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MEP Petra Kammerevert
Culture and Education Committee Chairman
European Parliament

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European Consortium
for Sociological Research

Prof. Fabrizio Bernardi
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20 April 2017

Support for the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest

Dear Petra Kammerevert,

We, the European Consortium for Sociological Research, are writing to express our deep concern about 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. The new legislation makes the continued operation of Central European University (CEU) in Budapest nearly impossible and is an extraordinary violation of the integrity and freedom of an institution of higher education in the European Union.

The European Consortium for Sociological Research is professional association that currently comprises more than 80 leading research institutions and university departments in Europe. As a European research consortium, we are deeply troubled by a law that overtly curtails academic freedom in a member state of the European Union. Our research and teaching activities fundamentally rely on institutional safeguards of our right to academic freedom throughout the European Union.

A distinguished group of Europeans—including then President of Hungary Arpad Goncz, then President of Czechoslovakia Vaclav Havel, Polish historian Bronislaw Geremek, who later became Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Hungarian-American philanthropist George Soros—founded CEU in 1991 to support the transition from Communism to freedom through education. In the past 25 years, CEU has become an internationally esteemed private university, whose reputation in teaching and research in the social sciences and humanities is incontestable. With students from 117 countries and faculty from 40—the largest portion of whom are from European Union member states—CEU is both a European and an American institution with a truly global reach. We have many esteemed colleagues and collaborators at CEU and its importance, as a centre for free academic discourse in Eastern Europe can hardly be overstated.

We join CEU in strongly contesting the new legislation. While CEU is seeking all possible legal remedies, the appeals process will take time, and this legislation must be stopped immediately in order that CEU can continue operating in Budapest. Leaders of European countries, the European Commission, and the European Parliament can and must defend academic freedom and the integrity of universities operating within the European Union. We ask you to act now to do everything in your power to stop this legislation and defend the academic freedom in the European Union that is fundamental to all of our member institutions.

Sincerely

Prof. Fabrizio Bernardi
Chair of the European Consortium for Sociological Research



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Frans Timmermans
Vice President
European Commission

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Tibor Navracsics
European Commissioner
for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport

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