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April 7, 2017

His Excellency, Dr. Janos Ader, President of the Republic of Hungary  
Office of the President of the Republic of Hungary  
1536 Budapest, Pf. 227  
Hungary

Dear HE President Ader,

In the name of the Institute of Education of the University of Zurich, I am writing to express solidarity with Central European University and express concern regarding Bill T/14686 amending Act CCIV of 2011 on national higher education accepted by the Hungarian Parliament on April 4, 2017. The Bill renders CEU's continued operations in Budapest virtually impossible and strikes a severe blow against the academic freedom that enables all universities, including those in Hungary, to flourish. Further the Bill raises significant legal and constitutional concerns.

As a result, we respectfully urge you to refrain from signing the Bill and to refer it to the Constitutional Court of Hungary on the following grounds, among others:

- The law limits the freedom to academic research, studies and education as well as to the right to culture by requiring foreign higher education institutions to operate in Hungary based on a binding international agreement.
- The law further limits the freedom to academic research, studies and education when it requires from foreign higher education institutions having a campus in Hungary to actually provide higher education programs in their country of origin as well.
- It clearly discriminates against CEU when it requires faculty members from OECD member states employed at higher education institutions whose maintainer is a Hungarian foundation to obtain a work permit in Hungary. Since in Hungary only Andrassy University has a Hungarian maintainer, whose faculty is mainly from EU member states, the law is clearly discriminatory against CEU.
- It breaches law-making procedures. The Bill was adopted in an exceptional procedure and without consultation with the affected parties as entitled under law.


In the 25 years since it was founded by a group that included then President of Hungary Arpad Goncz and then President of Czechoslovakia Vaclav Havel, 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 117 countries and faculty from 40. The University as a whole is accredited by the US Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), and its masters and doctoral programs are registered by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Its programs are also certified by Hungarian authorities and it has complied in full with all Hungarian laws.

Furthermore, this amendment curtails academic freedom in Hungary, which in turn will have negative consequences for investment and employment in Hungary. The cause of academic freedom has strong support from private citizens and institutions in Hungary and around the world. These include the distinguished Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Corvinus University, ELTE University, University of Szeged,

and many universities around the world—from Oxford and Cambridge to Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and scores of others. The European Commissioner for Education, Culture, and Sport, Tibor Navracsics; former President of the Republic of Hungary, Laszlo Solyom; German President, Frank-Walter Steinmeyer; former Governor of New York George Pataki; the U.S. Department of State, as well as 19 Nobel Laureates have also publicly voiced their concern. Additionally, over 47,000 petitioners and more than 1,400 individuals have written to Prime Minister Orban and Minister Balog in support of academic freedom and CEU.

We urge you to act on your Presidential prerogative and send the Bill to the Constitutional Court of Hungary where the above concerns regarding its legality and constitutionality can be appropriately reviewed to protect the proud tradition of Hungarian academic life and preserve its autonomy and freedom.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ph. Gonon', with a stylized, cursive script.

Prof. Dr. Philipp Gonon  
Director of the Institute of Education  
University of Zurich

CC: Central European University