

To: János Áder, President of Hungary and Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary

23-08-2018, Brussels, Belgium

Dear János Áder and Viktor Orbán,

As civil society organizations that are promoting gender equality in the global South and in Europe, united in the network WIDE+ (Women In Development Europe+), we are hugely concerned about the recent proposal from the Hungarian government to abolish the existing gender studies programmes in Hungary. This is part of an ongoing backlash towards hard-fought policies and laws that aim to protect women's rights and promote gender equality. It is particularly distressing that women's rights defenders in civil society and the academic arena are attacked and blackmailed though they are contributing substantially to democracy and social justice.

Hungary's actions will undermine EU's core values

We have received information from different sources about the Hungarian government's proposed law to abolish the accredited MA programmes in gender studies in Hungary. 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."

There is no basis to question or ban gender studies, an academic field in which Hungary enjoys an excellent reputation. This discipline, which is taught in the most prestigious institutions of higher education in the world, has significantly contributed to the advancement of academia, democratization, and the enlightenment of society. Perspectives from gender studies on questions of human wellbeing, equality, identity, difference, and diversity today are also recognized within the framework of human rights as well as many other scientific disciplines, from medicine, law, political sciences, economics, sociology, history to cultural and literary studies, languages and art.

The EU has firmly committed itself to promoting and ensuring gender equality and academic freedom, which are both an integral part of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in article 13 and article 23. If this proposal will be implemented, Hungary will act in clear violation to the fundamental values of the EU, threatening the core democratic foundations on which the EU is built.

We call on the Hungarian Government:

- Withdraw this proposal and fully ensure academic freedom for universities to offer gender studies.
- Refrain from this anti-democratic and authoritarian rhetoric and of the attempts to control academic freedom and knowledge creation with regard to gender, gendered human rights and liberation because they undermine basic values that underlie the EU and Hungary.

Yours Sincerely

WIDE+ Caucus on behalf of WIDE+ (Women In Development Europe+), info@wide-network.org