



INTERNATIONAL CENTER for
ETHICS, JUSTICE and PUBLIC LIFE
Brandeis University

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April 25, 2017

Dear Petra Kammerevert, Member of European Parliament:

On behalf of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life at Brandeis University in the United States, I write to express urgent concern about the recent modifications to the National Higher Education Act passed by the Hungarian Parliament on April 4, 2017 and signed into law by the president of Hungary on April 10, 2017. This new legislation targets the Central European University in particular, and, in so doing, attacks the values of academic freedom and the global exchange of knowledge everywhere.

The Center enjoys a direct and substantive relationship with CEU's Shattuck Center on Conflict, Negotiation and Recovery. In the fall of 2016, our two centers collaborated on "A Vision of Aleppo," a design lab exploring the potential contributions of arts, culture and heritage to rebuilding trust and rebuilding the city. Through this collaboration, we came to appreciate the intellectual generosity, the breadth of knowledge, and the creative vision of the staff and fellows of the Shattuck Center. We came to understand that our two centers align around linking the resources of the academy with the needs of communities and professionals, especially those in regions of violent conflict seeking to ameliorate suffering and strengthen social justice.

We are now planning a new collaboration between Brandeis and CEU on a project entitled Creative Approaches to Countering Polarization, a topic that highlights the very real contributions of centers of higher education to civil society and public life. Academic freedom and global exchange are important values in themselves; they are especially significant because of their capacity for interdisciplinary inquiries that combine theory and practice to address contemporary concerns for the benefit of our societies.

John Shattuck, the previous president and rector of CEU, has been a member of the Advisory Board of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life the since 2013. This spring he has assumed the role of chair.

Brandeis University was founded by the American Jewish community in 1948, as an inclusive institution with core commitments to academic excellence and social justice. Given our historic and cultural roots, we are keenly aware of the responsibility of individuals and institutions to stand in solidarity with those whose freedoms are abrogated and whose rights are abused. It is in this spirit that we ask you, as a Member of the European Parliament, Chair of Culture and Education Committee, and global citizen, to act now to do everything in your power to protect CEU from the effects of the recent Hungarian legislation and to defend academic freedom for all.

CEU stands as a beacon of academic integrity and rigorous intellectual inquiry. At a time when the global community faces challenges as complex and as urgent as ever, an institution such as CEU should not be compromised or distracted from its teaching and research missions.

Thank you in advance for your creative and energetic attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,


Cynthia Cohen, Acting Director