

April 7, 2017

Mr. Viktor Orbán
Prime Minister of Hungary

Dear Prime Minister Orbán:

As Presidents, Rectors and Vice-Chancellors of graduate research universities in North America and Europe, we are writing to express our support for a valued partner, Central European University, and to express our concern about the recent amendments to the higher education law and their implications for CEU's status in Hungary.

In twenty-five years, Central European University has established itself as a private international university with a global reputation for teaching and research in the social sciences and humanities. It attracts students from more than one hundred and faculty from about forty countries. Its masters and doctoral programs are accredited by the State of New York, and the United States Middle States Commission on Higher Education certifies the University as a whole. The appropriate Hungarian authorities also certify its programs. It has complied in full with all Hungarian laws since its establishment 25 years ago.

In international rankings, some of CEU's departments are rated among the top 50 in the world. It is among the most successful institutions in securing European Research Council grants in Central and Eastern Europe. In fields as various as medieval studies, network and cognitive science, CEU's faculty members have won the most prestigious awards in their disciplines.

Its academic independence is guaranteed by a Board of Trustees that includes the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University, the former President of Stanford University, the Chancellor designate of the University of California, Berkeley, the former Provost of Columbia University, the President of Bard College, New York and other academic and intellectual figures of high repute. Under the supervision of the University Senate, independent academic departments administer CEU's programs. Its Rector is selected by the Board of Trustees and receives his formal appointment at the hands of the President of Hungary.

CEU is a valued member of the international academic community and its presence in Hungary has added to the reputation of Hungarian academic life on the international stage. As concerns CEU, the new legislation is discriminatory in effect and would make the Central European University lose its very character as the bi-national and international institution that has been shaped through unique United States and Hungarian cooperation over the last 25 years. The changes endanger the academic freedom vital for the CEU's continued operation in Budapest and set a dangerous precedent for academic life in other countries.

We respectfully urge the government to bear in mind the damage the legislation might do to Hungary's well-founded international academic reputation, to its relationships with its European partners, and with the United States.

Yours Sincerely,

President Michael Crow
Arizona State University

President Robert Brown
Boston University

President Lee Bollinger
Columbia University

President-elect Martha Pollack
Cornell University

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European University Institute

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