

HUNGARY - INFORMATION SHEET

BACKGROUND

Hungary is bordered by Austria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and the Ukraine. Between 1948 and 1989 Hungary was under the control of the Communist Party. The Magyars, a nomadic tribe, are said to have arrived from central Asia to what is now known as Hungary. Most Hungarians trace their ancestry to the Magyars. The officially recognised minorities are Armenians, Bulgarians, Croats, Germans, Greeks, Poles, Romanians, Roma (Gypsy), Rutthenians, Serbs, Slovaks, Slovenes, and Ukrainians. The largest minority is the Roma, who make up about 5% of the population.

LANGUAGE

Hungarian is spoken. It is dissimilar to nearby countries. Hungarians tend to be monolingual, in fact a study in 2006 found young Hungarians to be the most monolingual country in Europe. Before World War II, German was the most common second language, during the Russian occupation, Russian was mandatory in schools, and most recently English is the most preferred second language.

RELIGION

The majority of Hungarians are Roman Catholic: about two thirds of the population. The constant changing of rulers has left Hungarians with a reputation for being tolerant about religion.

RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

ALL SAINTS' DAY - *Mindenszentek napja* – On this day people remember their deceased loved ones by lighting candles at their graves in cemeteries.

EASTER SUNDAY AND MONDAY - HÚSVÉT Easter is an important religious holiday in Hungary. Families with children paint Easter-eggs of all styles and colour. Children find small gifts beside their beds early Sunday morning. A traditional breakfast of Easter-eggs, ham, braided cake bread, horse-radish and hot chocolate is eaten.

NAMEDAYS - NÉVNAP in Hungary are special days celebrated on a day designated for a person's name. Small gifts are given. It is like a small, low-key birthday celebrated in the workplace, where people will usually not know when their colleague's birthdays are. Namedays are also celebrated among friends and family.

SOCIAL CUSTOMS

CHILD REARING PRACTICES: The concept of self-esteem is not valued in Hungarian culture. Children are loved and indulged, but there is a popular belief that strength of character in children derives from overcoming obstacles. It is common for both parents to work and to share parenting. Parents tend to be strict and a loss of privileges is the most used form of punishment. Smacking is not accepted.

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE: Hungarians are very formal and incredibly polite. Older men might still kiss a woman's hand on meeting her. Men will walk on the left side of women, dating back to when men kept their swords on the left side. Friends, family members and close acquaintances, who have not seen one another for a while, greet and part with pecks on both cheeks. It is customary for a woman to offer her hand first in introductions. Hungarians put surnames before given names in all usages, even in casual conversation.

CUISINE

Hungarian cuisine is heavily meat-based with pork being the most common ingredient. Goulash is the national dish, a soup or stew made with meat, onions, potato and seasoned with paprika. Other vegetables may be added. *Palacsinta*, a Hungarian pancake, is a common dessert.

FAMOUS HUNGARIAN INVENTIONS

The Rubik's Cube puzzle was invented by a Hungarian and so too was the ball-point pen, sometimes called a biro after its inventor Laslo Biro.

REFERENCES

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