



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

June 15, 2017

The Honorable Mr. Zoltán Balog
Minister of Human Capacities
The Honorable Dr. László Palkovics
Minister of State for Education
H-1054 Budapest
3 Akadémia Street
HUNGARY

Dear Minister Balog and State Secretary Palkovics:

I very much appreciate the information and reference materials you provided in your April 7 letter regarding Hungary's amended higher education law and the status of Central European University (CEU). I also take note of the other higher education institutions with U.S. ties that apparently might be affected by the revised legislation. In response, I hope that this letter can provide useful clarifications regarding the U.S. context as it pertains to these institutions.

Education is primarily a state and local responsibility in the United States. Matters related to the legal status and degree-granting authority of most higher education institutions, including these higher education institutions operating in Hungary, are within the purview of state-level authorities and not the U.S. federal government. The accreditation of higher education institutions is carried out by private educational associations based on peer evaluation. Solely for purposes of federal student aid and other federal programs, the U.S. Secretary of Education, in accordance with our country's Higher Education Act, recognizes accreditation agencies that the Department determines to be reliable authorities regarding the quality of higher education institutions.

The U.S. higher education institutions engaged in higher education activities in Hungary were all chartered or authorized by a competent state-level authority and are accredited by a U.S.-based accreditor recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

I take note of the proposal in your letter to consider the possibility of our entering into an international agreement with the Ministry of Human Capacities. However, for the reasons noted above, the appropriate parties with which to enter into discussions regarding the feasibility of such agreements are state-level authorities.

Based on recent communication between members of my staff and the Embassy of Hungary, it is my understanding that representatives of your government have already begun to pursue direct engagement with officials in the chartering/authorizing states for these institutions.

In light of this information, and the important and long-standing role that higher education institutions like those referenced above have played within the U.S.-Hungary relationship, I am hopeful that the outstanding issues you mention can be resolved through dialogue with the institutions and with state-level authorities.

I wish to thank you in advance for your efforts during those discussions as all parties work to seek a mutually agreeable resolution. In the meantime, please accept my best wishes and the assurances of my highest consideration.

Sincerely,



Betsy DeVos