

His Excellency, Dr. János Áder, President of the Republic of Hungary  
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Dear HE President Áder,

As academics at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom, we are writing to express solidarity with Central European University and to express our serious concern regarding Bill T/14686 amending Act CCIV of 2011 on national higher education accepted by the Hungarian Parliament on April 4, 2017.

It is our view that 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, we believe that the Bill raises significant legal and constitutional concerns.

In its twenty-five year history, 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. In the latest Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) University subject rankings published on March 8, 2017, Central European University was ranked impressively across several subject areas:

- the University's degree programs in the fields of politics and international studies were ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> in the world;
- philosophy, sociology and social policy and administration were ranked in the world's top 100 Universities;
- history maintained its ranking in the top 150 Universities;
- both law, and economics and econometrics, achieved rankings within the top 151-200 Universities.

In addition, the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, published on April, 5, 2017, ranked Central European University 39<sup>th</sup> among the top universities under 50 years old worldwide. These stellar rankings go some way to testifying to CEU's global renown, and it is unsurprising that academics from universities within Hungary and around the world, including the University of East Anglia, continue to benefit significantly from research and teaching collaborations with scholars at CEU.

Central European University attracts students from 117 countries and faculty from 40. The classroom experience is therefore exceptional and to be greatly prized. It is one in which students from widely diverse backgrounds can both listen to and learn from one another. Its ethos is precisely the opposite of indoctrination, but rather one of encouraging students to question, to critique, to think and to reflect.

We believe that the recent amendment to the law curtails academic freedom in Hungary. This can only have negative consequences for investment and employment in Hungary. Furthermore, 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.

We join with these institutions, and with 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; 19 Nobel Laureates; and tens of thousands of petitioners in respectfully urging you to refrain from signing the Bill. We urge you instead to act on your Presidential prerogative and to refer the Bill 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.

Such a referral will enable the Constitutional Court of Hungary to appropriately review the legality and constitutionality of the law, and thereby help ensure the continued protection of the proud tradition of Hungarian academic life by preserving its autonomy and freedom.

Yours sincerely,

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