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Faculty of Humanities

Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies

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Subject *Letter to Minister of Education*

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Minister of Education
Hungary

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Copy to:
Embassy of Hungary in The Hague, Ambassador András Kocsis
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Netherlands embassy in Budapest, Ambassador René van Hell,
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Dear Minister of Education,

We have been notified about the Hungarian government's proposed law to abolish the accredited MA program in gender studies in Hungary. 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."

As the director, chair and board members of the Netherlands Research School of Gender Studies (NOG) -which is an accredited and internationally acclaimed national platform for 8 university partners in the field of gender studies in the Netherlands-, we would like to express our deep concern and protest this proposal. We also want to show our solidarity with our Hungarian colleagues with whom we co-operate since several decades in EU-funded projects at the level of both MA and PhD education. Gender studies are well established as a scientific discipline and Hungary enjoys an excellent reputation in this field. The discipline, which is taught in the most prestigious institutions of higher education in the world, has significantly contributed to the advancement of science and the improvement of society. Perspectives from gender studies on questions of economics,



health, human wellbeing, equality, difference, and diversity today are also recognized within many other scientific disciplines, from medicine, law, political sciences, economics, sociology to cultural, literary studies and history. Furthermore, gender studies embraces a plurality of theoretical perspectives and methodologies that cannot be reduced to one single framework or paradigm. Therefore, graduates with the skills and expertise to tackle both global, but also specific local challenges relating to societal progress, health, rights and dignity remain important for future generations. This field is both intellectually and politically crucial, across Europe and within Hungary. Statistics of the employment and career development of our international gender studies alumnae over the past 10 years proof that societies worldwide appreciate employees with a theoretically funded, critical and creative academic background in gender studies. Nearly all of our alumnae manage to find suitable positions and jobs.

We want to stress that this measure 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 therefore 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.

Best regards,

Prof. Dr. Rosemarie Buikema, Utrecht University, Director, Graduate Gender Programme, The Netherlands, NOG Director

Prof. Dr. Lies Wesseling, Director, Centre for Gender and Diversity, Maastricht University, The Netherlands, NOG Chair

Prof. Dr. Marieke van den Brink, Director, Radboud Gender and Diversity Studies, Radboud University, The Netherlands, NOG Board

Dr. Liesbeth Minnaard, Minor Gender and Sexuality, Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society, The Netherlands, NOG Board

Dr. Liza Mügge, Director Amsterdam Research for Gender & Sexuality, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, NOG Board

Dr Kathrin Thiele, Utrecht University, Gender Studies Programme, The Netherlands, on behalf of the NOG Curriculum Committee