

Academic Rights in Romania

The Hungarian-language university existed in Romania from 1945 till 1959 when it was forced to merge with the Romanian Babes University. Now, Babes-Bolyai University with 6,000 full time Hungarian students is a self-proclaimed ‘multicultural’ university. However, among all European Universities teaching in minority languages, it is the only one which does not use inscriptions in the minority language.

The Hungarian academic community of the University demanded on several occasions the placement of multilingual inscriptions. In 2005 the University Senate made a decision in this respect, promising that Hungarian inscriptions would be placed within a few weeks. Eventually, the deadline for displaying the signs was set for 10 January 2006. After nothing had happened, the Bolyai Initiative Committee urged that the mentioned decisions be put into practice before 19 November 2006. On 22 November, two university lecturers, Dr. Peter Hantz and Dr. Lehel Kovács, placed several Hungarian signs inside various buildings of the university. These inscriptions, having the same size and design as the Romanian ones, were fastened below the latter. However, the security staff of the university forcibly prevented the placement of some inscriptions, like ‘No smoking’ or ‘Information’ and the displayed signs were removed the same day, following the order of the Rector.

Subsequently, on 27 November, Dr. Hantz and Kovács were sacked. The Hungarian Vice-Rectors of the University resigned. Several other Hungarian-speaking university staff also resigned. In December, Leaders of the Hungarian Line of Studies decided not to fill the vacancies, until the main problems of the Hungarian community at the University are not solved.

Moreover, the University filled a police report charging the two lecturers with vandalism. However, the teachers refused to give the statement on that issue.

On 13 December 2006, over 75% of the Hungarian professors involved signed a petition asking the establishment of a Hungarian-language Faculty of Natural Science at the Babes-Bolyai University. Students also gathered signatures.

However, not only Hungarian intellectuals express their concern about academic freedom and minority rights in Romania. Already on 16 February 2006 the intellectuals from all over the world signed the open letter to the President of the European Commission, the President of Romania as well as the Prime Minister of Romania emphasizing that Hungarians in Romania are heavily underrepresented in higher education and that in many European countries, quite contrary to the Hungarians in Romania, national minorities enjoy the benefits of a public (state-financed) universities in their own language. Therefore they urge the re-establishment of the public Bolyai University in Cluj-Nacopa / Kolozsvár.