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**National Attitudes
of New EU Member
States towards the
EMP: The Case
of Hungary**

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Published with the support
of the European Commission

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September 2005



This paper was produced with the financial assistance of the European Commission. The text is the sole responsibility of the authors and in no way reflects the official opinion of the Commission.

EuroMeSCo papers are published with the support of the European Commission by the EuroMeSCo Secretariat at the IEEI Largo de São Sebastião, 8 - Paço do Lumiar 1600-762 Lisboa - Portugal Telephone +351 210 306 700 - Fax +351 217 593 983 E-mail: mednet@mail.telepac.pt - Homepage: <http://www.EuroMeSCo.net>

Geopolitical Situation: The Experience of the Past	05
EU Membership	06
The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership	07
The First Pillar: Political and Security Policy Cooperation	07
The Second Pillar: Economic and Financial Cooperation	09
The Third Pillar: Cultural and Human Rights Cooperation	10
Conclusions	12
Annex: List of events and publications on the Mediterranean	13

Two basic assumptions are made with regard to the new European Union (EU) member states that formerly belonged to the Soviet sphere of influence. First, that traditionally they have been regarded as constituting a single bloc, and as behaving similarly because of a common recent past, a similar peripheral location, and a still incomplete transition, among other factors. Common characteristics and interests may result in similar aims and positions, and united representation seems to be a good idea. This was made clear to the Eastern states by the EU before they were accepted as candidates to the Union. However, given the need to forge their own identity and define their specific interests, the limited nature of the culture of co-operation, and sometimes even rivalry among states,¹ (manifest in the process of the NATO and EU enlargement), do not make it very likely that the newcomers will work as a single. Indeed, looking beyond the commonalities, one finds several differences: different parts of the periphery generate different threat perceptions, problems and solutions. Second, there is a widely held conviction among newcomers that membership in the EU is the only way to accelerate economic growth. There is less understanding of EU integration as a complex process of a political, economic and cultural nature. For the public, economic issues are foremost, but recent political debates (on the European constitution, for instance), proved that the newcomers are gradually adjusting, and intend to participate in all aspects of the Union. There are visible differences among them, however, and their attitudes are based on generally different national interests. This is especially true for issues, countries and regions traditionally seen as “out-of-area”, where there is no history of cooperation. This is the case of Mediterranean basin. The Mediterranean as a whole is a new concept within the Union, too, and one that is still evolving, so the new members have to define their attitudes and policies towards a “moving target” about which even old EU members are still “learning”.

While not altogether alien to Hungarian history, the Mediterranean region has not been a priority in Hungarian foreign policy over the past few decades, and was especially sidelined at the time when Hungary was not even an official candidate to EU membership. Thus, the Hungarian national attitude towards the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) and the Mediterranean as a whole has evolved in the context and during process of EU integration, and has been shaped by more general considerations, like the geopolitical situation of the country and its past experiences; EU membership challenges, including the country’s peripheral status, the perception of obligations and opportunities imposed and offered by membership, the ability of Hungary to establish a balance between national interests and EU demands, and (something that shapes all of the above), Hungarian national politics.

Present day Hungary is a landlocked country without a historically strong relationship with the Mediterranean region (with the exception of the Roman period when part of the country, Pannonia, was a Roman province). Until the end of the First War Hungary, however, was a power that reached towards the Adriatic Sea via Croatia (part of Hungary for many centuries)², and later as part of the Habsburg Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Hungary had a special relationship with the Ottoman Empire: it was at war with it for centuries, and a third of the country was ruled by the Ottomans for 150 years. However, it was also the Ottoman Empire that later gave refuge to Hungarians rebelling against Habsburg rule. In the Mediterranean, the Italian city states and the then united Italy were important traditional partners: both were related by personal,³ economic, religious⁴ and cultural contacts. Beyond this, Hungary has never had a meaningful presence or colonial ambitions in the region (such activities were confined to the Balkans before and during the First World War).

The end of the Second World War and the new realities that it gave rise to, all former ties with the region were severed. A new, and often very difficult, relationship was established with Yugoslavia, Turkish and Italian links diminished because of the latter states’ political affiliation and NATO membership. In their place, Soviet, ideologically based “socialist” relations were established with the “friendly Arab states” in the southern Mediterranean (Algeria, Libya, Egypt, and Syria). These proved to be important and reliable markets for Hungarian products and provided much needed hard currency. For various reasons, these relationships were drastically scaled down if not abandoned with the transition, and as political attention turned elsewhere their basis became essentially economic. With the transition from a centrally planned to a market-based economy, the once economically active state withdrew and failed even to provide necessary bank guarantees. Economy and foreign trade were liberalized, and the former well-known mammut companies disappeared, many of them parcelled

1. There was always the fear that those meeting the criteria and completing the negotiations first would have to wait for the others to catch up. For Hungary and Poland this kind of rivalry is over, but the 2007 Bulgarian accession is being threatened by a possible delay in the Romanian accession.

2. The Croatian Parliament announced its break from the Austro-Hungarian monarchy on 28 October 1918. See Sokcsevits Dénes-Szilágyi, Imre-Szilágyi Károly, 1994, *Déli szomszédaink története* [The History of Our Southern Neighbours], Bereményi Kiadó, p. 240.

3. There were several marriages among the Italian and Hungarian royal families, and in the fourteenth century Hungary was ruled by kings from the Naples branch of the Anjou family (Charles Robert, 1308-1342, and Louis the Great, 1342-1382).

4. Hungarians were converted to Roman Catholicism by King Saint Stephen, whose coronation crown was sent by the Pope in 1000. Roman Catholics make up about 75% of the population. The other main groups are Calvinist and Lutheran, and about 3% Orthodox Christian.

Geopolitical Situation: The Experience of the Past

EU Membership

into smaller, specialized units. These, and newly established small enterprises, were unable to conduct trade overseas on their own. The reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1989⁵ had a further political impact on relations with the Arab world,⁶ though it must be acknowledged that Hungarian foreign policy has been successful in maintaining good relations with both Israelis and the Arabs.

With the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the Soviet Union itself, Hungary had to re-invent its foreign policy, re-define its interests, and re-establish relationship with states accordingly. The new Hungarian foreign policy formulated three priorities, which have remained unchanged since the regime changes of 1989-1990. Most notable among them is Euro-Atlantic integration, followed by friendly relations with its neighbours, and the issue of the Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries⁷. The relative weight of the latter two has depended on the colour of different governments: conservative governments have tended to put the minority issue first and relations with neighbours conditioned by this; social-liberal governments have tended to regard the guarantee of minority rights in the framework of good neighbourly relations.

Political awareness of the Mediterranean grew within political and academic circles – albeit on a small scale – as the EU forged and later institutionalised its policy towards the region in the 1990s. French unease over eastern enlargement played a limited role in this growing awareness, as a debate was initiated about how to prove that Hungary is a reliable EU member state. One of the most obvious areas of co-operation was the Mediterranean, as Hungarians felt they had a special relationship with the region and since it was perceived as being a particularly important area for France (and others). Although Hungary could not participate in the Barcelona process, it tried to get involved and prepare for participation (the need to focus on the Mediterranean and the Middle East became more pronounced after Hungary joined NATO and was integrated into AFSOUTH). These developments – the increasing importance of the Mediterranean in EU (and NATO) policy and the elaboration of an independent Hungarian foreign policy in which the primary focus was EU membership – are apparent in the concept of the Mediterranean elaborated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁸, and in Hungary's national strategy⁹, as well as in various academic conferences and publications¹⁰. Indeed, there is a new public awareness of the region, not least because it has become a popular tourist destination.

Hungary joined the EU on 1 May 2004 and while foreign policy priorities have not changed, their application has: with the accession the first priority was achieved, and Hungary had to adjust to a new political environment. It is fully aware that it is a member of “one of the most powerful political and economic communities” in the world and it wants to increase “the global economic and political role of the EU”. Hungary observes common European values in its extra-EU relations, and although it aims to deepen European economic and political integration, and wishes to participate actively in all the policy making and legislative institutions of the EU, it also sees the Union as a vehicle to further its own national interests.

The active and pro-active pursuit of its interests may seem an ambitious goal, but Hungary wants to “Europeanise” its foreign policy interests because it believes that its diplomacy will be thus better equipped to promote its interests within the EU than relying only on its capabilities¹¹. While some interests, such as regional and neighbourhood policy, are already EU policy, there is one issue for which Hungary has attempted to gain international support within and outside the EU (particularly the Council of Europe): the minority issue. For the first time in September 2004, the persecution of ethnic Hungarians in Serbia was raised bilaterally and in the European Parliament (which ordered that the case should be investigated).

So EU membership is seen as an obligation, a responsibility, and also as an opportunity to further national goals through participation in EU foreign policy activities – first and foremost “the unification of the Hungarian nation within the framework of the Union”¹². There is, then, a policy of conformity and a wish to adjust, but also a markedly “Hungarian focus”¹³. This is reflected in the Hungarian foreign policy focus on the Balkans in particular, and the Ukraine to a lesser extent¹⁴.

Although Hungary undertook all the relevant tasks during the accession negotiations, the new obligations contracted beyond the EU – sometimes far beyond Hungary's borders

5. Diplomatic relations were severed in 1967, according to some sources under pressure from the Soviet Union.

6. Szigetvári Tamás, 2004, *Gazdasági együttműködési lehetőségek Magyarország EU-csatlakozása után az arab világgal, a Közel-Kelettel és Észak-Afrika országaival* [Possibilities of Economic Cooperation with the Arab world, the Middle East and the North African States after Hungary's EU Accession], Budapest, pp. 55-56 (unpublished manuscript).

7. The 1920 Treaty of Trianon stripped Hungary of two-thirds of its territory and left one-third of Hungarians outside Hungary. Today, about three million ethnic Hungarians live in neighbouring states, most of them in Romania and Slovakia, so that all Hungarian governments must represent their interests. It should be noted, however, that such activities are mostly concerned with the cultural rights and freedoms of the ethnic Hungarian minorities and have no border altering implications.

8. Various concepts were developed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to define Hungarian interests in the Balkans, Russia, the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, among other regions.

9. *Koncepció Magyarország dél-mediterrán politikájára* [Concept for the Southern Mediterranean Policy of Hungary], August 2000, at www.kum.hu/Strategy/magyar/medit-m.htm and http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Kulpolitikank/Biztonsagpolitika/Nemzeti_biztonsagi_strategia.

10. See the annex for the list.

11. Hungarian National Security Strategy, at http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/Kulugyminiszterium/EN/Ministry/Departments/NATO/National_Security_Strategy.htm.

12. Programme of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány, at http://www.mszo.hu/download/dokumentumok/kormanyprogram_2004_2006_magyar.pdf, p. 39.

13. Hungarians have been traditionally sceptical about their ability to pursue their national interests, but two trends can still be distinguished that can be identified by the hierarchy of the second and third priorities of national foreign policy.

14. “Due to its geopolitical situation and historical reasons, in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) Hungary concentrates on the Balkans and the Eastern European region, but considers the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation also important and is ready to participate in this process actively, e.g. by sharing its experiences in democratic transition”. See: Minister of Foreign Affairs Ferenc Somogyi, at http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Aktualis/Miniszteri_beszedekek/050601euromediterran.htm

– have yet to gain the attention of those outside directly interested administration circles. Extra-EU responsibilities were understood, but the focus was placed on the integration process itself. Hungary had no problem with the thrust of EU foreign policy (Chapter 26 negotiations were easily negotiated and settled), but little attention was paid to new obligations such as the Barcelona process/EMP (itself evolving) by anyone outside relatively small diplomatic and academic circles. Symbolic interest was manifested by the Hungarian representation¹⁵ at the opening ceremony of the 1995 Barcelona Conference, but this reflected the conviction that Hungary has to be present in all EU events more than any real understanding of the nature of the Process itself (in the event, the Hungarian ambassador was excluded from the proceedings). From 2003, Hungary became an active EMP observer, but the Partnership was followed only by the very few officials that were actually present at the negotiations.

As it is not in the Mediterranean, Hungary obviously has limited political space for manoeuvre and the economic potential of the relationship is limited; nor is it able to play a significant role in the region on its own. However, as a new EU member on the periphery and with specific national interests (particularly security, economic and trade related), the Mediterranean has become a part of the country's political, economic and foreign trade environment and this has enhanced its status among the southern partners. This changed environment means that there is a new network/structure of relationships that has given Hungary new multilateral tools to work with. It also means that Hungary must adjust its former bilateral relations to the new framework. The new Hungarian government programme addresses the need to build relations with the Mediterranean, Asia and Latin America within the framework of the Union's foreign policy activities.

While the southern shore of the Mediterranean – as well as Africa, Asia and Latin America – is not entirely beyond the scope of Hungarian foreign policy given the aforementioned legacy of Soviet policy, it is unclear how these relations may be conducted according to market economy requirements, particularly since Hungary, like most new EU members, is struggling with grave financial difficulties.

Hungary's domestic political situation will also have an impact on its foreign policy. Hungary is deeply divided (split in half, one might say), with the opposition questioning the legitimacy of almost any government initiative. Although the basic tenets of the foreign and security policy have been consensual to date, given this division political considerations may well reshape implementation if not foreign policy outlines.

After 1 May 2004, the EMP made its official appearance on the administration agenda. Due to the complex nature of the Partnership and its three pillar system, several government bodies are involved, including the Prime Minister's Office for the Coordination of EU Affairs, the ministries of foreign affairs, defence, economy and transport, cultural heritage, and youth, family, social affairs and equal opportunities. Ministerial EMP-related activities are usually conducted within the framework (and with the staff) of the departments in charge of European affairs, although in some cases (notably the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), relevant regional departments also play an important role. Ministerial activities are coordinated by the European Coordination Inter-Agency Committee, whose work is coordinated by the Office of European Affairs (within the Prime Minister's Office, and headed by the Minister *sans portefeuille* in charge of European Affairs). Beyond the government, the EMP is the object of study by think-tanks¹⁶ and academics dealing with foreign policy issues (this was already the case even before the start of the Barcelona Process), and it is a subject dealt with in lectures and even full courses at some universities¹⁷. NGO activities are expected to take off, but are still insignificant.

Hungarian foreign policy towards the Mediterranean region as a whole is pursued within the framework of the European Union and given the country's position and capabilities, bilateral relations, however downgraded in the post-Communist era, are still active. The political/diplomatic representation of Hungary has not been decreased; on the contrary, new missions were opened in the Palestinian Territories (Ramallah) and Jordan (Amman), so that Hungary has diplomatic representations in *all* the southern Mediterranean partner countries¹⁸. The focus of foreign policy thinking and decision-making is to support all EU initiatives and policies towards the Mediterranean, and in the national interest to revive old bilateral relations and establish new ones. Hungarian interest in the political and security pillar of the EMP can be articulated with the general

15. Dr. Pál Schmitt, who was Ambassador to Spain and is now an MP in the European Parliament and Vice President of FIDESZ.

16. Teleki László Institute, Institute of World Economy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Institute for Strategic and Defence Studies.

17. Corvinus University of Budapest (Department of International Relations), Szeged University (Department of European Studies), Kodolányi János University College (Department of Social Sciences), Budapest University College of Economy.

18. Among the new Central European EU members only the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary have diplomatic missions in all the southern Mediterranean states. See Table 1 (Annex).

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership



The First Pillar: Political and Security Policy Cooperation



security aspects on the one hand, and such specific issues that could be put in a wider framework as the integration of further states to the EU, mainly that of Croatia and Turkey, and the coordination of the EMP with the President George W. Bush's Greater Middle East initiative.

Hungary is also concerned with southern security threats as perceived by the EU (migration, political and economic instability, the spill-over of local conflicts, terrorism, smuggling, and organised crime, among others), but to date the Balkans, in Hungary's immediate neighbourhood, has been more of a problem in this regard, particularly during the civil wars in Yugoslavia and the former Soviet states, especially the Ukraine and Moldova. These threats are only sporadically associated with the southern Mediterranean states. The public sees the appearance of some Arab money changers in the centre of Budapest as evidence of the threat of organised crime, but these activities are limited in space and scope. Incidents caused by the spill-over of local conflicts and/or terrorism are also few and far between, with the most serious case being the attempt to explode a bus carrying Jews emigrating from the Soviet Union to Israel via Hungary¹⁹.

Official and public awareness of terrorist threats increased after the attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001, and a series of anti-terrorist measures were adopted (including limiting money transfers or the provision of other support to terrorist-labelled Middle Eastern organizations). In one well publicized incident a Syrian born doctor practising in Pécs transferred moneys to support Palestinian children, and the organization later on turned out to be on the black list. The doctor was expelled from Hungary. In 2004, during an official visit by Israeli President Moshe Katzav, the Hungarian-Palestinian dentist Saleh Tayseer who is also the Hungarian Muslim community Imam was taken into custody on the suspicion that he planned an attack on the visiting dignitary (he was later released for lack of proof).

Because Hungary perceives the Balkans rather than the Mediterranean as a greater source of threat, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) emerges as a key framework, as two of the four defined neighbourhoods – the Balkans and Eastern Europe – are directly neighbour Hungary. The Hungarian perception is that it has a special understanding and knowledge of the Balkans, with which it shares a common political, economic and cultural history. Ethnic Hungarians living in the Balkan states and, albeit in lesser number, the minorities that live in Hungary serve as important links, but they may be subject to ethnic discrimination. Hungarian security is directly affected by the situation in the Balkans: it was threatened by the break-up of Yugoslavia and the following civil wars in Bosnia and Kosovo. Though the spill-over remained theoretical (barring a few incidents), migration and energy supply cuts have caused many difficulties²⁰. Hungary participates in peace-keeping and reconstruction activities in the Balkans (in the SFOR and IFOR – now EUFOR and KFOR), and is involved in several regional and cross-border initiatives.

All along the integration process, it has been a stated foreign and security aim that *all* Hungary's neighbours should be included in Euro-Atlantic structures. With the 2004 EU enlargement and the expected 2007 accession of Romania and Bulgaria, most of Hungary's neighbours – among them those that have the biggest Hungarian minorities – will have joined the Union. Although the domestic political consensus on foreign policy is deteriorating, the accession of Croatia proved to be consensual when the Hungarian foreign policy establishment firmly voted in favour of starting the accession negotiations with Croatia in March 2005 in spite of the Gotovina affair.

The EU decision to begin accession negotiations with Turkey in October 2005 has not yet garnered much public attention, and although there are signs of discontent with posters and some civil organizations collecting signatures against Turkish accession, such events are marginal and usually organised by Europeans rather than Hungarians, and predominantly reflect sentiments in France or Germany. However, there are debates about the Islamic basis of Turkish society and there is open hostility towards Islam, so although currently not widespread, such views may be significant later. The official view is that Turkey must meet all accession criteria and that timing is important, since Hungary does not want Turkey to join over the next two EU financial periods as it is felt that this is the amount of time that it will take the Hungarian economy to catch up with the level of the older EU member states.

Like many of the other most recent members, Hungary is generally considered Atlanticist, although the reasons and extent to which they are so vary. These countries sided with the US and Great Britain over Iraq, which raised tensions within the EU²¹,

19. 23 December 1991, at http://www.radio.hu/index.php?cikk_id=107940.

20. The oil pipeline "Friendship" connecting Hungary to the Adriatic sea ceased to operate.

21. US rhetoric differentiated between the "new" and "old" (anti-war) Europe.

but the feeling was that a dual commitment (to the EU and NATO or the US) was not contradictory but complementary,²² and that obligations had to be met on both sides. Since all the new members are convinced that the EU and NATO *together* will guarantee their well-being and security, the trans-Atlantic rift was particularly unwelcome since the new members were pressed to “take sides”. As luck would have it, the old members were divided, and then had to mend fences. In the context of trans-Atlantic bridge-building, President George W. Bush introduced the Greater Middle East Initiative, at which time there was a series of debates within the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (with the participation of the representatives of other ministries and some experts) about how EU Mediterranean policy could complement the Greater Middle East Initiative. Emphasis was put on common interests and aims but it was understood that the approach to the Mediterranean and the Greater Middle East as a whole is different in many ways. This was seen as an argument in favour of harmonizing the two approaches, however, as many saw them as complementary. It was noted that a duplication of efforts was not in Hungary’s interests. For Hungary, the NATO-Mediterranean dialogue is a good example of complementarity, as it contributes to the Mediterranean dimension of the ESDP. Hungary is contributing to that dialogue by offering what it modestly can to the southern partners in the area of peace-keeping and military training, with English language courses for military and civilian personnel (the program is ongoing and Algerian military officers are currently studying in Hungary).

The main foreign and security policy-making and executing actors for the Mediterranean are the ministries of foreign affairs and defence, although the former has a much more visible role. Its departments for European Political Cooperation (the home of the EU-Med policy coordinator), Strategic Planning and Analysis (which drew up the 2000 Mediterranean strategy) and Department 6 in charge of the Middle East and Africa (its head is the national EU-Med senior official) work together to coordinate policy. They represent Hungary at the relevant EU-Med meetings, including COMAG, the Maghreb-Mashreq group, and the Euro-Mediterranean Committee. The Ministry of Defence is in charge of the NATO-Mediterranean dialogue, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A representative of the Hungarian Parliament participated in the opening of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliament in March 2004 as an observer, and after 1 May Hungary became a regular (with three parliamentary representatives). The Euro-Mediterranean Parliament is perceived as another forum for enhanced dialogue and cooperation²³. Finally, various academic institutions analyse first pillar aspects of the EMP, and although the Partnership is not high on the foreign policy agenda and attention is sporadic, there is a relatively solid body of research focusing on the Partnership²⁴. The Teleki László Institute Centre for Foreign Policy Studies (formerly the Hungarian Institute of International Affairs) joined EuroMeSCo in 2004 and participated in EMP-related activities and research well before that.

Hungary’s interests are best articulated within the second pillar on economic relations, as it has comparative advantages in this domain. It was the second pillar that first attracted Hungarian interest, even before the Barcelona Process and accession negotiations. The issue at stake was the distribution of EU funds and aid between Central Europe and the southern Mediterranean. Although politically different, the Mediterranean was seen as a rival in this regard. Hungary also sees the Mediterranean as being full of potential and economic relations began to intensify after 2000 (although they have yet to reach Soviet period levels). And the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel opened a new channel for economic cooperation in a formerly non-available field.

Chapter 26 of the accession negotiations was unproblematic. Although Hungary asked for a transitional period for some products, it was ready and able to terminate all obligations that were inconsistent with the *acquis*. As regards Hungarian participation in EU economic and financial cooperation, the country supports EU policy and fully comprehends the importance of economic stability for the overall security and development of the EU. As a peripheral state it considers that vital for its own security as well. At the same time, Hungary perceives that its experience with the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy could be usefully shared to foster economic reform in the Southern Mediterranean states, and that Central European cooperation is an example for greater South-to-South. The EMP economic dimension

The Second Pillar: Economic and Financial Cooperation

22. As said by former Minister of Foreign Affairs László Kovács: “more EU does not mean less NATO”.

23. 23 March 2004, as announced by MTI, at www.fidesz.hu.

24. See Annex.

25. On human capital the section on the third pillar in this paper.

26. Government Decree 2319/1999 of 7 December explained the concept of international development cooperation of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy and Finance, and was adopted on 24 July 2001, at http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Kulpolitikank/Nemzetkozi_fejlesztés/NEFE_politika.htm.

27. See http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/NR/rdonlyres/FD0D03B9-DBBC-4266-B379-BFDF34C3EEFF/0/TB_beszamolo.pdf.

28. See http://www.kulugyminiszterium.hu/kum/hu/bal/Kulpolitikank/Nemzetkozi_fejlesztés/tajekoztatok.htm.

gives Hungary the opportunity to be an international actor and to revive old contacts, particularly as the former Hungarian presence and expertise is still remembered and sought after. Some Hungarian trademarks and companies are still present in the region (even after the former ceased to exist at home). Such is the case of Tungfram, Ikarus, and GANZ to name just a few. There are Hungarian technologies (the dry cooling systems used in power plants in water scarce areas, for instance) that are still used in the region. Hungary can offer expertise in education, training, medical services, and agricultural and water treatment know how, among others²⁵. Conversely, the Southern Mediterranean is a familiar and relatively close market for Hungarian products and could thus widen the scope for trade (mostly narrowed down to the EU members over the past decade) and contribute to the diversification of energy supplies, which is vitally important in light of Hungary's lack of energy resources. There is a favourable view of the former socialist countries among old "friendly" Arab states, and despite NATO and EU membership these the Central and Eastern European states are still not identified as part of the "West". The Hungarian public also perceives the Mediterranean more favourably than it does, say, the Ukraine, an immediate neighbour, not least because the southern shore of the Mediterranean has become a key tourist attraction (Turkey, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Israel, and more recently Jordan and even Syria).

The main official actor for the second pillar is the Ministry of Economy and Transport (the Deputy State Secretary supervises foreign economic relations and the ministry's department of foreign economic relations with extra-EU countries oversees relations with the southern Mediterranean). This is a relatively new development, as all external relations between 2000 and 2004 were under the aegis of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Former foreign trade representations were dissolved and staff and activities were integrated into the embassies. Hungary participates in all EU-Med second pillar activities: the annual conferences of the EU-Mediterranean Ministers of Trade and ECOFIN (in 2005). And it also contributes to MEDA financially and has participated in all Euro-Mediterranean initiatives. Hungary began to prepare for participation in EU development cooperation as early as 2001, when the national International Development Cooperation Policy was elaborated²⁶. In November 2002 a department was set up within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate activities in this domain. Hungary is bound to increase its contribution to EU development funds by up to 0.7% of its GDP (it was 0.33% at the end of 2003, but the 0.39% ratio for 2006 will be met only later). Given severe financial restrictions (the development budget for 2004 was 1.05 billion HUF, but was cut down to 832.5 million HUF), the development budget will decrease further to 779.6 million HUF in 2005²⁷. Within the limits, however, Hungary will participate in development activities.

Hungary is also adjusting its policies to adapt to international trends towards bilateral support, in addition to supporting multilateral frameworks. It concluded a long-term framework agreement with the Palestinian National Authority, and several projects were initiated (for 2003-2005), including the provision of technical assistance, the training of elections observers, and receiving Palestinian children in Hungarian summer camps²⁸. In 1993 the Ministry of Economy and Transport established ITD Hungary (International Trade and Development Hungary), to promote relations between Hungarian entrepreneurs, state and regional administration and foreign partners. ITD has offices in Egypt and Turkey.

At the academic level, the Institute of World Economy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, a highly esteemed think-tank that works on world economy issues, has participated actively in academic exchange on different EMP issues, applied for FEMISE membership, and participates in the EMERI (Euro-Mediterranean Economic Research Institute) project.

The third pillar is the one that Hungary is most able to contribute to, partly because of a 140 year old academic tradition, and partly as a result of Cold War contacts. Oriental and Middle Eastern studies were institutionalised at the Eötvös Loránd University (later at the Pázmány Péter University), starting with Turkish studies in the 1870's (given the Ottoman Turkish legacy and studies about the origin and ancient past of the Hungarians). This was followed by Arabic and Semitic, and later Iranian studies. Egyptology is a relatively recent field of study, but has led to some significant work. In the context of theological and biblical studies, Hebrew studies have always been strong, although they were limited during the Cold War along with other religious studies. Hebrew studies received new impetus after the establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel and regime change in 1989-1990. There are an estimated 130,000

The Third Pillar: Cultural and Human Rights Cooperation

Jews in Hungary, the third largest Jewish community in Europe, and around 200,000 Hungarian Jews live in Israel, most of which keep in close contact with Hungary. The Jewish cultural and political contribution to Hungarian life is very significant²⁹, with a strong presence in political, media and cultural circles. Although it is the case that “anti-Semitism in Hungary, while rarely overt, still exists in a non-violent manner”³⁰, anti-Semitism among the general public is less pronounced than is perceived by some. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that there are smaller groups and parties that make anti-Semitic statements, although their influence is very limited.

Hungary has practically no Muslim population, apart from a very limited number of descendants of former Muslims (mainly from Bosnia-Herzegovina) and some students, who stayed behind after the completion of their studies. As a former socialist country, Hungary was relatively closed to immigration. The few foreigners who came to live in the country were usually nationals of countries that belonged to the socialist-internationalist family – Vietnam, Cuba and the “friendly” Arab states – and most returned home upon completion of their studies. The appearance of refugees from Muslim countries is a relatively new phenomenon and has had only a limited impact since Hungary is primarily a transit state and few settle there. On the whole, the number of Muslims is estimated at around 10,000 (about 0.1% of the total population), and they are divided into at least three different communities³¹. So they tend to be “invisible” unless a specific event puts them in the headlines³².

The absence of sizeable Muslim communities means that Islamophobia is almost non-existent, apart from among some small groups that given their special links to Israel occasionally express such sentiments. This is more a function of foreign events and less of any problem with Muslims living in Hungary. The media coverage of 9/11 and terrorist activities in the Muslim world, of the war in Iraq and more recently of Turkish accession to the EU has given rise to some anti-Islamic sentiment, although it is presently embryonic. Awareness of this phenomenon is increasing with EU-wide opinion polls in which people are asked about Islamophobia in their countries. The relative absence of this kind of sentiment could give Hungary a wider margin in the Mediterranean.

Former students who came to Hungary during the socialist period and still keep in touch with Hungary are also an important community. There are mixed marriages in Hungary and the Arab countries, and since such people are usually public opinion leaders, this could be an asset for bilateral relations. Hungarians who once worked in the southern Mediterranean also contribute to this human potential. It should be noted that these groups create a network of contacts that would otherwise be invisible. Some Hungarian embassies in the southern Mediterranean keep track of such communities and/or families and regularly bring them together. The Hungarian Cultural Institute in Egypt is a valuable member of this network (a series of Hungarian cultural events organised in Syria in March-April 2004 by the Embassy were labelled acts of “Hungarian cultural dumping”³³ in the media). Hungarian “friendship societies” play a minor, but important role in that they try to raise awareness and strengthen mostly cultural contacts between Hungarians and other nationals. The Hungarian-Egyptian, Hungarian-Palestinian, and Hungarian-Turkish Friendship Societies are especially active.

Apart from Middle Eastern studies a relatively new phenomenon in the academic field is the development of Euro-Mediterranean studies³⁴, which are either conducted in the framework of contemporary history or international relations. Some universities and university colleges have started to teach Euro-Mediterranean courses on the history of the region and on the EMP.

As an EU member, Hungary has been involved in the activities of the Anna Lindh Foundation to which Hungary contributes 60,000 Euros. The official coordinator of activities and contributions is the Ministry of Cultural Heritage (the Department for Strategic Planning and EU Coordination in close cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), but the Teleki László Institute was named the NGO head in accordance with the guidelines. The Hungarian network of the Anna Lindh Foundation involves the abovementioned research centres and university departments involved in Euro-Mediterranean studies and able to reach students and the media. The aim of the Foundation is to establish relationships among the civil society organizations of the partner states, and in this sphere much remains to be done in Hungary.

Youth is a priority both of Anna Lindh Foundation and other specialized cooperation

29. The latest and by far most outstanding Hungarian Jewish achievement was the Literary Nobel Prize awarded to Imre Kertész in 2002.

30. See http://www.jewishinseattle.org/JF/Giving/Annual?Your_gift_touches_the_life_of_Hungarian_Jews.doc.

31. The most important is the *Magyarországi Iszlám Közösség* [Hungarian Islamic Community], which is involved in several charitable activities in Muslim countries.

32. See the cases mentioned in the section on the first pillar.

33. This was organised to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral relations between Syria and Hungary. There were cultural events all around the country almost every day for two months.

34. See Annex.

programmes like the Euro-Mediterranean Youth Platform, which was launched in September 2003. The Platform, together with Mobilitas, the Hungarian national office of the Youth 2000-2006 Programme, organised a meeting of young people from the Euro-Mediterranean partner countries on 22-26 October 2004 in Budapest. The meeting was supported by the former Minister for Children, Youth and Sports, Ferenc Gyurcsány, who is now the Prime Minister of Hungary³⁵.

Conclusions

For “historical as well as geographical reasons [Hungary] has no overseas interests or extensions, let alone colonial past”³⁶. Although it has historical links to some Mediterranean countries (Italy and Turkey), these were severed after the Second War when Hungary became a member in the Soviet alliance. During the Soviet era, Hungary pursued the Soviet Middle Eastern policy, having relatively strong political, economic and cultural relations to the Arab states of “socialist orientation”. Economic relations were based on two facts: these countries proved a market to the less sophisticated goods produced by the socialist countries, and they were also the only markets to gain hard currency from. Cultural relations were based mostly on and maintained by students from friendly Arab states, and by people who went to work in those countries with centrally planned contracts. Regime change and the dissolution of the Soviet Union changed relations with the Arab states in a very negative way, but although economic contacts were severed and political interest in the region disappeared, the network of Hungarian diplomatic missions was maintained and even expanded to include Israel, the Palestinian Territories and Jordan.

The new era made it necessary to formulate an independent foreign and security policy, which in turn presupposed the evaluation of Hungary’s situation and an articulation of the national interest³⁷. Hungary was and still it is a policy-receiver rather than a policy maker. Official policy focuses mostly on Euro-Atlantic integration, and since new priorities led to an abandonment of meaningful ties beyond Europe despite the desire of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to maintain and improve relations with the Arab states. NATO membership in 1997 and accession to the EU in 2004 changed the context again. As a member of an international power, Hungary has new responsibilities but also a new framework within which to pursue its national goals. EU integration increasingly means involvement in policies in distant neighbourhood areas, such as the southern shore of the Mediterranean and Middle East, where Hungary has relatively minor interests and must build new relations on the Soviet past. While still on the periphery, it is now formerly inside rather than outside the EU, and so it is more exposed to security threats directed at the EU, but while for the EU the south is more of a threat, for Hungary its direct neighbourhood is more of a concern. The ENP is seen as especially useful, a tool that allows for a more nuanced approach to relations with neighbouring states.

For Hungary, the EMP is an important means to provide security for Europe as a whole through multilayered relationship with the southern shore of the Mediterranean. Hungary participates actively in all the relevant structures and activities of the Partnership, but its capabilities are rather limited not only because of its location but for economic reasons Hungary is still “learning” about policy-making in an international structure and the EMP is a moving target, which is still perceived more in the context of bilateral relations than as a form of integrated cooperation. Hungary has economic and trade interests in the region aside from general security-related interests, and it tries to pursue them within the EU framework. It aims to do so by using the “human capital” of former southern Mediterranean students in Hungary and Hungarians who formerly worked in the southern Mediterranean. Public awareness of the EMP is still very limited, and outside limited official circles, it is debated only in a relatively restricted academic context.

35. Upon becoming Prime Minister, Ferenc Gyurcsány expanded the scope of the Ministry to include equal opportunities (Ministry of Youth, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) but sports was shifted to the Prime Minister’s Office.

36. See Antonio Missiroli, 2002, “Bigger EU, Wider CFSP, Stronger ESDP?”, *Occasional Paper 34*, EU Institute for Security Studies, pp. 58-64.

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1997

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1998

Searching for a New Role: Hungary in the South – an international conference organised by the Institute for Strategic and Defence Studies.

2001

The Barcelona Process and Eastern Europe – an international conference organised by the European Studies Centre of the Szeged University.

2004

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Annex: List of events and publications on the Mediterranean³⁸

Conferences



Publications



³⁸ Only events and publications on the Mediterranean were included. For other articles and publications on specific countries or Middle Eastern issues see: <http://www.telekiintezet.hu>; Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Közel-Kelet adatbázis (Middle East database).

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Department of International Relations

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership — Kodolányi János University College,
Székesfehérvár

University courses

	Poland	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Hungary	Slovenia	Estonia	Latvia	Lithuania
Morocco	x	x	-	x	-	x	x	x
Algeria	x	x	-	x	-	-	-	-
Tunisia	x	x	-	x	-	-	-	x
Libya	x	x	x	x	-	-	-	-
Egypt	x	x	x	x	-	x	x	x
PNA	x	x	-	x	-	-	x	-
Israel	x	x	x	x	-	x	x	x
Jordan	x	x	-	x	-	x	x	x
Lebanon	x	x	-	x	-	x	x	x
Syria	x	x	x	x	-	-	x	x
Turkey	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Table 1

Diplomatic representation of the Central European new EU members in the southern Mediterranean states³⁹

³⁹ The table was drawn up on the basis of the information available on the official websites of the relevant Foreign Ministries.

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