

Hungarian Scientists' Open Letter to the Group Leader of the European People's Party
Mr. Manfred Weber

Dear Mr. Weber,

This open letter is a cry for help. We, Hungarian scientists, scholars and university professors turn to you for help in a most serious matter: The Hungarian Government has launched legislation to change the Hungarian research landscape dramatically, which tramples on the rule of constitutional law and on basic democratic principles.

The Hungarian Academy of Sciences is an almost 200 years old institution with many research centers and a network of research groups at the universities. The centers and institutes are under self-governance of the Academy and are internationally reviewed regularly. The overall performance of these institutes is good, especially in relation to the limited financial possibilities.

According to the submitted legislation, the research centers and institutes would be separated from the Academy and organized into a new entity, governed by a body composed of 50 % governmental delegates. Moreover, the plan is to have a further council above this body, entirely consisting of delegates of the government. All the persons in these bodies would be appointed by the Prime Minister. All the assets of the Academy, including real estate, facilities and all equipment would be used by the new organization without any compensation of the Academy.

The legislation was preceded by a one-year struggle between the government and the Academy. The Government side has failed to present any reasonable argument and impact assessment. The leadership of the Academy has unanimously condemned the attack on academic freedom, has presented clear arguments in favor of keeping the institutes in the organization of the Academy and has shown gestures of readiness for compromise. These were swept away.

The General Assembly of the Hungarian Academy voted twice with overwhelming majority against the intentions of the Government. The community of researchers has organized itself into the so-called Forum of Academic Workers. Multiple demonstrations were held, manifestos and protests were published – in vain. We have run out of tools.

Prime Minister Mr. Orbán, the leader of the ruling FIDESZ party seems to intend to stay with his party within EPP in the new legislature. He already ordered concessions to meet the democratic requirements put forward for him by EPP, like withdrawal of the system of courts for public administration or that of the special tax for advertisements. The new legislation, which violates the right of academic freedom and the right of property is a severe attack on the democratic order and principles. We ask you to put pressure on Mr. Orbán to withdraw the legislation about the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

With best regards,