

Finnish University Professors, Researchers and Teachers protest law against Central European University

The Hungarian government is, despite wide international protests, pushing through a law amendment with the intention of closing down the prestigious Central European University (CEU), which since 1991 has operated in Budapest's centre. The situation presents a serious danger to academic freedom in Hungary as well as to the autonomy and international networks of science all across Europe.

The case is made particularly significant by the fact that Hungary, unlike some other countries that have recently violated academic freedom, is a member of the European Union. The CEU's hope largely rests on the ability of Hungary's European partners to persuade the Hungarian government to realise the harmfulness of their present policy and the irreparable damage it can cause to the country's reputation.

The Finnish Union of Professors and the Finnish Union of University Researchers and Teachers thank those Finnish politicians, such as former ministers Alexander Stubb and Erkki Tuomioja, who have already joined the protest on the CEU's behalf. The Unions urge also other politicians and decision-makers to raise the issue as visibly as possible in all intergovernmental contacts and in the European Parliament, where Hungary's governing party Fidesz is a member of the largest parliamentary group European People's Party (EPP).

The Central European University's president and faculty stress that the impact of the case is not likely to be confined to a single university. Hungary and the CEU may set an example for other European governments who would like to silence or close their universities. Moreover, the Hungarian government is presently drafting another law proposal that would seriously restrict the activities of NGOs. Fundamentally, the question is about the future of free civil society and the freedoms of opinion and expression in the middle of the European Union.

The interests of the CEU are currently served best by widest possible publicity of the case. We encourage all Finnish and European leaders, academics and citizens to speak on behalf of the Central European University in public and through all other channels available to them.

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