

Dear Austrian Members of the European Parliament,

in my role as Chairman of the Austrian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, I am writing to express my deep concern about the recent modification of the Higher Education law passed by the Hungarian Parliament on April 4, 2017, and signed by President Ader yesterday.

The new legislation would in essence make the further operation of the Central European University in Budapest impossible and, although the Hungarian government claims the contrary, represents an extraordinary violation of academic integrity and freedom.

CEU, as you undoubtedly know, was founded in 1991 and in the past 25 years has become an internationally esteemed private university, whose highly regarded reputation in teaching and research in the social sciences and humanities is incontestable. With students from some 117 countries and faculty from 40, it is indeed a global institution. I need not mention the particular role the CEU plays for Austrian academia.

CEU has vehemently protested the new legislation and has received support and expressions of solidarity from all over the world, including Commissioner Carlos Moedas, the president of Germany, the presidents of Harvard, Duke, NYU, Princeton, Yale and several other US universities, the Vice Chancellor of Oxford, 19 Nobel laureates and thousands of researchers world wide, as well as students and colleagues in Hungary, among them the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, rectors of major universities and large student organizations, etc.

In addition to being a violation of academic freedom, the new legislation is discriminatory, as several of its passages target only CEU and was passed without regard to due procedure. I urge you to take action against this unacceptable development immediately, calling upon the President of Hungary to overturn this decision.

Sincerely,  
Thomas Wallnig.

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