
Dublin, 22 August 2018

To: Hungarian Prime Minister, Mr. Viktor Orbán

Dear Prime Minister, Mr. Viktor Orbán,

we, the participants of the 10th European Conference on Gender Equality in Higher Education convened in Dublin, Ireland, representing academics, policy makers and practitioners from 34 countries from all continents, take note that a Hungarian government decree has been sent out ordering the termination of the teaching of Gender Studies, specifically cancelling two accredited, highly respected MA programs.

We write to protest this proposed decree of the Hungarian government and the attempt to legislate the curriculum of universities. This step is a violation of academic freedom which is the guarantee of the autonomy of higher education. By denying faculty and administrators academic freedom, the Hungarian government puts itself outside the community of democratic nations. We are concerned that this also sets a very dangerous precedent for state intervention in all other university courses.

Furthermore, it appears that the Hungarian government may understand Gender Studies narrowly and inaccurately, as a humanities discipline. We want to stress that Gender Studies is vital, empirically and theoretically, to social sciences broadly, business, management and organisation studies, technological sciences and innovation studies, medical sciences and natural sciences, and that Gender Studies expertise is necessary and in high demand in all branches of society, nationally and internationally.

We call upon the Minister of Education to refuse this amendment. We also call upon the European Union, of which Hungary is a member, to condemn this action as a violation of its principles. We call upon policy makers and academic institutions in our own countries to join our protest. We urge all concerned to rectify this anti-educational, anti-scientific, anti-democratic, and anti-equality move. We are also extremely concerned about further impacts including the loss to international collaboration with Hungary, and the loss of Hungarian scholarship from international and EU collaborative projects and communities of scholars and practitioners.

We sincerely trust the Hungarian government will reconsider and withdraw this decree to ensure that Hungarian universities continue to operate in line with the value of academic freedom, a cornerstone of democratic societies, and to teach the whole range of disciplines appropriate to a modern society.
