

Opposition to Gender Studies Ban in Hungary

To: The Prime Minister of Hungary, Mr Viktor Orbán

The Minister of Education, Mr Jozsef Bodis

CC: Head of European Commission Representation in Hungary,

Mr Zupko Gabor Ambassador of the United States of America to Hungary, Mr David B. Cornstein,

Ambassador of Hungary to the United States of America, H. E. László Szabó

Statement of the European Conference of Politics and Gender Protesting the Plans of the Hungarian Government to Ban Gender Studies Programs

Dear Prime Minister, Dear Minister of Education,

We have been notified about your government's proposed law to abolish accredited gender studies programs in Hungary. According to The Hungarian Journal, "the part of the amendment which concerns gender studies provides no explanation whatsoever. Two universities are concerned: Hungary's biggest state-funded university ELTE, and the Central European University. If the amendment becomes official, it will mean that nobody can attend gender studies courses in Hungary and get a degree in the subject."

We are writing to you in our capacity of the European Conference of Politics and Gender to express the deepest concerns and to ask you to re-consider the proposed amendment. It is our understanding that, in line with the legal and actual autonomy of higher education in Europe and the values of the European Union, such measures should not be taken. Even if the amendment is legal under Hungarian law, we believe the government should not take this step as it sets a dangerous precedent for state intervention in all other university courses. We can only interpret the proposed amendment as a major attack on all social sciences, as issues relating to gender form an integral part of these disciplines.

We also want to show our solidarity with our Hungarian colleagues, many of whom are part of our Gender and Sexuality Research Network. Not only is gender studies a well-established scientific discipline, but Hungary and our Hungarian colleagues enjoy an excellent reputation in the field. The discipline and the work of our Hungarian colleagues have significantly contributed to the scientific advancement and improvement of society. In fact, no society can be understood without a knowledge of gender dynamics. As such, the teaching of and research in gender studies is not a matter of ideology, but rather an intellectual and political requirement for the development of any society that seeks to promote social justice.

We call therefore for the withdrawal of this amendment so that Hungary does not position itself outside the community of democratic nations that value and guarantee the autonomy of higher education. We urge the Hungarian government to reconsider

these plans so that the universities in Hungary can continue to be places that teach the whole range of disciplines appropriate to a modern society, in line with other countries in Europe. We also call upon the European Union, of which Hungary is a member state, to condemn this action as a violation of its principles.

Sincerely,

Prof Isabelle Engeli, on behalf of the European Conference of Politics and Gender