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CC: Support_for_CEU@ceu.edu

April 06, 2017

His Excellency, Dr Janos Ader, President of the Republic of Hungary
Office of the President of the Republic of Hungary
1536 Budapest, Pf. 227
Hungary

Dear HE President Ader,

The British Association for Jewish Studies, representing the scholarly community in this field across the British Isles, is deeply concerned about the proposed changes to the status of the Central European University (Bill T/14686 amending the Hungarian Higher Education Act and accepted by the Hungarian Parliament on April 4, 2017). We join our larger sister organisation, the European Association for Jewish Studies, in voicing our disquiet about the effect these changes to the CEU are likely to have, including the possible threat to the university's survival. CEU's reputation as an institution of academic excellence, as a place in which local and international talent is recognised and nurtured, and in which international research co-operation in Europe and beyond is cherished and encouraged, has been steadily growing over the past quarter century. CEU is truly a flagship of central and eastern European intellectual culture, and an asset to Hungary's educational landscape.

Within our own field of Jewish Studies, the CEU is contributing to the future of the discipline through its degree programmes and research projects, training students and staff to the highest international standards. In our departments we regularly welcome research students who completed their masters degrees at CEU. In international rankings, some of CEU's departments are rated among the top 50 in the world. CEU also makes Hungary a regional leader in winning highly competitive European Research Council grants. Several of its faculty have won the most prestigious awards in their disciplines.

The government's proposed legislation to alter its statute of operation in Hungary would compromise its academic freedom and set a dangerous precedent for academic life in other countries. We would like to express our solidarity with the Central European University and call upon you to reconsider the proposed legislation. To carry through this project would significantly impoverish the Hungarian and European landscape in Jewish Studies, and undoubtedly constitute a major loss also in the many other disciplines in which the CEU excels.

The Bill renders CEU's continued operations in Budapest virtually impossible and strikes a severe blow against the academic freedom that enables all universities, including those in Hungary, to flourish. Further the bill raises the following significant legal and constitutional concerns:

- **It limits the right to education and freedom of science, research, and academic life**
- **It discriminates by disproportionately targeting foreign higher education institutions** by requiring them to operate a campus in their country of origin.
- **It breaches law-making procedures.** The bill was adopted in an exceptional procedure and without consultation with the affected parties, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the Hungarian Rectors' Conference, as entitled under law.

We urge you to act on your Presidential prerogative and send the Bill to the Constitutional Court of Hungary where the above concerns regarding its legality and constitutionality can be appropriately reviewed to protect Hungary's well-founded international academic reputation, and preserve its autonomy and freedom.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Holtschneider".

Dr Hannah Holtschneider, President of the British Association for Jewish Studies 2017

CC: Central European University