

Laudation

of sociologist Györgyi Bindorffer
on the occasion of awarding the

JUSTITIA REGNORUM FUNDAMENTUM Award

We greet Györgyi Bindorffer as one of the persons awarded this year with the Justitia Regnorum Fundamentum Award. She is a sociologist and cultural anthropologist who has devoted her career to the research of the identity of nationalities in Hungary.

The ancestors of the Bindorffer family arrived from Regensburg, Bavaria, to the town of Szentendre during the settlement programs at the time of Empress Maria-Theresa. Györgyi Bindorffer Sr, the great grandfather of Györgyi Bindorffer was a coach-maker and cartwright in Szentendre. Her grandfather, Ferenc Bindorffer was also cartwright, but a poet as well and the friend of the members of Szentendre Society of Painters. Young painters often rented the attic room of his house. For example, the painter Endre Bálint lived here, too, and his painting, *My room at the Bindorffers*, can be found in the Ferenczy Károly Museum today. Her father and mother were both teachers at Szentendre.

All segments of the professional work of Györgyi Bindorffer are deeply determined and infiltrated by taking responsibility for the nationalities. From her early young years she has been devoted to public affairs even in the times when it was dangerous. She was a supporter of the work of the Foundation Supporting the Poor established in 1979 by Otilia Solt. Most of the founders of this Foundation were the students of sociologist Professor István Kemény and they all were active in the field of research about poor people and the Roma minority in Hungary. Due to her sensitivity in social issues she started to work on improving the situation of the poor, the disadvantaged social groups and the nationalities. This affinity was topped by her excellent research work following the traditions of great sociologists. This was the time when she engaged herself in cultural anthropology, which was a new branch of study in Hungary in those days. She graduated as a cultural anthropologist from the Faculty of Humanities of the Eötvös Loránd University. In the '90s she was a lecturer at the Department of Cultural Anthropology and the Institute of Sociology of the University. In the Doctoral Program of Sociology of Eötvös Loránd University she defended her doctoral thesis *summa cum laude* in 1999. From the mid '90s she has been a member of the Hungarian Society of Sociologists, the European Sociological Association and the Hungarian Society of Cultural Anthropologists.

The most significant fruit of her research activities is the ground-breaking book "Double identity – ethnical and national identity in Dunabogdány" (also published in 2005 in German under the title „Wir Schwaben waren immer gute Ungarn”), published in 2001. Her work resulted in spreading the term “double (or multiple) identity” in the profession of cultural anthropology in Hungary.

Let us quote the words of sociologist György Csepeli about the book of Györgyi Bindorffer: “it is a very useful book summarizing the professional literature about ethnic and national identity, including the Hungarian identity. The author is a well prepared, professional and focused writer. Her book is a fortunate mix of the paradigms of cultural anthropology, social history, social psychology and sociology. At the same time, the book is a real encyclopaedia of the life in the village of Dunabogdány, a worthy follower of the great traditions of Hungarian sociography. She uses an original typology to develop the concept of double identity, making a distinction between balanced identity and conflicting identity. In the case of a balanced identity the two different identity patterns are in harmony and supplement each other, each providing the individual with benefits the other cannot give. In contrast with that, in the case of a conflicting identity the individual is disunited as one sees the self as the

enemy of the self. Bindorffer has also come across cases of lost identity. These cases prove that losing one's identity shall put existence itself at risk." This book of Györgyi Bindorffer was awarded in the year 2002 with the Polányi Károly Award of the Hungarian Society of Sociology for the best book on sociology selected from the books published in the previous year.

In the year 2000 she became a research fellow at the Minority Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Her main research field was the identity of ethnic Germans in the counties of Baranya, Komárom-Esztergom and Pest. She spent nine years at the Institute and one of the scientific results of this period is the book "Variations of double identity", edited by her as head of an OTKA-team on the assimilation of nationalities in Hungary, language use habits and their effects on identity.

She is not only a theoretical expert: she has had many field trips and completed on-site studies in the villages of Véménd, Somberek, Csolnok, Dunabogdány etc. With her research method of participatory observation she has always been close to the local people, and from her young age she has always been active in local community life. Therefore, it is not by coincidence that in the year 2000 she was elected as the president of the German Minority Government of the town of Szentendre. In this function she used all her knowledge and expertise to improve the situation, the identity and the culture of Germans in Szentendre.

From 2009 till her recent retirement she was a staff member of the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights and its predecessors as a research expert contributing to strategic planning, close cooperation with the nationality governments. Her contribution was a great support for the work of the commissioner and later for the deputy commissioners. In this period, her last comprehensive research was about the minority government system, resulting in a book with the title "Minority, politics and minority policy".

By awarding the Justitia Regnorum Fundamentum Award, the ombudsman acknowledges the rich achievements in research and the tireless efforts in community activity performed by Györgyi Bindorffer in the past decades. By bestowing this award on You, we wish you many more years for using your theoretical and practical expertise and knowledge for the benefit of the nationalities living in Hungary and for all of us.

Budapest, 24 June 2016