

4 April 2017

Mr. Zoltán Balog

Minister of Human Capacities

1054 Budapest, Akadémia utca 3.

Hungary

Dear Minister Balog,

As concerned citizens Europe and representatives of organizations working on freedom of expression issues, we are writing to express solidarity with Central European University and express concern at proposed legislative changes to CEU's status in Hungary. These changes would endanger the academic freedom vital for CEU's continued operation in Budapest and would strike a blow against the academic freedom that enables all universities, including those in Hungary, to flourish.

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 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 appropriate Hungarian authorities and it has complied in full with all Hungarian laws.

In international rankings, some of CEU's departments are rated among the top 50 in the world. CEU also makes Hungary a regional leader in winning highly competitive European Research Council grants. Several of its faculty, in fields as various as medieval studies, network and cognitive science, have won the most prestigious awards in their disciplines.

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. The government's proposed legislation to alter its statute of operation in Hungary would compromise its academic freedom and set a dangerous precedent for academic life in other countries.

We respectfully urge the government to withdraw the proposed legislation and enter consultation with CEU, bearing in mind the damage such 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,

Tihomir Loza

Executive Director

South East European Network

for Professionalization of Media

(SEENPM)

Signed on behalf of **SEENPM member organizations:**

Albanian Media Institute (Tirana, Albania)

Center for Independent Journalism (Bucharest, Romania)

Center for Independent Journalism (Budapest, Hungary)

Independent Journalism Center (Chisinau, Moldova)

Investigative Journalism Center (Zagreb, Croatia)

IPS Communication Foundation / bianet.org (Istanbul, Turkey)

Kosovo Media Institute (Pristina, Kosovo*)

Macedonian Institute for Media (Skopje, Macedonia)

Media and Reform Center Nis (Nis, Serbia)

Media Center LTD (Belgrade, Serbia)

Media Development Center (Sofia, Bulgaria)

Media Diversity Institute Western Balkans (Belgrade, Serbia)

Media Plan Institute (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Mediacentar Sarajevo (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Montenegro Media Institute (Podgorica, Montenegro)

Novi Sad School of Journalism (Novi Sad, Serbia)

Peace Institute (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

Platform for Independent Journalism (P24) (Istanbul, Turkey)

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