



## **STATEMENT OF THE NETWORK OF UNIVERSITY TEACHERS AGAINST BANNING THE GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM**

In the middle of the summer university break, the Hungarian Rectors' Conference was presented a draft decree from the Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of Justice. This proposal called for the abolition of the masters program on Gender Studies. Such curricula are currently offered by the ELTE Faculty of Social Sciences and the Central European University (CEU). The draft decree allowed students enrolled this year to complete their studies, but terminated this degree for future years.

The master's degree in Gender Studies was added to the list of tertiary education in 2006. There followed in 2008 the English offering of the degree at the Central European University, and in 2016 the initial offerings of courses in Hungarian within the Faculty of Social Sciences of ELTE.

The degree program at ELTE was launched in 2017, and was soon subjected to offensives mounted by the government and several governmental actors, even before the formal outset of the program. Now, one year after its beginning, on the basis of a series of irrelevancies such as the low number of students (often the case in the start-up phase of a program) and undocumented labor market and economic implications of the training, the Hungarian government apparently wishes to ban the master's program at both the ELTE Faculty of Social Science and the Central European University.

This indicated course of governmental action directly attacks the academic freedom of the University, even within the narrowed interpretation of the Basic Law, offered as resting on a basis of contrived reasons devoid of valid professional foundations, and intended directly to ban the offering of an established university program.

The study of gender in society is acknowledged world-wide as a valid scientific discipline. Several hundred universities offer courses and grant degrees in this field, which develops and presents research on gender inequalities in society and in the workforce, changing societal gender roles, and cultural stereotypes connected with gender.

The efforts of the Hungarian government to discredit gender research and education for political goals – see for example the recent attack launched against the Societal Research Center of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – has already led to ridicule in the eyes of world opinion, which has noted the short sightedness and provincialism of the draft decree. The planned governmental proposal has been panned even by extreme right wing portals as abusive.

The Network of University Teachers firmly protests any misguided or illegitimate governmental action aimed at harassing or banning the Gender Studies master program. It invites local and international universities and scientific organizations to join this protest to repel a gross effort to abuse and endanger academic freedom in Hungary.