

Jena, Germany
11 February 2019

Prof. László Lovász, President
Magyar Tudományos Akadémia
1051 Budapest, Széchenyi István tér 9

Dear Prof. Lovász:

We, the undersigned staff and fellows of the Imre Kertész Kolleg in Jena, share with you and your colleagues grave concern over the recent government attacks on the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and academic freedom in Hungary in general. We are especially alarmed by the structural reorganization demanded by the so-called “program of excellence,” announced on 31 January 2019. As you and your colleagues have pointed out, the proposed program violates the fundamental principles of academic freedom. Academic research centres would need to apply for their entire budget by submitting tenders to the recently created Ministry for Innovation and Technology within less than a month, to be assessed through an unspecified evaluation process, without regard for international and European Union norms of peer review. This requirement would place research in the natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences under increased or direct political control.

More fundamental structural changes announced by Minister Palkovics strongly hint at government plans to completely dismantle the Hungarian Academy of Sciences’ network of research institutes, employing approximately 5,000 active staff members. All institutes would be removed from the oversight of the Academy while some, mostly in the humanities and social sciences, would be dismantled on the charge that they are “unproductive.”

All of these changes have been proposed or introduced without consulting the academic community and in opposition to the decisions of the elected leaders and membership of the Academy. We ask the Hungarian government to respect the integrity and independence of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and its research institutes and to restore their organizational and financial stability. We strongly support your demands for independent and scholarly oversight of research and staffing. As scholars, we urge you to continue to stand strong in your efforts to protect the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as an independent body committed to academic freedom and scholarly excellence.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Dr. Joachim von Puttkamer, Co-Director
Dr. Michal Kopeček, Co-Director
Dr. Agnieszka Jagodzińska, Fellow
Dr. Barbara Klich-Kluczevska, Fellow
Prof. Dr. James Krapfl, Fellow
Dr. Jochen Böhrer, Research Associate
Prof. Dr. Joshua A. Sanborn, Fellow
Dr. Lars Fredrik Stöcker, Fellow
Dr. Machteld Venken, Fellow
Prof. Dr. Natalia Aleksion, Fellow
Prof. Dr. Paweł Machcewicz, Fellow
Prof. Dr. Violeta Davoliūtė, Fellow