Minister of Education

Hungary

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Dear Minister of Education,

We have been notified about the Hungarian government’s proposed law to abolish the accredited MA program in gender studies 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.”

As directors and professors of gender studies masters and study programmes in various European states and worldwide, we would like to express our deep concern and protest this proposal. We also want to show our solidarity with our Hungarian colleagues. Gender studies are well established as a scientific discipline and Hungary enjoys an excellent reputation in the field. This discipline, which is taught in the most prestigious institutions of higher education in the world, has significantly contributed to the advancement of science and the improvement of society. Perspectives from gender studies on questions of human wellbeing, equality, identity, difference, and diversity today are also recognized within many other scientific disciplines, from medicine, law, political sciences, economics, sociology to cultural, literary studies and history. Furthermore, gender studies embraces a plurality of theoretical perspectives and methodologies that cannot be reduced to one single framework or paradigm. Therefore, research, studies and graduates with the skills and expertise to tackle both global, but also specific local challenges relating to societal progress, rights and dignity remain important for future generations. This field is both intellectually and politically crucial, across Europe and within Hungary.

This measure also sets a dangerous precedent for state intervention in all other university courses. By denying to faculty and administrators the academic freedom that is the guarantee of the autonomy of higher education, the Hungarian government puts itself outside the community of democratic nations.

We call therefore upon the Minister of Education to refuse this amendment. We also call upon the European Union, of which Hungary is a member nation, to condemn this action as a violation of its principles. And we call upon academic institutions in our own countries to join our protest.

Best regards

NAME, Institution, Name of the Master, country

Chia Longman (Universiteit Gent), Master Gender & Diversity, Flanders, Belgium

David Paternotte (Université libre de Bruxelles), Master de specialisation en études de genre, Wallonia-Brussels Federation, Belgium