

Hungary's Soros-Backed University Is Reaccredited

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The Central European University in Budapest has been the subject of an intense battle in Hungary. Daniel Vogel/Central European University

A Budapest university [threatened with being shut down](#) after emerging as a high-profile target of government attacks on its founder, the financier George Soros, announced a bit of welcome news on Wednesday: It has been reaccredited for the next five years.

“Our university is proud to have secured reaccreditation here in Hungary, where we belong,” the president and rector of the Central European University, Michael Ignatieff, said in a statement.

The university became a focus last year of [a broad campaign against Mr. Soros](#) by the right-wing government of Prime Minister Viktor Orban, although the institution has consistently maintained that he no longer plays a role in its operations.

The government proposed legislation last year that appeared to have been written specifically with the intent of shutting the school down, and its passage was met with criticism from universities around the world, the United States and the executive arm of the European Union.

A spokeswoman for the university said that the government had not signed an agreement that would put an end to the dispute.

Hungary joined the European Union in 2004, but [Mr. Orbán's rise](#) as an autocrat and a threat to liberal democracy as established in the bloc has been accompanied by increasingly strident views toward migrants ever since hundreds of thousands [passed through the country](#) on their way to Northern Europe in 2015.

The Hungarian government has repeatedly accused Mr. Soros — a Hungarian-American who has spent millions backing organizations that promote liberal democracy and open borders in Europe — of plotting to destabilize the continent by allowing millions of migrants to settle in Europe. (Mr. Soros [issued a rebuttal](#) to the government's claims.)

Mr. Soros began his work in Hungary, the country where he was born, in the 1980s before the fall of the Iron Curtain. Mr. Orbán was among the recipients of scholarships from foundations sponsored by the financier during the transition to democracy.

In 1991, he founded Central European University and gave it a generous endowment, which stood at 500 million euros, or about \$610 million, last year, creating one of the most modern and sought-after centers for the social sciences in the country and Eastern Europe.

The threat to close it was part of relentless government campaign to associate Mr. Soros with the migration crisis and to persuade Hungarians that he was educating and financing opposition to Mr. Orbán's government.

As Hungary prepares for elections in April that are widely expected to hand Mr. Orbán four more years as prime minister, the campaign has grown more intense. Visitors to Hungary this winter saw a country in which Mr. Soros was depicted as a public enemy.

Large billboards were a frequent presence throughout the country, and advertisements on radio, television and the internet all had the same message: Mr. Soros is organizing mass migration to Hungary and the rest of Europe.

Last month, the government proposed the so-called Stop Soros Bill, which would ban organizations judged to support migration and tax financing they receive from organizations abroad.

“The government wants to arbitrarily label, malign and separate from society certain N.G.O.s it dislikes” and, eventually, to force them to cease their operations, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, which provides legal assistance to asylum seekers among others, [said in a statement](#).

Correction: February 28, 2018

An earlier version of this article referred incorrectly to the status of Central European University, saying that it had been “spared” closure because it had received accreditation. A university spokeswoman said that the government had not signed an agreement that would put an end to a dispute over its continued operation.