
In addition to the Open Letter, below, from External and Honorary members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (January 28), an Open Letter from members of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association was sent on February 2: <http://bit.ly/apaOpenLetterHungary>

There is also a petition that can be signed by all supporters of the Hungarian philosophers worldwide:
<http://www.PetitionOnline.com/logosz/petition.html>

An article on the Hungarian Philosopher Affair appeared on February 4 in AAAS's *ScienceInsider*. Worldwide commentary is also invited at the AAAS website: <http://news.sciencemag.org/scienceinsider/2011/02/hungarian-academicians-blast-government.html>

28 January 2011

OPEN LETTER

To: Professor József Pálinkás, President, [Hungarian Academy of Sciences](#)

From: Undersigned External and Honorary Members, Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Dear Professor Pálinkás,

It is impossible for scholars and scientists living in the rest of the world to be unaware of the very worrisome developments taking place in Hungary today. There is dismay about the curbs on press freedoms, but the latest developments have struck home in the Academy.

Every funded scholar and scientist in the world knows that research grants are provided to support the conduct of research and the communication of its results through conferences, student support and publications.

We also know that even in the wealthiest nations, research is lamentably underfunded, especially in today's difficult financial times.

We all know, too, that every funded researcher in the world is vulnerable to superficial and unsupported charges -- by laymen who do not understand or perhaps do not even believe in scholarly and scientific research -- to the effect that public money is being wasted on research that is not worth conducting and not worth disseminating.

This is why research funding is accorded on the basis of peer review, by qualified scholars and scientists, and not on the basis of opinion polls, let alone allegations by every skeptic, cynic, or worse.

Most important of all, whenever a baseless attack on publicly funded research happens to appear in the media -- assuming that the attack is not so vicious or personal as to be libelous or defamatory -- it is ignored and tolerated as one of the inevitable, if not always admirable, manifestations of freedom of the press and freedom of opinion.

In particular, the worldwide scientific and scholarly community knows well that the occasional public venting, especially in hard economic times, of an individual's animus against research spending in general, or against a particular line of research that the critic happens to dislike, is to be expected in a Gaussian distribution of opinion, freely expressible in public.

If necessary (though it is rarely necessary), supporters of research, better informed about its conduct and purpose, including the research community itself, are free to rally in the defense of research and researchers when they fall under the shadow of disinformation.

But in a nation where it is the freedom of the press and freedom of opinion that are themselves falling under a shadow, and where familiar generic criticisms, so general (and superficial, and ludicrous) that they could literally have been made about every single funded researcher on the planet today -- unmerited funding, misspent on conducting and communicating unworthy research -- are coupled with far more sinister and borderline-libelous allegations -- pocketing the research money instead of using it for its intended purpose -- the first thing the international scholarly community would expect by way of a response is a rallying of the national scholarly community in defense of the research and researchers thus attacked.

Instead, what we hear is that in Hungary legal action is being contemplated against the researchers that are under attack.

We write to ask that the Hungarian Academy of Sciences take a prompt, prominent and unequivocal public position in support of the research and researchers thus attacked, and against such empty, ad hominem attacks, to which every scholar and scientist in the world is vulnerable, if they are allowed to metastasize unchallenged.

It is noteworthy, in particular, that it is philosophical research -- mental work for which it is not laboratory results but conferences, student support and writings themselves that are the product that the research is funded to produce -- that is particularly vulnerable to diffuse generic attacks on the worth of the research and the integrity of the researchers.

Hence research in Philosophy and History -- a formal division of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences -- is in especial need of the Academy's explicit support.

Nor is it irrelevant that philosophers -- like journalists -- are often thorns in the sides of governments, on account of their critical thinking -- critical thinking of which Hungary today seems to stand in greater need than ever in recent times.

A national Academy of Sciences is the first, natural defender of the exercise of critical thinking in research. As external members and honorary members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences we confidently but urgently await the prompt, prominent and unequivocal statement of the Academy's public position in support of the research and researchers in question.

It is the principle of assessment through informed peer review -- as opposed to public trial by sinister, uninformed and unsupported allegations -- that is at stake here, and the stakes are especially high for science and scholarship.

With collegial salutations,

[list of co-signatories on next page being updated daily]

Adhya, Sankar, NCI-NIH, HM
Alföldy, Géza, U Heidelberg, EM
Aszalos Adorján, NCI,NIH, EM
Balabán, Alexandru, Texas A&M U, HM
Boskovits, Miklós, U Florence, EM
Bruner, Jerome, NYU, HM
Cocking, Edward, U Nottingham, HM
Csörgő Miklós, Carleton U, EM
Dallós, Peter, Northwestern U, HM
Déak, István, Columbia U, EM
Demchenko, A, Nat Ac Sci, Ukraine, HM
Diehl, Volker, U Cologne, HM
Dressler, Wolfgang, U Vienna, HM
Evans, Robert, University of Oxford, HM
Fellegi Iván Péter, Statistics Canada, EM
Flores, Ricardo, U Politea, Valencia, HM
Fried Johannes, Goethe I Frankfurt, HM
Gelenbe, Erol, Imperial College, HM
Gertler, János, George Mason U, EM
Grafarend Erik, U Stuttgart, HM
Györffy, Balázs, U Bristol, EM
Hartkamp, Arthur, Radboud U, HM
Hajdu, János, U Cologne, EM
Harnad, Stevan, UQ&M, EM
Hofstede, Geert, U Maastricht, HM
Hopwood, David, J Innes Ctr, HM
Hortobágyi, Gabriel N., Texas U, EM
Horváth, John, U Maryland, EM
Husar, Rudolf, Washington U, EM
Jovin, Thomas, M-PI, Goettingen, HM
Kaczorek, Tadeusz, Warsaw U Tech, HM
Kahane, J-P, U Paris-Sud Orsay, HM

Kahneman, Daniel, Princeton U, HM
Karády, Victor, CEU, EM
Kazmierkowski, M, Warsaw Tech U, HM
Kende, Péter, BFTDK, EM
Lax, Peter, NYU Courant Instiute, HM
Lee, Y-T, Pres, Academia Sinica, HM
Lempert, László, Purdue U, EM
Lengyel Peter, Yale U, EM
Lichtenthaler Frieder, TU Darmstadt, HM
Maier, Giulio, Technical U Milan, HM
Mészáros, István, U Sussex, EM
Mroz, Zenon, Polish Acad of Sciences, HM
Muller, Miklos, Rockefeller U, EM
Márkus, György, U Sydney, EM
Pauncz, Ruben (Rezso), Technion, EM
Pápay, Gyula, U Rostock, EM
Pavláth, Atilla, USDA, EM
Pecht, Israel, Weizmann Institute, HM
Petsko, Gregory A., Brandeis U, HM
Polányi, John, U Toronto, HM
Polonyi, János, U Strasbourg, EM
Pretsch, Ernő, ETH Zuerich, EM
Thirring Walter, U Vienna, HM
Thoma, Manfred, U Hannover, HM
Thorgeirsson, Snorri S. NIH, HM
Thurau, Klaus, U Munich, HM
Tomasello, Michael, MPI Leipzig, HM
Ullmann, Ágnes, Institut Pasteur, EM
Varadhan Srinivasa, NYU Courant, HM
Vető Miklós, U Poitiers, EM
Walter-Klingenstein Grete, U Graz, HM
Wilke, F. Ludwig, Tech U Berlin, HM

Zieme, Peter, Berlin Acad of Sciences, HM

Zsidó, László, U Roma, EM

[list of co-signatories being updated daily]

XII. Fej., 70/G. §

(1) *A Magyar Köztársaság tiszteletben tartja és támogatja a tudományos és művészeti élet szabadságát, a tanszabadságot és a tanítás szabadságát.*

(2) *Tudományos igazságok kérdésében dönteni, kutatások tudományos értékét megállapítani kizárólag a tudomány művelői jogosultak.)*

(1) The Republic of Hungary honours and supports the freedom of science/scholarship, arts, ... etc.

(2) The sole parties entitled to decide questions of scientific/scholarly validity and to evaluate scientific/scholarly research are the scientific/scholarly researchers themselves.

Links to descriptions of the ongoing events in question:

<http://bit.ly/HungaryAcademy-1>

<http://bit.ly/HungaryAcademy-2-en-francais>

<http://bit.ly/HungaryAcademy-3>

<http://bit.ly/HungarianAcademy-4>

<http://bit.ly/HungaryAcademy-5-auf-deutsch>

<http://bit.ly/VajdaVideo-in-hungarian>

<http://bit.ly/HellerVideo-in-English>

An article on the Hungarian Philosopher Affair appeared on February 4 in AAAS's *ScienceInsider*. Worldwide commentary is also invited at the AAAS website:

<http://news.sciencemag.org/scienceinsider/2011/02/hungarian-academicians-blast-government.html>

In addition to the Open Letter from External and Honorary members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (January 28), an Open Letter from members of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association was sent on February 2:

<http://bit.ly/apaOpenLetterHungary>

There is also a petition that can be signed by all supporters of the Hungarian philosophers worldwide: <http://www.PetitionOnline.com/logosz/petition.html>