

April 5, 2017

Dr. János Áder  
President, Republic of Hungary  
Sándor-Palace, 1014 Budapest, Szent György tér 1-2.  
1536 Budapest, Pf. 227

Dear President Áder:

The American Historical Association, with approximately 12,000 members the largest organization of historians in the world, has serious concerns about recently-passed legislation in the Hungarian Parliament that would change the status of the Central European University in Budapest. This legislation bans CEU from granting American graduate degrees and requires the university to open a campus in the United States. It also diminishes the university's independent authority to hire new faculty and select students. The law not only restricts the academic autonomy of CEU but also endangers its core mission of serving as a bridge between scholarly communities in Europe and America. We most strongly urge you not to approve this legislation.

This evisceration of the work of CEU would deprive Hungary, Europe, and the world of a valuable intellectual resource. Students from throughout the world have studied at the university, whose sterling global reputation is well-deserved. Its faculty members have won many competitive awards. Many of our members have had personal experiences with CEU and attest to its important role in their own intellectual and academic development. Although a private university, CEU has always operated in accordance with Hungarian law, and it has become a leader in European education in both the social sciences and the humanities. CEU is, moreover, a prominent example of international scholarly collaboration; it is not only a Hungarian university but also an American institution accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

One of the American Historical Association's most important values is a belief in the importance of academic freedom for scholarly research. A key component of such research is international institutional cooperation. We fear that if the amendments to Act CCIV on National Higher Education are approved, the change will have severely negative consequences not only for CEU but also for Hungary's role within the international scholarly community.

On behalf of the American Historical Association I urge you to refrain from signing this ill-conceived legislation.

Sincerely,

Tyler Stovall, President, American Historical Association