

April 1, 2017

**Mr. Zoltán Balog**  
**Minister of Human Capacities**

1054 Budapest, Akadémia utca 3.

Hungary

Dear Minister Balog,

I am the President of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages, and on behalf of my organization I wish to express solidarity with Central European University and express concern at proposed legislative changes to CEU's status in Hungary. These changes would endanger the academic freedom vital for CEU's continued operation in Budapest and would strike a blow against the academic freedom that enables all universities, including those in Hungary, to flourish.

Many of my colleagues were educated at CEU, and their education is of the highest standard. Many others, me included, published with the CEU Press and participated in joint projects and conferences with the CEU colleagues. We always admire the academic rigor and breadth of their scholarly endeavors. Restraining or, even worse, closing of this highly respected institution would be a harsh blow to the entire intellectual community of Slavic and East European scholars. I am especially concerned by the anti-Semitic and chauvinistic undertones of the political campaign against CEU.

In twenty-five years, Central European University has established itself as a private international university with a 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. Several of its faculty, in fields as various as medieval studies, network and cognitive science, have won the most prestigious awards in their disciplines.

CEU is a valued member of the international academic community and its presence in Hungary has added to the reputation of Hungarian academic life on the international stage. The government's proposed legislation to alter its statute of operation in Hungary would compromise its academic freedom and set a dangerous precedent for academic life in other countries.

We respectfully urge the government to withdraw the proposed legislation and enter consultation with CEU, bearing in mind the damage such legislation might do to Hungary's well-founded international academic reputation, to its relationships with its European partners and with the United States.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Lipovetsky

President of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages

Professor of Russian Studies,

University of Colorado-Boulder, USA

CC: Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary;

Office of the Prime Minister;

Central European University

*Mark Lipovetsky*

*Professor of Russian Studies*

*Chair of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures*

*Office: McKenna 131*

*Tel: 303-492-7957*

*Mailing address: 276 UCB, Dept. of GSSL,*

*University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309*