

Dr József Bódis
State Secretary for Education
Ministry of Human Capacities
jozsef.bodis@emmi.gov.hu

August 30, 2018

Dear Dr. Bódis,

I write to you in my capacity as Chairperson on the Gender Expert Chamber of the Czech Republic, a body that unites experts in the area of gender studies, both from civil society and higher education and research institutions in the Czech Republic. I address you in response to the unilateral decision made by your government to ban Gender Studies at universities in Hungary.

Based on available information, we understand that as of next year it is no longer possible to graduate from any Gender Studies programme offered by a Hungarian public higher education institution while the CEU case is still pending your government's decision. While official statements cite low enrolment among the main reasons for this decision, it seems that the actual reasons for banning the discipline are of ideological nature and comprise an undemocratic exercise of political power – of the kind that humanities and social science disciplines target in their critiques. Besides Hungarian politicians' comments that support this interpretation, it is questionable how enrolment could be a factor given the fact that the Gender Studies programme at Eötvös Loránd University has only been running for a single year while the CEU programme is well established and of an international reputation.

Your government's decision is in clear violation of autonomy of higher education, one of the cornerstones of any democracy. The ban threatens to narrow down critical perspectives that form a crucial part of any state-of-the-art social science and humanities discipline. Because of this, we understand the ban as an attack against both academic freedom and social sciences and humanities. The way in which the ban was delivered – as a unilateral, authoritarian decision with no consultations – is ever more alarming. It suggests little respect for academic freedoms and a deliberate ignorance of their foundation.

The Gender Expert Chamber of the Czech Republic would therefore like to call on you to reconsider this step and withdraw the decree so that Hungarian citizens may still obtain education that is not dictated by their government but rather developments in individual disciplines.

With kind regards



Genderová expertní komora ČR, z.s.
IČ: 04128265
Jilská 361/1, 110 00 Praha 1
Tel.: +420 210 310 322, +420 732 876 492

Veronika Šprincová (on behalf of the Gender Expert Chamber Executive Committee)
sprincova@padesatprocent.cz