

CEU REFUTES LETTER FROM MINISTRY OF HUMAN CAPACITIES.

Budapest, April 12, 2017 – Central European University (CEU) refutes a letter from the Ministry of Human Capacities that is being distributed in response to letters sent by thousands of academics, politicians, and citizens in support of CEU to the Ministry. The letter continues the line of deceptive communication taken by the government since the announcement of the amendments to the higher education law that target CEU specifically. It contains several points that are false and misleading. CEU lists them below, and a copy of the letter is attached.

- For the entire duration of its operation in Hungary, CEU has been in full compliance with all the previous legislation on higher education as repeatedly confirmed by the Hungarian Education Authority and the Hungarian Accreditation Board. CEU operates in Hungary based on authorizations issued by the relevant Hungarian and U.S. authorities. New legislation was not necessary if irregularities were to be corrected. The Hungarian government could have just enforced the existing legislation and had full powers to do so. New legislation was adopted to make it impossible for CEU to operate. The Minister of Education stated publicly, after the new legislation was adopted, that its real purpose was to close down CEU.
- The letter says compliance with the new rules is “not impossible.” CEU strongly feels that compliance is impossible, not only in terms of the punitive deadlines imposed but also because the U.S. government cannot sign an international agreement regarding higher education, as the U.S. government has clearly and repeatedly communicated.
- The requirement for an international agreement “to institute shared overview of teaching” by two different governments is unacceptable. This goes against the principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, as the US government has also confirmed as unacceptable under the US legislation.
- The letter indicates that it is a problem that CEU is registered as a foreign institution despite only having operations in Budapest and this way it does not fulfill a Hungarian legal requirement. Until the new amendments, there has been no such requirement in Hungary! There are many other American universities which only have operations outside the U.S. such as American University of Cairo and American University of Paris.
- The letter states that the new legislation only affects CEU as an American chartered and accredited university, and that Hungarian-accredited CEU (or KEE, in Hungarian) can continue to function. This is an acknowledgement that the government really wants to shut down CEU. It has always been the purpose of this university to offer U.S. accredited degrees, which KEE cannot. By shutting down CEU, the government would shut down KEE as well. This is one university community, which has one set of operations, a single campus, a single set of faculty, staff, and students, with recognition in two countries.
- The letter mentions consultations between the government and CEU prior to submission of the legislation. This is patently false. We were not even officially informed that new legislation was being prepared. CEU has requested meetings with government officials on several occasions and these requests were rejected. Moreover, although there was a legal obligation to consult other organizations such as the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Hungarian Rector’s Conference, no such consultation took place.
- The government’s letter speaks of a willingness to meet. But in response to a request for a meeting submitted immediately by the Rector of CEU, Minister Balog responded in writing: Due

to the mandatory character of these criteria, discussing them at Ministry-CEU level would hardly take us far enough, instead, we are looking forward to negotiating further steps to be taken with the competent U.S. authorities legally empowered to find a solution for the operation of Central European University in Hungary.”