



2017/2131(INL)

20.2.2018

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

On the situation in Hungary (pursuant to the European Parliament resolution of
17 May 2017)
(2017/2131(INL))

Rapporteur for the opinion: Petra Kammerevert

(Initiative - Rule 46 of the Rules of Procedure)

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PROPOSALS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

A. Act amending the National Higher Education Act

1. Recalls that, in April 2017, following the adoption of the Act amending the National Higher Education Act in Hungary, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe asked the Venice Commission for an opinion and that in its conclusions the Venice Commission stated that the introduction of more stringent rules coupled with strict deadlines and severe legal consequences, for foreign universities which were already established in Hungary and had been lawfully operating there for many years, appeared highly problematic from the standpoint of rule of law and fundamental rights principles and guarantees.
2. Acknowledges that the Hungarian Government has acceded to some of the demands in the Resolution of the European Parliament of 17 May 2017 on the situation in Hungary, notably as regards the suspension of the deadlines established in the Act amending the National Higher Education Act and the launching of a dialogue with the relevant US authorities; notes, however, that the Hungarian Government has not rescinded the Act amending the National Higher Education Act;
3. Regrets deeply that the Commission's attempts to settle the legal dispute with the Hungarian Government have not met with success so far and that the Commission was forced to initiate proceedings before the Court of Justice of the European Union, since the Act amending the National Higher Education Act runs counter to internal market freedoms, notably the freedom to provide services and the freedom of establishment, and to the right to academic freedom, the right to education and the freedom to conduct business, enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;

B. Segregation of Roma children

4. Draws attention to the fact that the segregation of Roma children in education in Hungary remains a widespread and deep-rooted phenomenon which contributes to the social exclusion of Roma, reducing their chances of integration in the labour market and in society;

Media policy

5. Stresses, with reference to the 'Democracy Index 2017' published recently by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), that media freedom in Hungary has been considerably restricted in the past year as a result of State intervention and increased State control; deplors, in this connection, the closure and subsequent sale of Népszabadság, one of the oldest and most prestigious newspapers in Hungary, once again revealing the Hungarian Government's intolerance vis-à-vis a critical press;
6. Is concerned that, after Hungary's last independent regional newspapers were taken

over by oligarchs close to the Hungarian Government, the latter has recently further extended its control over the media, with media concentration in Hungary reaching an unprecedented and grotesque level according to ‘Reporters Without Borders’;

7. Notes that the pro-government news website 888.hu recently published a black list of journalists working for foreign media, who are described as foreign propagandists for Soros, and that this clearly runs counter to the principle of media freedom;

In general

8. Urges the Commission to continue to deploy all means available under the Treaties, in order to uphold the Union’s common values and to conduct a political dialogue with the Hungarian authorities, the other Member States and the European Parliament in order to guarantee the rule of law, in particular in the areas of education and freedom of the media;