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### **Title**

The Genius of the Nation versus the Gene-Tech of the Nation: Science, Identity, and GMO Debates in Hungary

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### **Abstract**

Introduction In the late 1990s, Hungarian politicians, environmentalists, and agricultural lobbyists weighed the pros and cons of allowing genetically modified (GM) food and seeds to enter the Hungarian market. Starting around 1994, a small group of Hungarian environmentalists began researching GM issues. Initially, they feared that as a post-socialist country seeking foreign investment, Hungary would become prey to multinational corporations seeking an 'emerging market' with a lax regulatory environment. The terms of the debate were reframed over time, notably following 1998, when a number of European Union member states banned the imports of GM foods and when Hungarian expatriate geneticist Árpád Pusztai was caught in a high-profile media controversy after expressing misgivings about the health risks associated with GM foods. The Hungarian public, previously agnostic on the subject of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), was suddenly engrossed in a debate that came to draw upon two key symbols of contemporary Hungarian national identity: the figure of the scientist and that of the industrious peasant producing wholesome food. With Hungary's entry to the European Union, concerns about GMOs, food safety, and science and technology policy, have taken on an increasingly high profile in public debates about the European enlargement process.

### **Comments**

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