

Statement on the Future of the HUN-REN Hungarian Research Network

In connection with the objective set out in the government program—“We will restore the autonomy of science. We will prepare a new, transparent law that reinstates the professional independence of the MTA (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) and the research institutes, and settles the status of academic assets.”—we propose reconsidering the future vision and operating principles of the organization established by the HUN-REN law.

The HUN-REN research network was established as an organization independent of the central budget, but the principle of researchers’ self-governance is only marginally reflected in the legislation that created the network. It is worth considering whether the size and centralizing ambitions of the newly established administrative governing center are in line with the research and innovation potential represented and to be developed by the network.

The Public Task Financing Contract (KFSZ) provides funding for six years, aiming to improve scientific performance, innovation, internationalization, and the training of the next generation of researchers. The performance evaluation indicators, priorities, and target values of the KFSZ require reconsideration and clarification.

We consider it of fundamental importance to resolve the unconstitutional situation regarding the real estate assets owned by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences MTA and used by the institutions of the research network.

The directors of the HUN-REN research institutions agree that from the decisions of the new government we expect a strengthening of the self-governing nature of scientific autonomy, as well as the creation of a supportive science policy environment in which decisions about the development of research institutions can be made jointly by representatives of the scientific community and the institutions themselves.

We propose the following measures and agree with the general directions implied by these decisions:

1. The government should amend the HUN-REN law. The most important element of the amendments should be to ensure researchers’ self-governance and the scientific, economic, and operational autonomy of research institutions. We propose that the founding rights of HUN-REN be transferred by law to the MTA, and that the source of the annual funding specified in the KFSZ be moved under the Academy’s budget chapter. The legal status of the institutions should not change; their position outside the scope of the public finance law should be maintained.
2. With the involvement of the MTA, it should be examined how the legal deadlock regarding property rights between the MTA and HUN-REN can be resolved as soon as possible through amendments to the KFI, MTA, and HUN-REN laws.

3. The government and HUN-REN should, by mutual agreement and in a forward-looking and realistic manner, revise the indicators and target values of the KFSZ while keeping the funding specified in the contract unchanged.

If the research network continues to operate within the framework of the MTA, we propose preserving the integrity, organizational independence, and operational autonomy of the institutions, thereby ensuring their independence from public body and governance structures. As leaders of HUN-REN institutions, we stand ready to participate in working out the details.

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