The Budapest Observatory - Regional Observatory on Financing Culture in East-Central Europe functions under the umbrella of the Foundation for the East-Central European Cultural Observatory, registered at Budapest Central Court in April 1999. Its mission is to be of help for those who want to know more about the conditions (finances, legislation, governance, policies) of cultural life (cultural activities, products and organisations) in east-central European countries.

Scope, Objectives and Activities: the term east-central Europe is applied generously, to cover about twenty states between the Baltic and the Adriatic Seas which share the same (or very similar) historic legacy of authoritarian Communism.

In spite of the sea of words told and printed about the issues, successes and failures of cultural policies, especially funding, in the region, reliable first-hand evidence is hard to find. The Budapest Observatory aims to fill this information gap. As a resource organisation, the Observatory wants to facilitate research, collect and provide information, establish contacts in areas that include the financing of culture, cultural policy, legislation and statistics.

Finances: UNESCO provided seed money which was spent on setting up the initial infrastructure and on functioning in the first several months. Since then, BO has survived from project grants. BO received structural and project support from the Hungarian Ministry of Cultural Heritage (Nemzeti Kultúrális Örökség Minisztériuma, 2003, 2006), the Hungarian National Cultural Fund (Nemzeti Kultúrális Alap, 2004), and structural support from the National Civic Fund (Nemzeti Civil Alapprogram, from 2007 yearly).

Affiliations: the Budapest Observatory was a member of CIRCLE (Cultural Information and Research Centres Liaison in Europe, now defunct), Culture Action Europe (formerly EFAH, the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage), and Encatc, the European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres.

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