

## **The Current Threat to CEU in Hungary – a brief summary**

Central European University (CEU) is a graduate institution in Budapest, Hungary, accredited in the U.S. and Hungary, with programs in the social sciences and humanities. CEU is a truly international university: it has about 1500 students from 116 countries. CEU was founded by Hungarian-American philanthropist George Soros and has been operating in Budapest for 25 years. In its short history, CEU has become an excellent institution of higher education, consistently ranked by the Times Higher Education publication in the 100 best universities of the world and several of its programs are among the top 200 in the QS ranking scheme. Most recently, CEU was ranked 39<sup>th</sup> in the world's best "young" universities (under 50 years old).

On April 4, 2017 the Hungarian Parliament passed amendments to the Higher Education Law of Hungary. No consultation with CEU was made prior to the tabling of the legislation, and the government fast-tracked the legislation, passing it within a week of submitting it, and limiting the time allotted for debate in Parliament. On April 10, President Janos Ader signed the bill into law, disregarding both the arguments put forth by prominent Hungarian law professors calling the law unconstitutional, and the demands of tens of thousands of demonstrators who took to the streets in Budapest and other cities, calling on Ader to reject the bill.

The legislation sets new requirements to be satisfied by universities accredited in foreign countries. Several of the passages apply only to CEU, and are thereby discriminatory. Taken together, they make CEU's continued operation in Hungary impossible. Two of the most crucial parts of the new legislation include the requirement to establish a bilateral national level agreement about the operation of the university between the two governments, and the need to operate a campus in the U.S. in addition to the one in Budapest. First, higher education in the U.S. is a matter for the states, not the federal government. Secondly, CEU is registered in Budapest with accreditation in the U.S., a model that works for hundreds of universities around the world and has worked for CEU for 25 years. These as well as a handful of other new legislative measures essentially aim to close down the institution in Budapest. This

is explicitly a political attack against CEU, and represents a serious threat to academic freedom in Hungary.

Since the tabling of the legislation, CEU has received a veritable flood of support from international and domestic academic circles including 19 Nobel prize laureates, EU Commissioner Carlos Moedas, the president of Germany, the presidents of Harvard, Duke, NYU, Princeton, Yale, Oxford and several others, the International Association of Universities and thousands of researchers and professional organizations worldwide, 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. A full list of support letter writers is available [here](#). News on CEU's situation can be found [here](#).

The United States Department of State has expressed its clear support for CEU and for academic freedom, rejecting such a threat to an American university abroad, while sending a clear message to the Hungarian government that it cannot sign agreements in matters of higher education. The European Commission has initiated infringement proceedings against the Hungarian government regarding the legislation, due to the violation of core European values, including academic freedom.

CEU is now pursuing all available political and legal remedies against the legislation, which we consider unconstitutional, discriminatory and punitive. We ask all those who support us to write to Prime Minister Viktor Orban, to their European Parliament representatives, or U.S. Representatives in Congress and Senators, to draw attention to this serious threat to academic freedom and to a U.S.-registered university in a European Union member state.