

Minister of Education
Mr. Jozsef Bodis
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Betreff: Protest against the law to forbid the teaching of Gender Studies in Hungarian Universities
Datum: 15.08.2018

Dear Minister, Mr. Jozsef Bodis,

On Monday we learned from German media that the Hungarian government recently proposed a law, which would cancel accredited, well-performing Gender Studies MA programmes, one of which has consistently high enrolments since it was founded 2006, the second one has recently been established (2017). Hungarian Gender Studies programmes also participate in European exchange programmes. As a result, many of our German 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 universities. This exchange practice has led to longstanding academic relationships including research and teaching co-operations. We know our colleagues and are aware of how scientifically thorough and needed their work is.

We write to you today to protest against this decision. Never before has a democratic government sought to legislate the curriculum of universities without consultation with appropriate university institutions. Furthermore, 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."

Fachgesellschaft Geschlechterstudien // Gender Studies Association

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It 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 puts itself outside the community of democratic nations.

We call upon the Minister of Education to refuse this amendment. We also call upon the European Union, of which Hungary is a member nation, to condemn this action as a violation of its principles. And we call upon academic institutions in our own countries to join our protest.

Sincerely,
Sabine Grenz, Chair
Susanne Völker, Vice-chair
Sarah Elsuni, Treasurer

