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Ministry for Human Capacities
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Protest against plans to outlaw the teaching of Gender
Studies at Hungarian Universities

Vienna, August 20, 2018

Dear Mr. Bódis,

On August 13, we learned from the media that the Hungarian government has proposed a legal provision which would abolish well-performing Gender Studies MA programmes. 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.” The program at the CEU has consistently had high enrolments since it was founded 2006; ELTE’s Master in Gender Studies was established in 2017.

Hungarian Gender Studies programmes participate in European exchange programmes. As a result, many of our Austrian colleagues (as we ourselves) have had the chance to meet Hungarian colleagues and supervise MA as well as PhD students in Gender Studies coming from Hungary to German-speaking universities. This exchange practice has led to longstanding academic relationships including research and teaching co-operations. We are thus in a position to testify to the excellent academic work of our colleagues.

We write to you today to protest against these plans to outlaw the teaching of Gender Studies at Hungarian Universities. Never before has a democratic government sought to legislate the curricula of universities without relying on the academic expertise of the university institutions in charge. The proposed provision 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 places itself outside the community of democratic nations.

We therefore call upon you as the Minister of Education to take a stand against this amendment. We also call upon the European Union, of which Hungary is a member nation, to condemn this intervention as a violation of its principles. And we call upon national academic institutions to join our protest.

Sincerely

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Nikolaus Benke, Professor of Roman Law, University of Vienna

Gabriella Hauch, Professor of History, University of Vienna

Birgit Sauer, Professor of Political Science, University of Vienna

Deputy Speakers