

Laudation

on the occasion of bestowing the
JUSTITIA REGNORUM FUNDAMENTUM AWARD
on

PROFESSOR ISTVÁN KUKORELLI

István Kukorelli was born in Tét. He has an impressive career: renowned constitutionalist, Judge of the Constitutional Court, Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – all this time, he has never ceased to be a citizen of Tét... He is linked in many ways to the scenes of his childhood, the village where he was born (when, to his greatest joy, Tét became a town, he was elected its first honorary citizen), the Benedictine Secondary School of Pannonhalma, where he gained defining experiences of a lifetime and where he learned to appreciate the beauties of community life. During those four defining, albeit tough years in Pannonhalma, Benedictine teachers encouraged their students to think and to doubt, to weigh arguments and counter-arguments, to be guided by values. That is where István Kukorelli learned to act upon his principles instead of using them to justify his acts. He firmly believes that one thousand years history of Pannonhalma teaches us to combine progress with modernization, being Hungarian with being European. These ideas have guided him in all his activities. In 2004 the Benedictine community bestowed the Saint Martin Award on him in recognition of his attachment, and in 2011 he was elected President of the Alumni Association of Pannonhalma.

István Kukorelli graduated from the Benedictine Secondary School of Pannonhalma in 1970. After one year of mandatory military service, he started his studies at the Faculty of Law of ELTE in 1971. From the very beginning, public law became his subject of interest. From his sophomore year he participated in the activities of the Student Association of the Faculty, later he became its secretary. After graduation he started to work at the Department of Constitutional Law as an assistant lecturer. As a young teacher, he focussed on public law and its historical aspects. From 1976 he used to hold 2-3 seminars annually; up to this day, even in this era of “mass production” of university graduates, he is an advocate of humane education. He is still keeping the rosters of all his seminar groups. He is a trend-setting teacher: a large number of his former students gained wide-range recognition and prominence later on. István Kukorelli adopted a well-known saying by Zoltán Magyary: “A professor is not one who teaches, but one who has students.” And his students are grateful for his devotion... In the case of teachers it is a natural phenomenon that students give nicknames to them. It is not common, however, that Professor Kukorelli proudly wears his nickname “Kukó” without losing an iota of his authority even in a community where he embodies permanence, wisdom and calm deliberateness. He was voted on several occasions the most popular teacher of the Faculty of Law of ELTE. The online notes and comments of his students testify to his unwavering prestige.

He was awarded his candidate’s degree in 1988. In 1988–1989 he was Deputy Dean in charge of educational matters at the Faculty of Law and Political Science of ELTE. Two years later he was appointed Head of the Department of Constitutional Law – he held this position till 1999 when he was elected Judge of the Constitutional Court. He retook the position of the Head of the Department in 2013. In 1992 he published a textbook titled “Constitutional Law”. After the change of system this was the first attempt to give a complete and comprehensive elaboration to constitutional law. This textbook brought about a paradigm change in teaching constitutional law. It broke away from both the mere explanation of constitutional legal norms and the dogma of the omnipresent ideological function of law. This textbook not only ex-

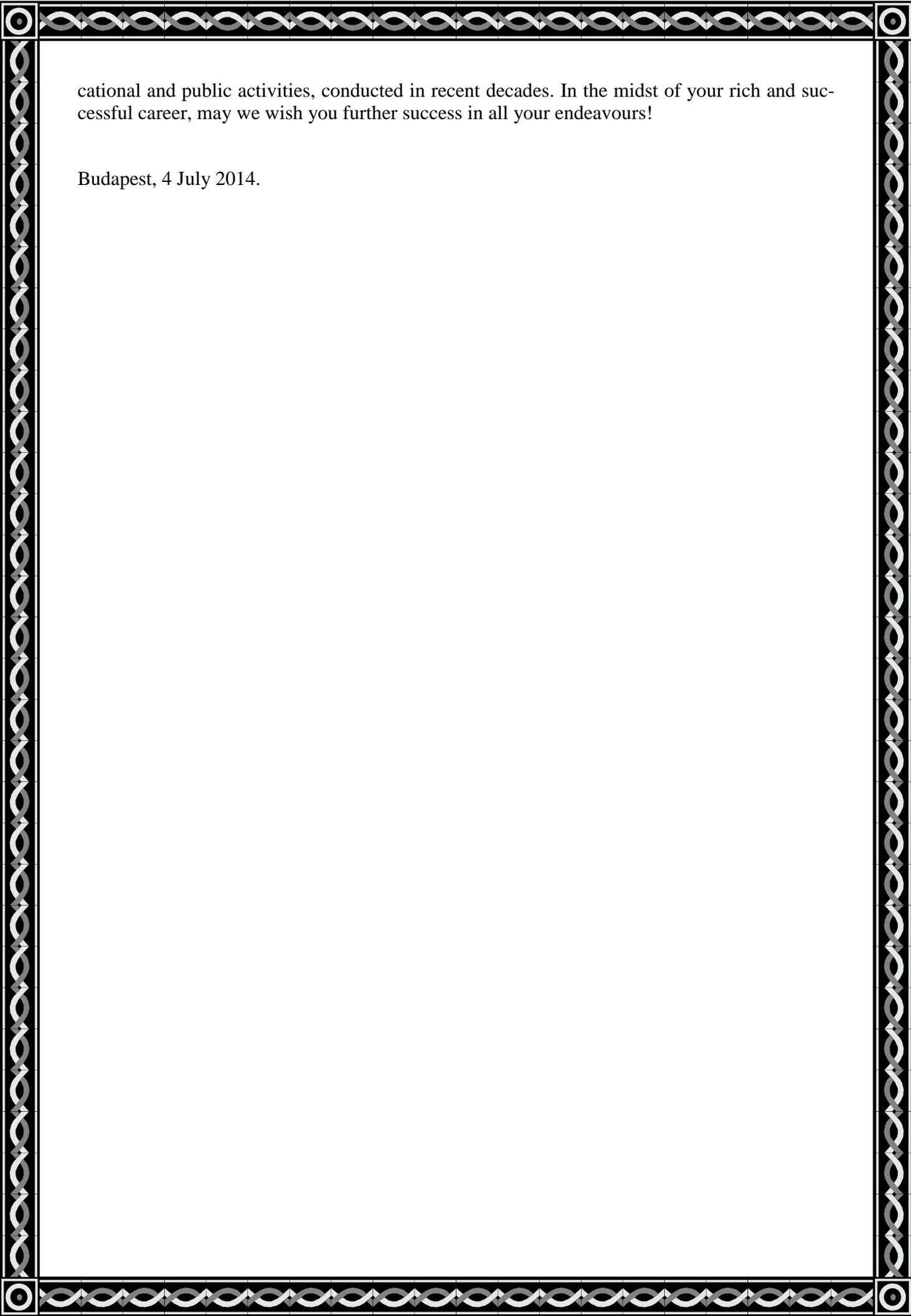
plains the norms of this, growing more and more important, branch of law, providing an institutional framework for the distribution of power, but also conveys lasting scientific views and constitutional values to the students. The textbook was republished on several occasions, thousands of students used it during the years. István Kukorelli habilitated in 1998, and he was appointed professor by the President of the Republic in 1999.

His public activities started with his close cooperation with Imre Pozsgay: first he was elected as member of the National Council and Secretariat of the Patriotic Popular Front, then, in 1989-90, Chairman of the Executive Presidium of the PPF. He participated in the work of the National Round Table as a representative of the so called third side: he considers this period as a highlight of his life. Nowadays, he reflects upon the National Round Table as a kind of Constituent Assembly: it gave birth to the acts of the change of system in the sphere of the rule of law. In 1990 he participated in the parliamentary elections as a candidate of the Patriotic Electoral Coalition and, in 1991, he became one of the founding members of the National Democratic Alliance. After that he moved to the background of politics. In 1994 he became a member and, in 1997, the Chairman of the National Election Board. He considered this position not as a political, but as a public function – he always strove to work in an objective, neutral way, keeping equal distance from all political parties. “Maintaining proportionality in everything” used to be his credo. This approach may have contributed to his election in 1999 as Judge of the Constitutional Court with an unprecedented six-party consensus. During those nine years he spent as a Judge of the CC he participated in approximately three thousand decisions, in 228 cases as presenting judge; he expressed a dissenting opinion or gave a concurring reasoning in writing in 61 cases. He always sought consensus, but remained true to his principles, never compromising them. In those cases when he could not identify himself with the majority decision, he used to express his dissenting opinion after a consuming internal struggle. He considers the collection of those dissenting opinions as his living conscience. Indeed, if we look back, we cannot find a single dissenting opinion of his that would be refuted by time; on the contrary, many of them have been justified by life. He completed his mandate as a Judge of the CC on 3 July 2008 and returned to the scientific world. He defended his academic doctoral thesis in 2010. As of 2011 he is the Chairman of the Committee of Law and Political Science of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. In 2010 he was awarded the Medium Cross with Star Order of Merit of the Republic of Hungary. Between 2008 and 2013 he taught at the Deák Ferenc Faculty of Law and Political Science of the Széchenyi University of Győr as the head of the Department of Constitutional Law and Political Science.

He participated in the establishment of the Bibó István College for Advanced Studies, one of the oldest of such colleges, whose primary objective is to educate lawyers and political scientists who are professionally prepared, well-versed in public affairs and open to the problems of society. In 2005, as a symbolic gesture of recognition, the College handed over all its keys to István Kukorelli and, in 2011, it awarded him the Harkály Prize. He deemed in the past and still deems extremely important the development of the civic identity and constitutional knowledge of primary and secondary school students; it is well documented in his textbook on civics.

István Kukorelli is founding member of the Independent Lawyers’ Forum, the Hungarian Association of People’s Colleges, the Hungarian Association of Political Studies and the Hungarian Association of Constitutionnalists; he has been the President of the latter ever since 2007. In 2011 he was elected President of the Benedictine Alumni Association. Up till now he has been a member and/or an officer in around 50 civil or professional organizations.

By bestowing the Justitia Regnum Fundamentum Award on István Kukorelli, the Ombudsman wishes to express his appreciation of Professor Kukorelli’s untiring scientific, edu-



cational and public activities, conducted in recent decades. In the midst of your rich and successful career, may we wish you further success in all your endeavours!

Budapest, 4 July 2014.