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Mr. Zoltán Balog  
Minister of Human Capacities  
1054 Budapest, Akadémia utca 3.  
Hungary

Dear Minister Balog,

As concerned fellow academics in Canada, North America, Europe, and all around the world, we are writing to stand in solidarity with Central European University and express our concerns regarding the recently passed legislative changes to CEU's status in Hungary. We are convinced that these changes sorely and irrevocably endanger the academic freedom vital for CEU's continued operation in Budapest and strike a blow against the academic freedom and independence which enables all universities, including those in Hungary, to flourish.

The Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies was established in 1998 at the initiative of the Austrian authorities. In subsequent years it received the support of the Governments of Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Our principal mandate is to raise the profile of Central Europe and Central European Studies in Canada and internationally, and to provide a leadership role in a network of cooperation in this field with other Canadian and foreign universities. We act as both an academic and cultural institute and sponsor and organize lectures, conferences, artistic festivals, symposia, concerts, exhibitions and other scholarly and cultural events with an Austrian and Central European theme. We also engage in international cooperative ventures with institutions in the United States and Europe.

The Wirth Institute is internationally recognized as the leading centre for Central European Studies in Canada. We also work with the Embassies of Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia to maintain and enhance Canada's most outstanding resource centre for Central European Studies for the use of scholars throughout Canada and the United States. We are proud to say that the Institute has supported several community initiatives, events, talks and conferences related to Hungary, such as Hungarian language instruction, the Hungary 1956-2016 Academic Conference, the Polish-Hungarian Friendship Day, and Hungarian artists and musicians across Alberta.

As a strongly committed partner of academic institutes from within the European Union, in particular with regard to Central and Eastern European countries, the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies at the University of Alberta has always been interested in developing and maintaining fruitful partnerships with academic and other institutions from the region. Accordingly, the Wirth Institute has numerous and excellent bilateral connections with governmental organizations, universities and NGOs from Hungary. Therefore, we stand deeply concerned about the possible consequences of the legislation against the CEU, since its impact will inevitably affect not only the Hungarian, but also the wider Central European academic landscape and community. We are also worried, that the legislation, if fully enacted, may only be the first step towards a continuous attack against other international academic partners which the Wirth Institute is affiliated with in Hungary. As the CEU has always been committed to making

available its unique academic infrastructure for the wider scientific community, this legislation is also negatively affecting our distinguished Alumni Members, as well as our current and future colleagues.

The CEU is a valued member of the international academic community and its presence in Hungary and in the Central European region has benefited the reputation of Hungarian academic life on the regional as well as on the international stage. The government's passed legislation to alter its statute of operation in Hungary strikes at the heart of its academic freedom.

On behalf of my fellow Colleagues and Doctoral Fellows (2016-2017) of the Wirth Institute for Austrian and Central European Studies, I respectfully urge the government and the Hungarian parliament to reverse the passed legislation by sending it to the Supreme Court for re-examination and to enter into meaningful consultations with CEU, bearing in mind the damage that such legislation is doing to Hungary's well-founded international academic reputation, to its relationships with its European and global partners.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Joseph F. Patrouch

Professor and Director

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CC: Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary;

Office of the Prime Minister;

Central European University