

**Minister László Palkovics**

Ministry of Innovation and Technology  
Fő utca 44-50.  
1011 Budapest  
Hungary

**Prof. Lauritz Holm-Nielsen**  
President

Strasbourg, June 29, 2018

Dear Minister Palkovics,

EuroScience is particularly concerned about recent developments regarding the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia MTA).

We understand that a Hungarian government decision has been taken to amend the 1994 legal framework for the Academy of Sciences and that the State Budget Framework for 2019 foresees redirection to the Ministry of Innovation and Technology of more than half of the Academy's budget. We have heard that negotiations between the Academy and the Ministry of Finance are still ongoing, but it is difficult to interpret the amendment and redirection of the budget differently from an attempt to control a substantial fraction of the research performed by the Academy's institutes.

Independence is vital for science and a necessary condition for society to reap the largest benefits from research and innovation. Academies of Science should benefit from the highest level of independence, as governments all over the world call upon the Academies to provide advice on how scientific developments impact our societies and how scientific evidence can inform policy in numerous and essential areas of importance for our countries. If Academies cannot work in independence, their advice will be considerably less valuable and international cooperation among Academies will suffer.

Undermining the independence of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, arguably one of the most highly respected scientific institutions in Central and Eastern Europe, is in clear contradiction with justified concerns expressed by countries such as Hungary concerning imbalance in the distribution of European Union research funding. Strong independent scientific institutions and a genuine commitment of governments to academic freedom in research, which includes adequate funding for scientific research, are pre-requisites for redressing imbalances in European funding.

It is legitimate to debate the relative role of Academies of Science in the total research and higher education framework in a given country, and several countries have modified the budgetary balance between different research organisations, such as academies and universities. But this is very different from placing an Academy of Science under direct ministry control for a significant part of its budget, thereby eliminating a large portion of the Academy's autonomy in essential matters such as personnel management and research orientation. EuroScience expressed similar concerns in recent years when the independent position of the Turkish Academy of Sciences and the Russian Academy of Sciences came under threat.

EuroScience fully shares the Academy's feelings of disbelief that proposals of such fundamental importance could be prepared without clear and substantial consultation with the Academy, and EuroScience supports the Academy's request that transmission of the proposals for vote in Parliament be postponed to allow for a meaningful debate among all concerned stakeholders.

We urge the Hungarian government to uphold the independence of the Academy of Sciences, to allow the Academy to continue to contribute to societal progress and to guarantee the conditions for the autonomy required for a scientific institution.

Hungary has a long-standing academic tradition, and Hungarian scientists have made significant contributions to world science in all areas, including in the humanities and social sciences. We sincerely hope that Hungary will continue to support this long-standing scientific ambition and thereby contribute to a stronger European Research Area.

Yours respectfully,

**Prof. Lauritz Holm-Nielsen**

Outgoing President

**Prof. Michael Matlosz**

Incoming President

**Dr. Peter Tindemans**

Secretary General EuroScience

*EuroScience is the European grassroots organisation of scientists and other stakeholders in science and innovation across Europe, across scientific fields and across the public-private divide.*

*Our biennial EuroScience Open Forums (ESOF) are the largest general science conference in Europe and provide a unique platform for scientists, businesses, policymakers and politicians and media to hear about the latest developments in science, and to discuss where the scientific and academic endeavor stands, how science can provide evidence for and enlighten politics, and more generally how society, economy and culture can benefit.*