

**CEU's opinion about the proposal of  
the Ministry of Human Capacities and the Ministry of Justice  
on the planned discontinuation of MA degrees in Gender Studies**

Thereby we express our astonishment concerning the proposal to discontinue MA degree gender studies education in Hungary, without any justification or antecedent.

Gender studies is a multidisciplinary, internationally recognized discipline that produces novel knowledge. Most highly ranked universities in the US and EU have a gender studies program. This field of study analyzes and disseminates knowledge about important issues, such as demography. It also conducts historical, anthropological, literary, philosophical, cultural, analyses, deepening our knowledge of our civilization.

The abolishment of gender studies would be a major blow to our university, it would hurt the interests of Hungarian higher education, it would deprive Hungarian researchers and teachers from international resources, and it would harm the prestige of the country.

At our university we have been teaching about the status of women and about gender matters for a decade. The proposal erroneously states that about 1-4 students are admitted to this program each year at CEU. In fact, already almost 200 students enrolled, which means 16 on average per year, and many more apply. Since the launch of the program, 129 students received a Hungarian MA in this field. Our graduates get jobs in Hungary and abroad, where they can utilize their knowledge gained at the program. Virtually nobody drops out.

One of the important features of the Hungarian accredited program at CEU is that gender studies is largely taught in joint programs, in international consortia. MATILDA is operated by four universities: Universität Wien, a Université Lumière Lyon 2, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski and Közép-európai Egyetem (CEU). GEMMA is based on eight universities: Besides Közép-európai Egyetem (CEU), the University of Łódź, the University of Granada, the University of Bologna, the University of Hull, the University of York, and the University of Oviedo. If gender studies education was abolished in Hungary, that would have repercussions for all these universities, and would end these international contracts, although they serve - directly or indirectly - the interests of Hungarian academia and of other Hungarian scholars. If the discipline was abolished, Hungary would lose relevant European research and educational funding.

Undermining Erasmus Mundus programs would touch upon the educational objectives of the European Union. The European partners and the relevant institutions of the EU may reconsider other agreements as well, if they experience that Hungarian universities are not reliable partners and if they experience that in Hungary the freedom of education is not guaranteed.

The Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB) had already evaluated the discipline from an academic perspective and it had evaluated the management of the respective programs along professional criteria. If the decree would disregard the evaluation of the relevant experts

(which was also endorsed two years ago by the Ministry of Human Capacities), that would carry the message that academic freedom in Hungary is subject to ideological and political criteria. It would constitute a brutal interference into higher education to abolish an academic degree by a ministerial decree, without any consultation or serious analysis.

The field is not only highly appreciated by academia, but also in the private sector, as ensuring gender equality is taken very seriously in the European Union, and large corporations increasingly consider it economically prudent and in line with their goals to cater for gender equality.

Based on all the arguments above, we consider the planned step erroneous, as it would not only hurt academic freedom, but it would also undermine a discipline in Hungary that is useful and internationally highly regarded.

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Dr. Zsolt Enyedi  
CEU Pro-Rector for Hungarian Affairs

Dr. Eva Fodor  
CEU Pro-Rector for Social Sciences and Humanities