

4 April 2017

MRG expresses deep concern regarding threat to academic freedom in Hungary

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) is deeply concerned regarding steps being taken by the Hungarian government that will severely limit academic freedom and freedom of expression. Legislative changes adopted by the Hungarian parliament on 4 April 2017 will likely mean that the Central European University (CEU), the highly respected Budapest-based academic institution, will no longer be able to operate in Hungary, where it has been based since its foundation.

These legislative changes, which appear to be targeted specifically at CEU, will have a significant impact on the prospects of many young people from minority backgrounds, who benefit from its unique range of scholarships and programmes.

Since its establishment, the academic program of CEU has placed international human rights and in particular minority rights at the heart of its mission, becoming one of the most important centres of academia in the field of minority rights protection. In particular, hundreds of students have benefited from its groundbreaking [Roma Access Program](#) which started in 2004 and more recently its [Open Learning Initiative for Refugees](#).

MRG is proud of its association with CEU, particularly the close relationship with MRG's Budapest-based regional office. We are pleased to have supported and encouraged many minority activists who have studied at CEU. MRG has also benefited greatly from the exceptional range of talented graduates who have filled our offices as both staff members and interns.

We are heartened that CEU has vowed to continue its mission despite the new legislation. It is however very likely that the institution will no longer be able to remain in Hungary. The impact of this will affect both domestic and international civil society in Hungary, which has become a key centre for minority rights advocacy and discourse. We now fear that the changes foreshadow further legislative measures aimed at restricting academia and civil society.

MRG stands with CEU in affirming the importance of freedom of expression, along with the value of ensuring access for all to the best educational opportunities regardless of background or privilege.



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