

Bard College

Center for Civic Engagement

31 March 2017

Mr. Zoltán Balog
Minister of Human Capacities
1054 Budapest, Akadémia utca 3.
Hungary

Dear Minister Balog:

Bard College and Bard's Center for Civic Engagement have worked closely with the Central European University (CEU) almost since its inception. CEU is a beacon of academic quality and openness and a central hub in our network of partner institutions that includes: Bard College Berlin, the American University of Central Asia, Al-Quds Bard College of Arts and Sciences, European Humanities University, and "Smolny College" (the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences at St. Petersburg State University). CEU has been the destination for hundreds of network graduates who have pursued their masters and doctorates in Budapest, a source of outstanding faculty who teach at all of our institutions, and a venue for summer schools, conferences and workshop for faculty, students and staff.

Through Bard's study away program with CEU, hundreds of students from Bard and America's top universities have studied at CEU in Budapest. A partial list of institutions that have sent students to study on Bard programs at CEU includes: Barnard College, Columbia University, Cornell University, George Washington University, Hamilton College, Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, Oberlin College, Princeton University, Sarah Lawrence College, Smith College, Swarthmore College, University of North Carolina, University of Pennsylvania, Vassar College, Wellesley College, Wesleyan University, and Yale University. These students regularly have positive impressions of the experience and return to the United States as ambassadors for CEU and for Hungary.

Bard itself has long-standing and robust connections with Hungary. Bard recently celebrated the 60th anniversary of taking in more than 300 Hungarian freedom fighters who fled Hungary after their revolution against the Communist dictatorship was crushed in 1956. We have had a regular stream of Hungarian students for the past twenty-five years and over the past decade have hosted five to ten Hungarian students annually.

The decision by the Hungarian government to impose rules and regulations that will knowingly force CEU to close can be interpreted as nothing but an assault on academic freedom and the free exchange of ideas. It does not represent the values or spirit of Hungary or the warm hospitality that so many of us have felt over the years while visiting Budapest. CEU is an outstanding institution recognized across the globe and a valued member of the international academic community. Its presence in Hungary has added to the reputation of Hungarian academic life on the international stage. Literally thousands of students and faculty from our network have been touched by CEU, as have thousands of students from Hungary and across the globe. Its loss would be a loss for everyone and missed opportunities for future generations.

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Page Two

The Advisory Board of Bard College's Center for Civic Engagement respectfully urges the government to withdraw the proposed legislation and immediately enter into consultations with CEU to resolve any conflicts and allow CEU to continue to prosper in Hungary.

Respectfully signed:

James Ottaway Jr., Chairman of Advisory Board of Center for Civic Engagement

Jonathan Becker, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bard College

James Friedlich, Executive Director and CEO, Lenfest Institute for Journalism

Susan H. Gillespie, Vice President for Special Global Initiatives, Bard College

Phillip Henderson, President, Surdna Foundation

George Kellner, CEO, Kellner Capital

Vincent McGee, Trustee, Gagarin Trust, President, Front Line USA Foundation

Alexander Papachristou, Executive Director, Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice

Joel Rosenthal, President, Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs

Felicitas Thorne, Philanthropist and Board Member for Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts and the American Symphony Orchestra

DISCLAIMER: The individuals listed above have endorsed in their personal capacity: their view does not necessarily reflect the views of their employers. Titles and affiliations of each individual are provided for identification purposes only.

cc: Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary
Office of the Prime Minister
Central European University