

Attention: news desks/science and education correspondents
For immediate release
Brussels, 3 April 2017

EUA calls on governments to refrain from interference in university autonomy

This week the European University Association (EUA) relaunches a crucial and timely European-wide dialogue on university autonomy. On the eve of its [Annual Conference 2017](#), on this very topic, EUA would like to underline the importance of universities as independent and open communities of scholars and to express its concern about the increasing tendency of national governments to interfere in university autonomy and academic freedom.

Growing infringements to these core academic values indicate a lack of trust in universities and the critical role they play in society. The latest example concerns the Hungarian government's proposal to amend national legislation with a view to targeting one specific higher education institution, the Central European University in Budapest, a long-standing EUA member. If adopted in its present form, it will threaten the capacity of the university to operate in Hungary.

Moreover, EUA continues to receive worrying reports of governmental interference in internal university affairs in Turkey, including further unjustified dismissals of university staff following the attempted coup in July 2016.

EUA strongly condemns such measures which go against fundamental university values, create mistrust, doubt and uncertainty and ultimately hamper universities in fulfilling their mission. Critical thinking and independent judgement form the backbone of university activities, and freedom from political intervention and pressure is a condition *sine qua non* in enabling them to fulfil their role.

In keeping with its founding aim of "*promoting and safeguarding university values and the case for university autonomy*," as well as openness, tolerance, solidarity and dialogue, EUA thus calls upon governments to refrain from undue political interference in university matters, to respect institutional autonomy, and to establish a dialogue with the sector that is based on mutual trust and the rule of law.

EUA reiterates the importance of standing up for these core university values in these challenging times, and calls on governments, universities, their scholars and students, and other university stakeholders, to remain committed to these internationally-recognised principles.

EUA will continue to monitor relevant developments across Europe, and provide a forum for such dialogue at the European level, starting with the discussion that will take place at its upcoming Annual Conference on "[Autonomy and Freedom: The Future Sustainability of Universities](#)" at the University of Bergen in Norway, on 6 and 7 April 2017.

For more information please contact:

Jessica Carter, tel: +32 2 743 11 59; mobile: +32 473 74 87 85; email: <mailto:jessica.carter@eua.be>

The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of approximately 800 universities in 47 European countries and 33 national rectors' conferences (NRCs). The EUA Council is made up of the president, the members of the Board, and of the presidents of all of Europe's NRCs. EUA works closely with its members to ensure that the voice of European universities is heard.