



April 3, 2017

Mr. Zoltán Balog
Minister of Human Capacities
1054 Budapest, Akadémia utca 3.
Hungary
Via e-mail

Dear Minister Balog:

We are writing to express our profound concern about proposed legislative changes to the status of Central European University (CEU) in Hungary. These changes are being rushed through the legislature without proper consultation with all involved and, if enacted, they could seriously jeopardize the academic freedom essential for CEU to remain in Budapest and continue its operation with the success it has had for over two decades.

The American Sociological Association is a scholarly society that represents more than 12,000 researchers, teachers, and practitioners from the U.S. and 88 other countries, including Hungary. The Central European University offers graduate-level degree programs in sociology jointly with social anthropology.

In twenty-five years, Central European University has established itself as a private international university with a strong global reputation for teaching and research in the social sciences and humanities. It attracts students from 117 countries and faculty from 40. 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. In short, CEU is an institution that supports and nurtures scholars who are regularly recognized by their peers as outstanding in their field of study.

The proposed legislation in Hungary would have serious adverse effects for the operation of the university, for academic freedom on campus and, ultimately, for the quality of teaching and scholarship. Such measures would violate Hungary's legal obligations to protect academic freedom, including its own Basic Law and international covenants that Hungary has ratified. They would also harm indirectly social scientists at other Hungarian universities who benefit from the presence and resources of and collaborations with CEU.

We respectfully urge the government to ensure that students and scholars at CEU are able to pursue their teaching, research, and studies with the full protection of academic freedom that the university has historically enjoyed, including considering the withdrawal of any legislation that would undermine such academic freedom.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michele Lamont', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michèle Lamont
President, American Sociological Association

CC:

Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary

Senator Kristen Gillibrand

Senator Chuck Schumer

Representative Andy Harris, Co-Chair of the Hungarian Congressional Caucus

Representative David Joyce, Co-Chair of the Hungarian Congressional Caucus

Representative Marcy Kaptur, Co-Chair of the Hungarian Congressional Caucus