

The Honourable Prime Minister Viktor Orbán
The Prime Minister's Office
1357 Budapest, pf, 6
Hungary

Strasbourg, 04-04-2017

It is very regretful that, increasingly, basic principles underlying the scientific and academic enterprise have to be safeguarded. Threats and attacks on the academic freedom, transparency and public accountability of the scientific process, mobility of scientists and students and independence and autonomy (within the general framework of the law) seem to have become commonplace.

Hungary, we regret to say, is the latest in line. The bill passed today (4 April) in Parliament to curtail the Central European University in Budapest is totally at odds with what we thought was taken for granted in free democracies. Universities often operate globally, establish global collaborations, provide joint degrees with other institutions or foreign degrees based on their accreditation in multiple countries, and recruit staff and students independently of government controls.

EuroScience has spoken up against recent developments in Turkey, legislation in Russia to reduce the independence of the Russian Academy of Sciences and legislation in the UK which threatens independent decision-making. Together with a large number of major European organisations in the field of science and higher education, EuroScience has opposed the attempts in the US to impose immigration restrictions and limit the possibilities of government scientists to communicate with the outside world.

We urge the Hungarian government and the Hungarian Parliament to think again and defend academic freedom, let the Central European University and all other academic institutions continue to contribute to our societies and guarantee the conditions for them to do so: independence for institutions, free mobility for staff and students and freedom to operate across borders and the honouring of academic freedom and open communication with society at large.

Hungary has a long-standing academic tradition and has engendered great academic achievements in all areas, including the social and human sciences. Over the past decades, the Central European University has demonstrated its valuable and unique position in Hungary's and more generally Central European countries' ambition to be leaders in the new Europe that came into being after the Cold War, a new Europe that fully embraces principles of an open society and academic freedom.

We sincerely hope that this ambition will continue to guide the policies of Hungary.

Yours respectfully,



Prof Lauritz Holm-Nielsen
President



Dr Peter Tindemans
Secretary General

EuroScience is the European grassroots organisation of scientists and other stakeholders in science and innovation across Europe, across scientific fields and across the public-private divide.

Our biennial EuroScience Open Forums (ESOF) are the largest general science conference in Europe and provide a unique platform for scientists, businesses, policymakers and politicians and media too hear about the latest developments in science, and to discuss where the scientific and academic endeavour stands, how science can provide evidence for and enlighten politics, and more generally how society, economy and culture can benefit.