Hungarian cultural diplomacy, as domestic cultural productions and educational reputation operate in tandem and directly feed into the conduct of Hungarian cultural promotion institutions internationally. The observable characteristics of this strategy, at their core, are the extensive collaboration of different state bodies or Ministries with educational institutions or civil society organisations.

¹¹ Bryan Cartledge, (2011) *The Will to Survive: A History of Hungary*, London: Hurst & Company, pp. 358.

¹² Ibid, pp. 359.

¹³ Our network (no date) Cultural diplomacy Budapest. Available at: <https://culture.hu/en/budapest/our-network>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Az Intézetéről (no date) Collegium Hungaricum.

Available at: https://culture.hu/hu/berlin/az_intezetrol

¹⁶ Bryan Cartledge, (2011) *The Will to Survive: A History of Hungary*, London: Hurst & Company: London, pp. 358.

¹⁷ R. H. McCarthy, (1933) "The we're off! The Jamboree in full swing." *Magyar Cserkész*, August 3.

Hungarian Domestic Cultural Policy

Hungary's domestic cultural policy uses state funding, increased Hungarian artistic or scientific productions, and the promotion of public engagement for the purposes of creating a lively cultural life in the country. Hungary further relies on such policies for the purpose of regional collaboration, specifically in regard to the inclusion of Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries in the national culture of Hungary.

This significant state support in domestic cultural policy not only continues from the policies of Hóman and Klebelsberg in the twentieth century, but in fact illustrates an important realisation: that cultural diplomacy is built upon a strong, appealing domestic cultural life that might be used as the basis for cultural exchanges with others.

In recognition of the importance of preserving and promoting Hungarian culture domestically, the government has increased its expenditure from 281,065 million forints in 2014, to 741,510 million forints in 2023, as illustrated in Figure 1.

An increase in the number of public cultural institutions from 3265 in 2000 to 5,960 in 2023 further demonstrates Hungary's strong domestic cultural policy.¹⁹

Hungary's increase in cultural produce is not limited to public institutions, as illustrated in Figure 2, the total number of published books by Hungarian authors each year has increased dramatically since 2001.

In qualitative terms, the fruits of Hungary's strong domestic cultural life can be seen in the number of large festivals each year oriented towards a Hungarian audience in Hungary and



Figure 1 illustrates the increasing government expenditure on cultural programmes by the Hungarian government, demonstrating a substantial rise from 281,065 million Hungarian forints in 2014, to 741,510 million Hungarian forints in 2023.

Source: Hungarian Statistical Office.¹⁸

¹⁸16.1.1.3. Budgetary expenditures on culture (no date) *Hungarian Central Statistical Office*.

Available at: https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/ksp/en/ksp0003.html

¹⁹16.1.1.11. Public cultural institutes and programmes (no date) *Hungarian Central Statistical Office*.

Available at: https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/ksp/en/ksp0011.html

neighbouring regions home to autochthonous Hungarian communities.

Through the mixture of concerts, traditional Hungarian folk music, and panel discussions by public intellectuals from Hungary and abroad, events such as MCC Feszt and the Bálványos Free Summer University and Student Camp (also known as Tusványos) operate as tools of cultural diplomacy.

MCC Feszt 2024 was estimated to have almost 50,000 attendees, demonstrating the significant popularity of such public festivals.²¹ Similarly, the presence of high-profile guest speakers from Hungary and abroad (for example: at MCC Feszt 2025, the German-American entrepreneur Peter Thiel, Dominic Cummings the former advisor to British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, former Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, and Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó) illustrates how such an event serves to bring international figures together with local Hungarian communities through the setting of an intellectual festival.²²

Tusványos continues this model, with its specific focus on

the inclusion of the Hungarian community in Transylvania. Through the vast number of civil society organisations, educational organisations, and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's annual custom of addressing the Hungarian people at the event, the Transylvanian Hungarian community is actively included in the events and discussions taking place in Hungary. The collaboration of civil society, business, and state ministries alongside educational or research institutions highlights an ability to create a unified approach towards domestic and international cultural policies.

Hungary's integrated cultural policy may be described as multi-disciplinary in nature, through the melding of discussions of Hungarian values like religion or family policies, alongside rock and traditional folk music, and political discourse led by educational institutions.

Regional cooperation has emerged as a further point of Hungarian cultural policies with the Visegrád countries through collaboration on the needs of national minority communities.²³ Furthermore, the focus on local Hungarian

Number of Books Published by Hungarian Authors (2001-2024)

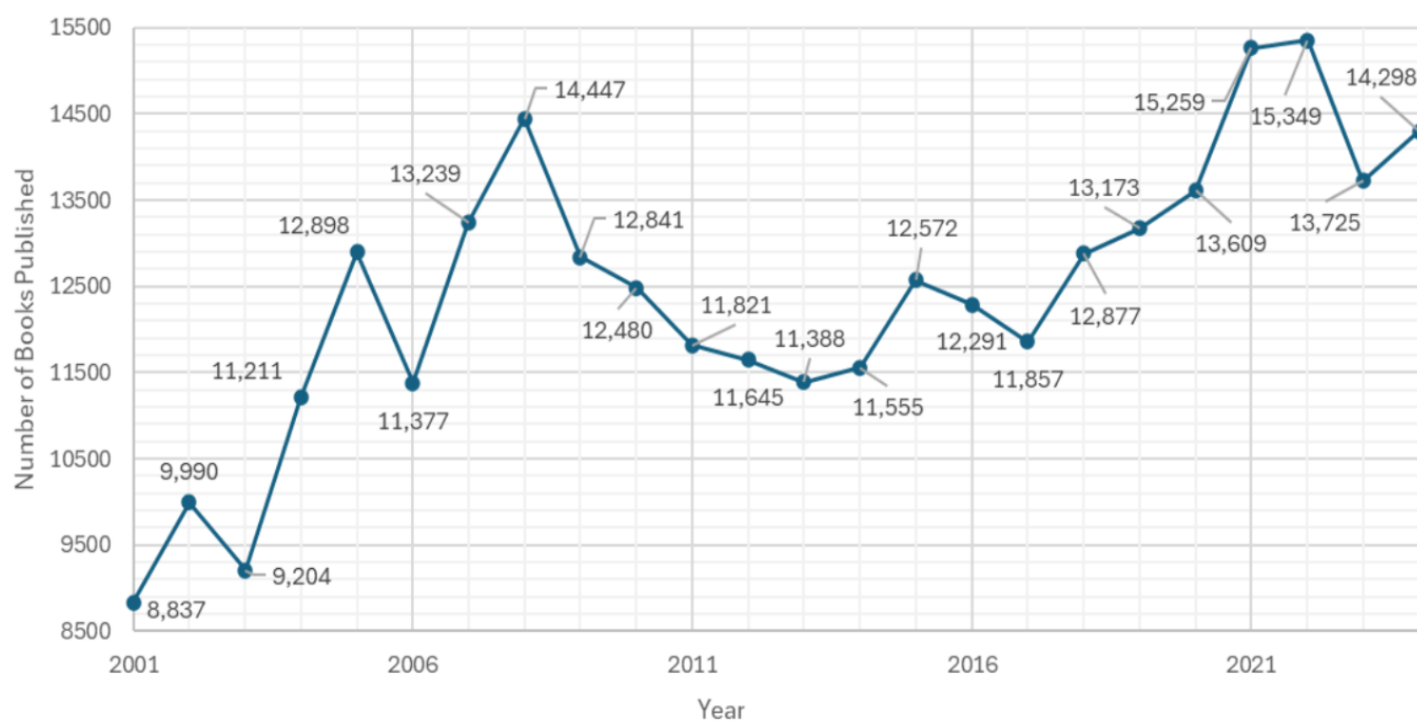


Figure 2 illustrates the increasing number of books published by Hungarian authors from 2001-2024. .

Source: Hungarian Statistical Office.²⁰

²⁰ 16.1.1.6. Book- and booklet publishing by authors' nationality and character of their work (no date) *Hungarian Central Statistical Office*. Available at: https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/ksp/en/ksp0006.html

²¹ Joakim Scheffer, (2025) MCC Feszt 2025 set to begin with prominent international line-up, *Hungarian Conservative*. Available at: https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/culture_society/mcc-feszt-2025-esztergom-hungary-international-line-up/

²² Ibid.

²³ Kata Eplényi, Marie Kubínová, Alexandra Ozga, Magdalena Rymkiewicz, Olga Skórka, Milan Suplata, and Emilia Zaręba. (2015), *The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in the V4 Countries*. Visegrád School of Political Studies.

*The Budapest Youth Choir performs at the Szent Teréz Templom, Budapest.
(Shutterstock)*



towns such as MCC Feszt in Esztergom, and the 2023 European Capital of Culture award in Veszprém, showcases the inclusion of the entire country in Hungarian cultural policy.²⁴

Education, Scholarships, and Exchange Programmes

Educational exchange programmes, whether they be targeted towards Hungarian or international scholars, provide a significant step forward from domestic cultural policy, towards forms of international engagement which constitute cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy in the area of education and scholarships, is designed to create public linkages between the host country and foreign scholars through first-person experiences and time spent in the host country.

On the subject of education, Klebelsberg's policies which supported the preservation of Hungarian cultural identity among minority communities scattered outside the coun-

try's post-Trianon borders can be seen to continue as a priority of the country today.

For example, the Sándor Petőfi Program, created in 2015, covers Hungarian communities across the Central Eastern European region. The programme offers scholarships for 65 young Hungarians from inside and outside of the state's borders each year, sending them to scattered Hungarian minority communities in the region to promote and preserve their Hungarian identity.²⁵

The Sándor Csoma Kőrösi Program pursues similar strategies, with a distinct focus on the global Hungarian diaspora, ensuring that their connections to their homeland are maintained.²⁶ In the realm of educational exchanges through the Hungarian university system, a distinct focus can be illustrated, via the Hungarian government's various programmes and supports to facilitate this practice.

Number of Foreign Students at Hungarian Universities (2014-2023).

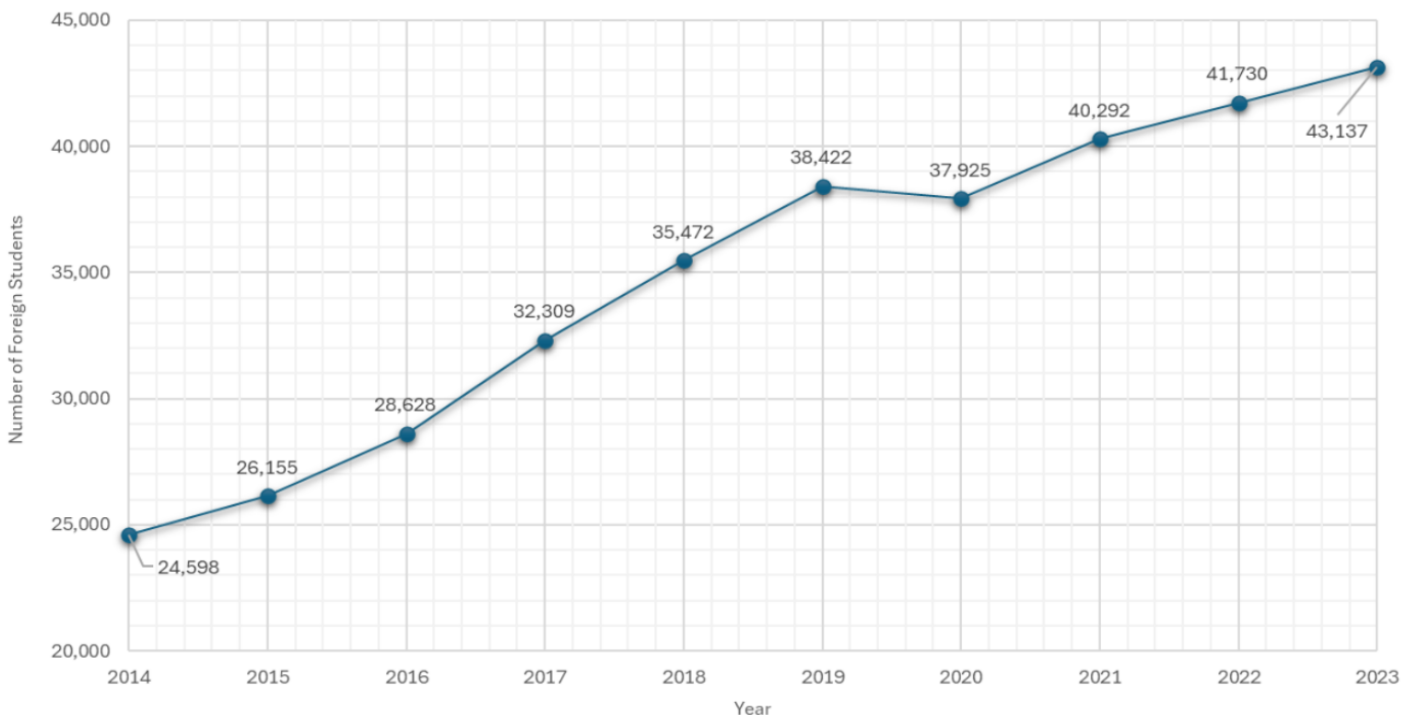


Figure 3 illustrates the increasing number of international students enrolled in Hungarian universities from 2014-2023.

Source: Hungarian Statistical Office.²⁷

²⁴Selection of the European Capital of Culture in 2023 in Hungary (2018) *European Capital of Culture*.

Available at: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-04/ecoc-2023-hungary-selection-report.pdf>

²⁵A Petőfi Sándor Program (no date) *Petőfi Sándor Program*.

Available at: <https://www.petofiprogram.hu/petofi-sandor-program>

²⁶Dániel Gázsó, (no date) *A Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Programról, Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Program*.

Available at: <https://www.korosiprogram.hu/diaszpora>

²⁷Number of foreign students by country (no date) *Hungarian Central Statistical Office*.

Available at: <https://statinfo.ksh.hu/Statinfo/QueryServlet?ha=HC1008>

As illustrated in Figure 3, the number of international students studying in Hungary has increased substantially, almost doubling in size from 2014-23.

Furthermore, in the realm of short-term semester exchanges for students, Hungary has proven its resilience in defending this portion of its cultural diplomacy through the protection of Hungarian students' ability to study abroad through the Pannónia Scholarship Programme, following the country's suspension from the Erasmus programme by the European Commission.²⁸

In an interview conducted for this research paper, Hungary's former Minister of Culture and Innovation, János Csák summarised the importance of education as an aspect of cultural exchange with the statement that "to live together is to understand each other."

Additionally, the achievements of Hungarian Nobel Prize winners bolster the reputation of Hungarian contributions to the sciences. This is particularly true of Katalin Karikó, the 2023 Nobel laureate in medicine who is currently a professor at the University of Szeged and won the award for her prior work in mRNA research.²⁹

These policies collectively serve to increase the international notoriety of Hungarian universities, promoting them as locations for scholars to engage in research collaboration. However, a further strength towards Hungary's educational exchange policies is the global nature of its scholarship programmes. For example, the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship saw, for the 2025-26 period, 80,000 applications, of which 51.5% originated from Asia, and 45% from Africa, showing that Hungary is increasingly becoming a global destination for higher education.³⁰

However, scholarships and traditional university exchanges are not the only focal points of Hungarian cultural diplomacy in this field. The use of additional educational or research organisations such as the Mathias Corvinus Collegium and the Danube Institute also constitute a branch of Hungary's soft power policies in the areas of research and education.

²⁸About the Pannónia Scholarship Programme (no date) *Tempus Közalapítvány*.

Available at: <https://pannoniaosztondij.hu/about-the-pannonia-scholarship-programme>

²⁹Burger, L. and Pollard, N. (2023) Nobel Prize for Medicine goes to Kariko and Weissman, pioneers of COVID vaccine, *Reuters*.

Available at: <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/kariko-weissman-win-medicine-nobel-covid-19-vaccine-work-2023-10-02/>

³⁰About Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship (no date) *Stipendium Hungaricum*.

Available at: <https://stipendiumhungaricum.hu/about/>

³¹Helyszínek (no date) *MCC*.

Available at: <https://mcc.hu/helyszinek>

³²Home (No date) *Hungary Helps*.

Available at: <https://hungaryhelps.gov.hu/en/home>

Through its focus on education, MCC operates a network of centres across Hungary and Hungarian communities in neighbouring countries such as Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine.³¹ Through the activities of its Belgian branch, MCC Brussels, the organisation further operates as an intellectual hub in the European Union for discussions on Hungarian values and conservative ideas.

The Danube Institute serves a similar role in research through the presence of Visiting Fellows from foreign countries, as well as the large volume of international scholars and former politicians who participate in the activities of the institute.

The activities of these two organisations are a further illustration of Hungary's integrated approach towards cultural diplomacy, particularly through their hosting of foreign scholars and their speaking or organisational presence at festivals linked to Hungary's domestic cultural policy, such as MCC Feszt and Tuszányos.

International Cultural Engagement: Events and Institutions

International cultural engagement is essential to the conduct of cultural diplomacy through the advertising of a nation's culture and accomplishments to other countries, in a way that authentically represents its values and heritage. Hungary's approach to international engagement comes in the form of events, such as in the fields of sports and public festivals, as well as the sophisticated network of Hungarian cultural institutions in major world capitals.

Institutions are a staple of Hungary's international cultural diplomacy, and communicate Hungarian values and culture to foreign audiences. In the area of charity, Hungary Helps, a humanitarian aid organisation, demonstrates Hungary's commitment to its cultural values internationally, particularly in the assistance of persecuted Christian communities across the world.³²

However, the most prominent tool of Hungary's cultural outreach is its network of cultural organisations abroad, the Liszt Institutes and Collegium Hungaricum. The use of these institutions, with branches in 26 different countries, creates a continuous Hungarian cultural presence in their host countries, allowing for long-term approaches towards cultural exchange to be pursued.

The Collegium Hungaricum operate in a special manner, as unlike the standard cultural institutions which focus on hosting events to showcase elements of Hungarian culture to their host countries, they also retain an educational element via scholarship support for Hungarian academics or students abroad.³³

According to Hungary's Ministry of Culture, the priorities of Hungarian cultural diplomacy as conducted through its Liszt Institute network include: the preservation of Hungarian heritage and its popularisation, improving Hungary's relations with host countries, fostering international cooperation in culture and the sciences, teaching the Hungarian language, and representing the diversity of Hungarian culture.³⁴

The administration of Hungary's international cultural institutions by the Ministry of Culture, previously operated by the Foreign Ministry, represents a recognition by Hungarian officials that cultural diplomacy is naturally at home with management of domestic cultural activities.

Additionally, cultural events and festivals play an important role in Hungary's cultural diplomacy. The Kurultáj, a sporting event which celebrates Hungary's unique history through traditional sports such as horseback riding and archery, is one such example.³⁵ The event celebrates Hungary's shared heritage with a number of countries with shared history as nomadic tribes across the Eurasian Steppe, seeing athletic delegations from countries such as Turkey, South Korea, Mongolia, and the Central Asia region, participate in the games.³⁶

Hungary's international engagement through foreign delegations attending public festivals such as MCC Feszt and Tusványos further demonstrates the integrated nature of Hungarian cultural diplomacy, jettisoning with domestic cultural policies, as well as its education or research sectors.

³³Az Intézetéről (no date) *Collegium Hungaricum*.

Available at: <https://culture.hu/hu/wien/az-intezetrol>

³⁴Institutes: The Hungarian Cultural Diplomacy Institute Network (no date) *Cultural diplomacy Budapest*.

Available at: <https://culture.hu/en/budapest/culturalinstitutes>

³⁵Our aim is to unveil the richness of Hungarian culture (2023) *Cultural diplomacy Budapest*.

Available at: <https://culture.hu/en/budapest/articles/our-aim-is-to-unveil-the-richness-of-hungarian-culture>

³⁶Information (no date) *Kurultáj*.

Available at: <https://kurultaj.hu/english/>



*Traditional preservation programme at the Kurultáj, Hungary.
(Shutterstock)*

Hungary as a Model: What Other Countries Can Learn

Understanding the collaboration of domestic cultural policies, as well as the education and outreach roles of Hungarian cultural diplomacy, the importance of Hungary as a case study for other countries is apparent.

Joseph Nye wrote in 2021 that he believed civil society was essential to the conduct of cultural diplomacy in an open environment, rather than the state.³⁷ However, as Anholt observed, countries frequently allow their cultural diplomacy to be divided into its constituent parts, lacking coordination or common sets of communication.³⁸ In the Hungarian case study, we can see the country's holistic, integrated approach towards cultural diplomacy is in fact a product of collaboration between state cultural policies, involving educational and cultural activities or institutions.

These policies have been key to Hungary's successful cultural diplomacy, and other countries may learn from the Hungarian model on a structural basis by reforming the way the state coordinates its cultural diplomacy altogether. Rather than allowing civil society organisations, charities, and educational institutions to pursue independent cultural outreach programmes, countries seeking to rejuvenate and restructure their cultural diplomacy must integrate these stakeholders into domestic cultural policy. As the Hungarian model demonstrates, the coordination of domestic policy goals, educational institutions, and international outreach creates a positive feedback loop, whereby the activities of one branch support the goals of another, creating a sophisticated network from which a country's soft power may be grounded.

In a sense, the responsibility of these organisations is not to consider the holistic nature of their country's soft power, but rather to practice their role within the system. It is the role of the state to coordinate between these branches and direct them towards a common goal or strategy.

However, there are further examples where countries might learn from Hungary's tactics—namely, its vast network of cultural agencies, festivals, and use of culturally unique domestic events, with the added integration of international focuses.

Creating a holistic network of cultural agencies in other countries is an essential component towards restructuring the way a given country may operate its cultural diplomacy. Even for countries with easily identifiable nation-branding across the world and traditionally considered adept in the conduct of their cultural diplomacy, such as Ireland, the Hungarian strategy may serve as a valuable instruction manual. For Ireland, the lack of coordination between its international cultural institutions, such as the Irish College in Leuven or the Irish Cultural Centre in Paris, with the public cultural life of the country, may be rectified by learning from the Hungarian model's coordinated approach.

For organisations such as the Instituto Cervantes or Alliance Française, primarily international language schools, the Hungarian model's focus on the integration of domestic and international cultural produce, dovetailed with its education sector, might encourage greater public engagement in Spanish or French culture beyond language courses.

For educational exchange, Hungary's support for academia or think tanks is not unique, but the extent to which it is integrated into the country's cultural diplomacy platform serves as a vital lesson for other countries to copy and display their educational facilities or research internationally.

In terms of events, though other countries may host prestigious global film festivals or awards ceremonies, these international cultural forums are not directed specifically towards the host country—they are international events by nature, thus diluting the opportunities for the host country to display its own cultural contributions. The benefit of replicating the Hungarian festival model, as demonstrated by MCC Feszt and Tusványos, is that these occasions provide international attendees with opportunities to experience the host country's culture in an immersive environment, effectively exposing attendees to the entire civil society and educational apparatus used to conduct the state's cultural diplomacy.

Culturally specific events such as the Kurultáj also provide a model for nations with a shared heritage to pursue unique methods of cultural collaboration. Notably, Ireland pursues a

³⁷ Joseph Nye, 2021. "Soft Power: The Evolution of a Concept." *Journal of Political Power* 14 (1): pp. 196–208.

³⁸ Simon Anholt, (2011) *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities, and Regions*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, pp 3.

similar strategy through the international presence of its Gaelic Athletic Association in promoting traditional Irish sports. If Ireland were to compare its history in international sporting events to the Kurultáj, great similarity could be found with the cancelled Tailteann Games from the early twentieth-century. Through their focus on the global Irish diaspora, the Tailteann Games sought to promote and preserve Irish heritage in scattered Irish communities through the use of active cultural diplomacy tactics.

However, there are further examples where other countries may learn from Hungary in their nation-branding more broadly. Hungarian soft power seeks to communicate Hungarian values and culture simultaneously. Organisations such as Hungary Helps demonstrate Hungary's Christian values, while the rich festival life of the country promotes Hungarian values alongside grand cultural performances.

Countries seeking to learn from Hungary must examine the holistic nature of the Hungarian soft power programme and evaluate domestic similarities or differences to the Hungarian model from which they might begin to alter these approaches.

One identifiable problem with soft power as it is practiced by most Western countries is the lack of deference to domestic cultural policy. As Anholt argued, the critical failure in modern nation branding strategies is neglect. Countries allow different arms of their would-be soft power to operate independently, and as such, fail to create a singular strategy. If a country does not have an appealing domestic culture with contemporary artists, musicians, or scholars contributing to fields of global interest, it will generally find the creation of soft power extremely difficult.

For countries seeking to rejuvenate their soft power and cultural diplomacy, these lessons and observations provide substantial value. Hungary has created a wildly successful system to perpetuate Hungarian soft power across the world, and in doing so, provides a valuable model for other countries to replicate.



*Unidentified people in masks at Mohácsi Busójárás, Mohács, Hungary.
(Shutterstock)*

Conclusion

To conclude this research paper, Hungarian cultural diplomacy has proven itself immensely successful in its scope and integration of multi-disciplinary subjects in a digestible, broadcastable manner. Cultural diplomacy has become an ever more important and influential tool in international relations through its responsibilities in nation branding and transnational communications.

Consequently, the Hungarian model of cultural diplomacy serves as a useful example for other countries to modernise their communication methods, and focus on the creation of holistic public exchanges based on principles of identity, values, and customs.

Cultural diplomacy, through its capacity as a nation branding tool, may burgeon stronger relationships between countries in areas other than cultural exchange, such as further cooperation in education, technology, and economic policy.

In the age of globalised fast media, cultural diplomacy remains a keystone of authentic diplomatic engagement with the public of every nation, as through education, sports, cultural institutions, and the advertisement of music, movies, and other forms of domestic culture creates a sufficiently integrated strategy from which to construct relationships of mutual understanding between nations.

As such, Hungary has proven itself in this subject area as a valuable model for the world to learn from. For other countries seeking to replicate the successes of the Hungarian case study, the creative nature of this strategy emerges as an essential factor, as in essence, cultural diplomacy is the sum of a nation's cultural life, while its presentability to the world depends on the use of attractive communication strategies.



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