

Heidelberg, April 12, 2017

Protest against the curtailing of academic freedom in Hungary

The Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA) at the University of Heidelberg firmly protests the continuing restriction of academic independence and the freedom of speech in Hungary. Having been initiated by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and passed by the Hungarian Parliament, a law dealing with the future structure of the Universities in the country is blatantly intended to deprive the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest the basis of its existence.

Founded in 1991 by the American billionaire George Soros, himself an immigrant from Hungary, this private university has developed into an exceptionally well-known institution around the world—an intellectual lighthouse of Hungary—which is dedicated to the spirit of independent research.

The new law requires that foreign universities in Hungary must also have a campus abroad. This is not the case with the CEU, and financially not possible. Should this law take effect, the CEU, at which 1,400 students from 100 countries are currently registered, would, as of next year, be prohibited from accepting any new students.

The Heidelberg Center for American Studies shares the concerns of President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who, speaking to the European parliament, warned that Europe cannot remain silent when civil society and the academy has “the air it breathes” taken away.

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