



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

April 3, 2017

Re: University autonomy & the Central European University

Dear Minister Balog:

I write on behalf of the Magna Charta Observatory to express concern over proposed legislative changes to Hungary's National Higher Education Act and their impact on the Central European University (CEU) and institutional autonomy in Hungary generally.

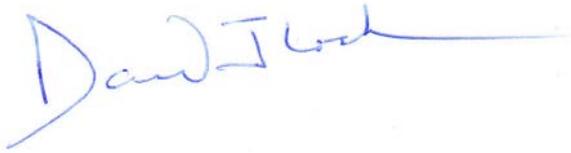
The Magna Charta Observatory of Fundamental Values and Rights (MCO) was founded by the University of Bologna and the European University Association and is based in Bologna. The MCO is the global guardian of fundamental university values and assists universities and higher education systems to operate effectively in accordance with them. It does this for the benefit of students, staff, society and universities themselves. Over 800 universities from 85 countries have signed its statement of fundamental values since 1988. The MCO fulfils its mission by gathering information, commissioning research, monitoring, expressing opinions, preparing publications, making presentations and organising conferences and workshops relating to the nature of, respect for, and protection of the fundamental university values. It investigates where infringements are reported and advises constructively.

CEU has built a reputation as an international leader in teaching, research, and scholarship. The MCO understands that the proposed legislative changes would directly impact CEU by requiring that CEU change its name and establish a new campus in the United States, and by eliminating an agreement that allows faculty and staff from non-EU countries from working at CEU without requiring work permits not required of EU residents working at other Hungarian universities. The MCO is concerned that these and other requirements would be prohibitive, threatening CEU's ability to operate. Moreover, the MCO is especially concerned that the proposed legislation seems to impact only CEU in this harmful way, raising concerns about the law's intent. This concern is deepened by statements from public officials quoted in the media. Needless to say, if the proposed changes were intended to harm CEU directly, this would be a clear violation of the principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, values which are essential to higher education quality and international higher education collaboration. This would raise grave concerns not only for CEU, but for all Hungarian higher education institutions.

We therefore respectfully urge you to seek withdrawal or review of the proposed legislation to remove from it any damaging impacts on academic freedom and institutional autonomy at CEU and beyond. We further urge you to reaffirm publicly Hungary's commitment to core higher education values, including academic freedom and institutional autonomy, and to ensure the fullest protection for these in any future legislative or policy proposals.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter, and look forward to your earliest response.

Sincerely,



David J. Lock
Secretary General

CC:

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