



The Governance of Land Use

COUNTRY FACT SHEET HUNGARY

The planning system

Levels of government and their responsibilities

Hungary is a unitary state with two levels of subnational government; 19 counties and the capital region of Budapest constitute the regional level and 3 178 municipalities form the local level. The national government has several responsibilities related to spatial planning. First, it prepares the national framework legislation that structures planning at the national and subnational level. Second, it enacts the *National Spatial Plan*, the two existing *Spatial Plans for Special Regions* and *Cross-border Spatial Plans*. Third, it uses financial instruments and allocates its budget to shape the spatial structure of the country. Fourth, it provides opinions on regional and local spatial plans and approves them with respect to their congruence with higher level spatial plans. This task is delegated to the *State Chief Architects* within the regional *Government Offices*, i.e. the deconcentrated parts of the national administration.

County governments are primarily responsible for the preparation and enactment of the *Spatial Plans for Counties*. They also provide opinions on the *National Spatial Plan* and the *Spatial Plans for Special Regions* that concern their territory.

Local governments enact *Settlement Structural Plans* and related building regulations that complement the plans. They are also the primary contact point for public engagement in the planning process. Furthermore, they have several special legal instruments at their disposal that they can use to shape the spatial structure in their territory, such as special proceedings, prohibitions and plot readjustments.

Spatial and land-use plans

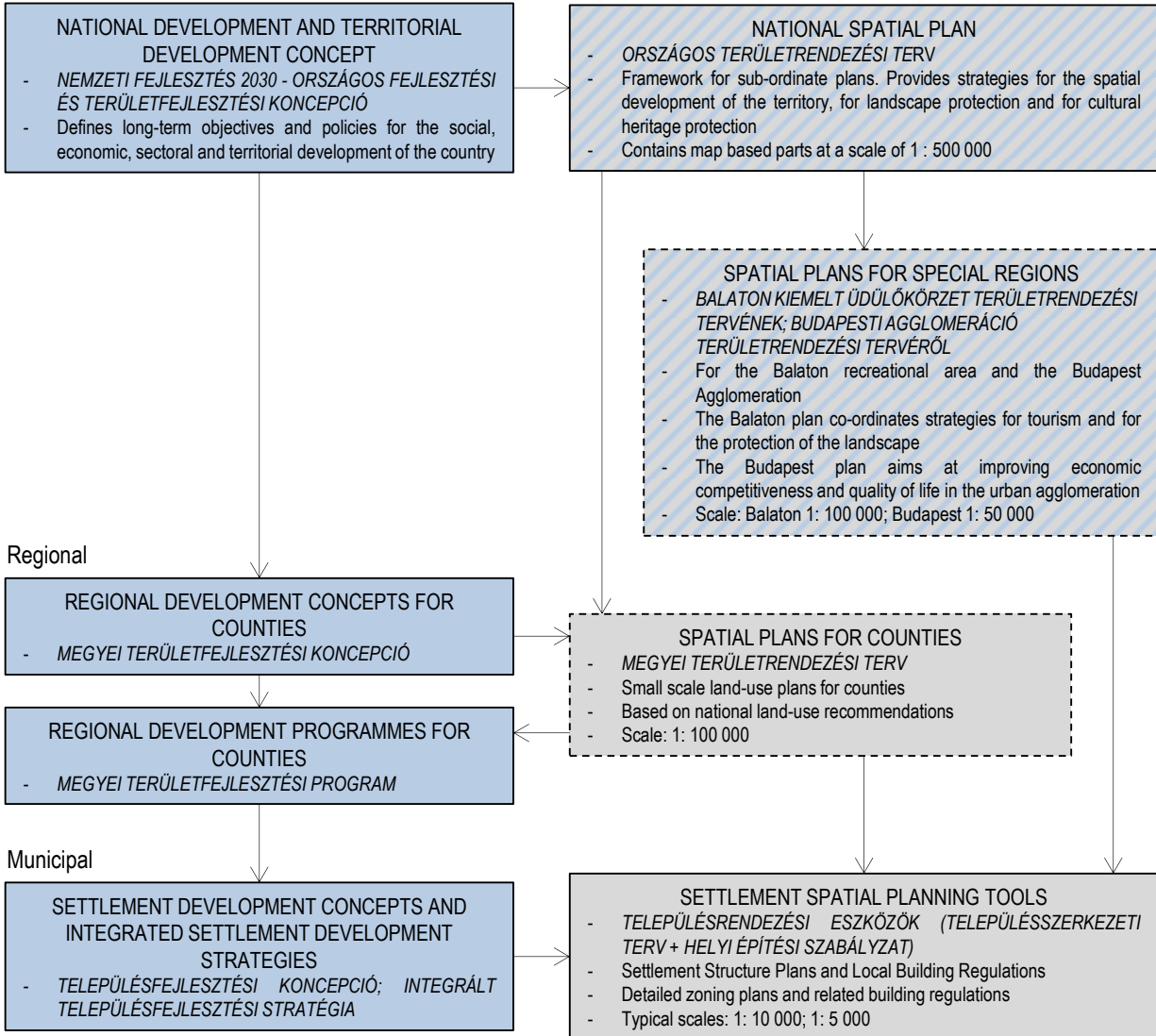
Hungary has a hierarchical planning system with three or four levels of spatial plans depending on the region. At the highest level, the *National Spatial Plan* contains a mix of general guidelines, strategic plans and small scale land-use plans at a scale of 1: 500 000. It is a legally binding document that is approved by a vote of parliament and is replaced every seven years.

Below the *National Spatial Plan*, two *Spatial Plans for Special Regions* exist. They cover the capital of Budapest and its surrounding urban agglomeration and the touristic area around Lake Balaton, respectively. Both plans are comprehensive plans that aim at fostering the economic potential of the region, while supporting sustainable development and the protection of nature and the cultural heritage. Just as national plans, they combine general guidelines and strategic plans with land-use plans at a scale of 1: 100 000 in the case of the Balaton plan and 1: 50 000 in the case of the Budapest plan. Both plans are approved by vote of the parliament, binding for lower level plans and renewed every ten years in the case of the Balaton plan and every seven years in case of the Budapest plan.

Organisation of spatial and land-use planning in Hungary

General framework

National



- Sub-ordinate plans must conform
- Sub-ordinate plans do not need to conform
- Primarily policy / strategic guidelines
- Primarily land-use plans
- Strategic and land-use guidelines
- Partial geographical coverage

Every seven years, each county prepares a *Spatial Plan for Counties*. It provides the link between the *National Spatial Plan* and local plan by detailing the regulations provided in the national plan. *Spatial Plans for Counties* are particularly relevant for development control, as they outline areas for future development and for nature and cultural heritage protection. Furthermore, they determine the permitted uses of those areas that have been left unspecified by the national plan. Land-use plans within *Spatial Plans for Counties* are generally drawn at a scale of 1: 100 000.

At the local level, the *Settlement Structural Plan* is a comprehensive plan that combines zoning with strategic planning and is binding for land owners. It is complemented by local building regulations that provide more details on approved types of use and possible developments. It has a scale of 1: 10 000 in the largest municipalities and larger scales in smaller ones. As for most other plans in Hungary, it is renewed every seven years.

Spatial plans at all three levels of government are accompanied by *Development Concepts*. They define long-term objectives for territorial development at the respective geographical scale and focus in particular on social and economic objectives. Furthermore, they guide sectoral planning. Each *Development Concept* guides the preparation of *Spatial Plans* at the corresponding administrative level (within the limits provided by higher level *Spatial Plans*).

Major laws and regulations

Three laws form the main framework legislation that determines the Hungarian spatial planning system. *Act XXI 1996 on Regional Development and Spatial Planning* outlines the roles of the different levels of government and their bodies for spatial development. *Act XXVI 2003 on the National Spatial Plan* determines how the land-use planning system works and defines the main land-use categories that must be used in zoning plans at national and county level. *Act LXXVIII 1997 on the Development and Protection of the Built Environment* contains the main elements of national building regulation.

Co-ordination mechanisms

Vertical co-ordination between levels of government occurs through the *Chief Architects* in counties who serve as representatives of the national government. They provide assistance to municipalities in preparing their plans and ensure that they match national plans. They can also approve discrepancies between local and national plans. Co-ordination at the horizontal level occurs primarily through the dissemination of the spatial plans at an early stage of the planning process to a list of authorities that is defined by decree. These authorities may comment on the plans and influence their contents.

Expropriations

Expropriation is possible for public sector developments that are in the public interest if a sale of the property could not be negotiated and the proposed development is only possible at the particular location. Expropriation is generally not possible for private sector developments.

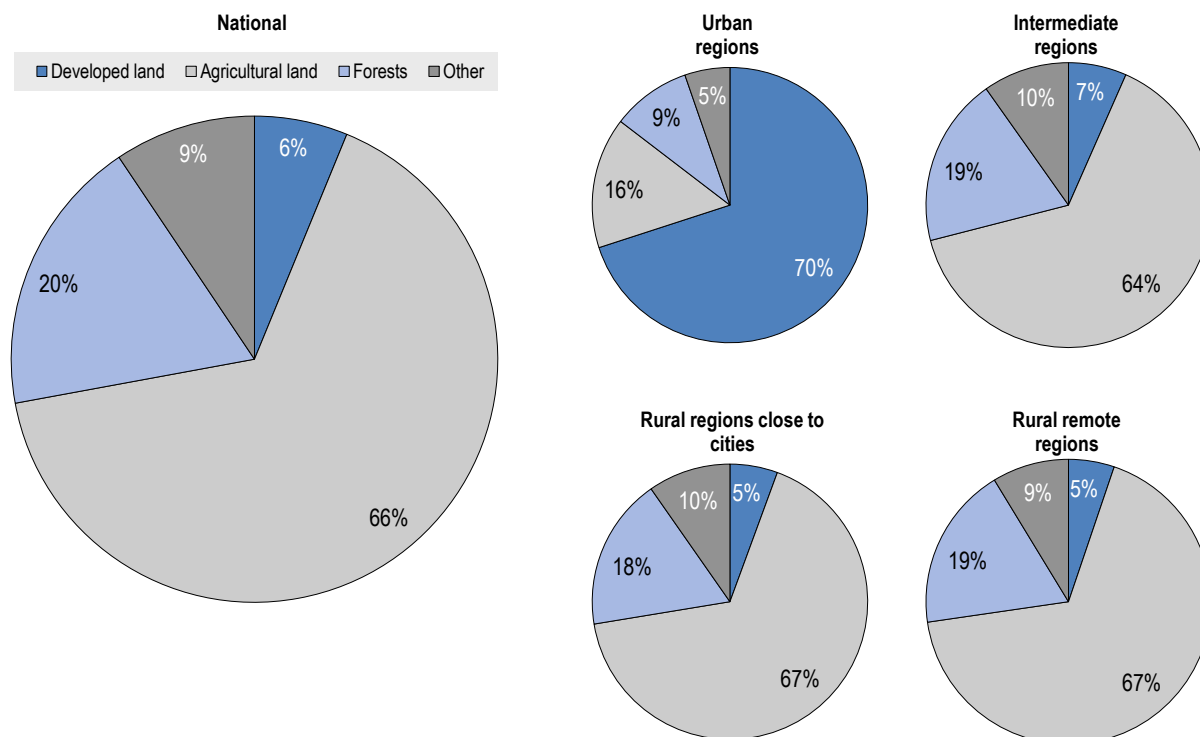
Recent and planned reforms to the system of land-use planning

The Hungarian spatial planning system in its current form was established in 1996 and 1997 with the enactment of the *Act XXI on Regional Development and Spatial Planning* and the *Act*

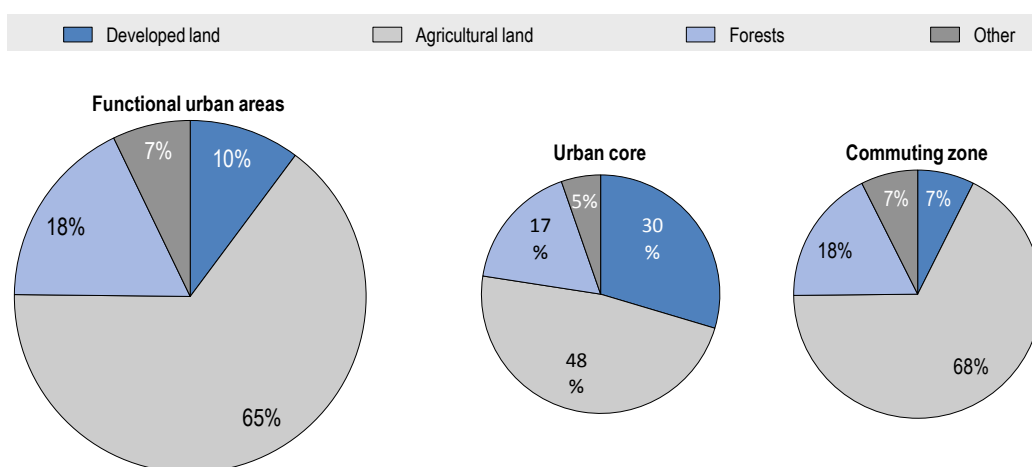
LXXVIII 1997 on the Development and Protection of the Built Environment. Since then, several further acts were passed that define the planning system and the role of the involved authorities in more detail without changing the system in general. Since 2009, several decrees were passed to streamline the planning process.

Land cover in Hungary

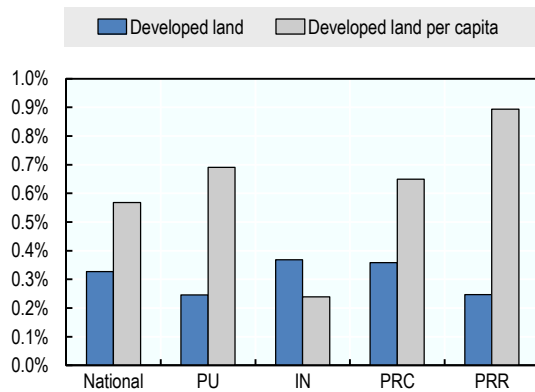
Land cover at the national level



Land cover in functional urban areas (FUAs)

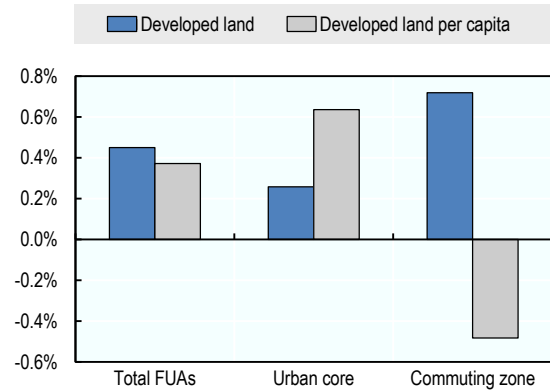


Annual change in developed land, 2000-12



Note: PU: urban regions, IN: intermediate regions, PRC: rural regions close to cities, PRR: rural remote regions.

Annual change in developed land in functional urban areas from 2000 to 2012



Note: Values for urban cores and commuting zones refer only to FUAs with more than 500 000 inhabitants.

Land-use trends in Hungary

Hungary's per capita land consumption is high relative to countries with comparable moderate population densities and the sixth highest among all 28 analysed OECD countries. Since 2000, per capita land consumption has increased in urban, rural and intermediate regions driven by a combination of declining populations and continued development of land. As a share of total land area, developed land makes up 6% in Hungary, which is within the middle of the range for OECD countries. In contrast, with 66%, the share of agricultural land is well above OECD average. The only exceptions are primarily urban regions, which have an unusually high share of developed land. This can be explained by the fact that the capital region of Budapest is the only region classified as primarily urban. As its boundaries correspond closely to the extent of the urban fabric, the region is dominated by developed land.

Source: OECD calculations based on *Corine Land Cover dataset*.

Land cover at the national level in Hungary

Land cover (km ²)	National	Urban regions	Intermediate regions	Rural regions close to cities	Rural remote regions
Total area	93 018	522	30 787	34 451	27 258
Total developed land	5 738	365	2 040	1 927	1 405
Percentage of total	6.2%	70.0%	6.6%	5.6%	5.2%
Annual change in developed land, 2000-12	18.4	0.9	7.3	6.7	3.4
Annual percentage change in developed land, 2000-12	0.33%	0.25%	0.37%	0.36%	0.25%
Agricultural land	61 320	80	19 824	23 005	18 411
Percentage of total	65.9%	15.4%	64.4%	66.8%	67.5%
Annual change in agricultural land, 2000-12	-97.6	-0.8	-32.4	-46.4	-18.0
Annual percentage change in agricultural land, 2000-12	-0.16%	-0.93%	-0.16%	-0.20%	-0.10%
Forests	17 203	49	5 911	6 172	5 072
Percentage of total	18.5%	9.3%	19.2%	17.9%	18.6%
Annual change in forests, 2000-12	-28.5	0.1	-11.9	1.1	-17.9
Annual percentage change in forests, 2000-12	-0.16%	0.31%	-0.20%	0.02%	-0.34%
Land cover per capita (m²)					
Total developed land per capita	578	211	576	689	753
Annual percentage change in developed land per capita, 2000-12	0.57%	0.69%	0.24%	0.65%	0.89%
Agricultural land per capita	6174	47	5596	8229	9863
Annual percentage change in agricultural land per capita, 2000-12	0.08%	-0.49%	-0.29%	0.09%	0.55%
Forests per capita	1 732	28	1 669	2 208	2 717
Annual percentage change in forests per capita, 2000-12	0.08%	0.76%	-0.33%	0.31%	0.30%

Land cover in functional urban areas (FUAs)

Land cover in FUAs (km ²)	FUAs	Urban core	Commuting zone
Total area	21 311	2 683	18 628
Total developed land	2 173	794	1 379
Percentage of total	10.2%	29.6%	7.4%
Annual change in developed land, 2000-12	9.5	3.0	6.5
Annual percentage change in developed land, 2000-12	0.45%	0.39%	0.49%
Agricultural land	13 846	1 284	12 563
Percentage of total	65.0%	47.8%	67.4%
Annual change in agricultural land, 2000-12	-29.6	-3.7	-25.9
Annual percentage change in agricultural land, 2000-12	-0.21%	-0.28%	-0.20%
Forests	3 765	462	3 303
Percentage of total	17.7%	17.2%	17.7%
Annual change in forests, 2000-12	-4.7	-0.9	-3.8
Annual percentage change in forests, 2000-12	-0.12%	-0.19%	-0.11%
Land cover per capita in FUAs (m²)			
	FUAs (50 000+ inhabitants)	Urban core (only FUAs 500 000+)	Commuting zone (only FUAs 500 000+)
Total developed land per capita	433	215	598
Annual percentage change in developed land per capita, 2000-12	0.37%	0.64%	-0.48%
Agricultural land per capita	2 759	49	2 893
Annual percentage change in agricultural land per capita, 2000-12	-0.29%	-0.56%	-1.42%
Forests per capita	750	28	889
Annual percentage change in forests per capita, 2000-12	-0.20%	0.61%	-1.51%

Source: All land cover statistics for Hungary are based on OECD calculations based on *Corine Land Cover dataset*.