

## Laudation

### on the occasion of bestowing the JUSTITIA REGNORUM FUNDAMENTUM AWARD

on László Szarka

László Szarka, a great expert on the family of peoples inhabiting the Carpathian Basin, has been devoting his life to researching the issues of minority existence for four decades now. László Szarka, who had graduated from Komenský University in Bratislava as a history and Hungarian language and literature major, has been working as historian from 1977. In the beginning, he was a member of the Budapest Research Group of the Academy of Sciences of Czechoslovakia; later, from 1985, he has been research fellow then senior research fellow at the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

It is not a coincidence that issues of minority existence have become the focal point of László Szarka's interest: his childhood was defined by his family's memories of the forced relocation of Hungarians from Felvidék (a part of present day Slovakia). Although his narrower family could stay in Felvidék (he spent his childhood in Alsószeli /Dolné Saliby, Slovakia/ and graduated from high school in Galánta /Galanta, Slovakia/), his broader family had to leave their birthplace and find a new home in Hungary. László Szarka relocated from the 1970s' Czechoslovakia to Hungary; however, he never lost contact with his native land. In an interview he said the following: "Experiencing that there was and there is a part of Felvidék continuing in Budapest [...] entails responsibility." In the 1980s he established contact with the dissident historians of Prague; his encounters with members of the Czechoslovakian and Hungarian intellectual elite launched him on the path of not a politician, but a historian. His entire work is defined by the endeavor to facilitate mutual understanding between peoples living side by side and having a common history, Hungarians and Slovaks in particular. "We shall not seek for what divides us, but we shall find what unites us..." He took the position of Co-Chairman of the Hungarian-Slovakian Joint Committee of Historians with this thought in mind; he held this post between 2000 and 2014. And this is the thought that guides him when researching various aspects of minority existence.

He has earned imperishable merits in having the field of minority studies recognized by science. In 1998, the Minority Research Workshop was established within the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences under his leadership. During the nine years of his directorship of the Ethnic and National Minorities Research Institute that became independent as of January 01, 2001, László Szarka achieved serious professional success in the research of Hungarian ethnic communities living abroad and national minorities living in Hungary, and in Roma research. Since 2011 László Szarka has been assisting the professional activities of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as senior research fellow and head of the thematic group researching the Horthy era.

His main areas of research are as follows: history of minority policies in Hungary in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries; history of the national minorities of Central Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; changes in the ethnic spatial structure in Central-Eastern Europe's border regions; minority and ethno-political conflicts in the

countries neighboring Hungary in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. László Szarka received his candidate's degree in historical science in 1995; he habilitated at the University of Debrecen in 2007.

Under the leadership of László Szarka, the Minority Research Institute participated in several prominent international projects supported by the European Union. The Institute compiled a large database; he supervised the compilation of the "Inter-ethnic knowledge management" database which describes the inter-ethnic relations of eight countries and administrative units of Central-Eastern Europe.

László Szarka achieved serious results in setting up the international network of minority research; under his directorship the Minority Research Institute established substantial professional cooperation with almost all minority research institutions of the Carpathian Basin. As Director of the Minority Research Institute, László Szarka also played the role of an outside mentor of cross-border scientific, cultural and intellectual life. At Selye János University, established in Komárom in 2004, where—between 2009 and 2012—he also worked as Dean, his main objective is to ensure, together with his colleagues, that Hungarian schools in Felvidék have highly qualified teachers who are capable of playing a significant role in local public life and creating a genuine community for the Hungarian population of Slovakia.

László Szarka has published a lot: he is the author of a dozen of books and contributed to publishing more than 30 books either as co-author or editor. The number of articles he has published in domestic or foreign scientific journals amounts to several hundreds. He taught, among others, at the Budapest Campus (1991-2003) then the Eger Campus of the Századvég College of Politics, at the Department of Politics of the Eszterházy Károly Teachers' College in Eger (2004-2014), and at the University of Debrecen and Corvinus University of Budapest. Now he teaches at the Department of History, Faculty of Education, Selye János University of Komárom, works as guest consultant at the Graduate School of History of the Eszterházy Károly University of Eger, and he is guest lecturer at the Graduate School of History, Faculty of Social Sciences, Pázmány Péter Catholic University. Through his educational activities, he greatly contributes to cultivating promising, young talents and to the professional development of a new generation of historians.

He is member of numerous domestic and international editorial boards and professional associations. For his prominent scientific activities he has been bestowed upon several professional awards. In 1995 he received the Soros Foundation's Open Society Award, in 2009 the Hungarian Foreign Ministry's Lánchíd Award, in 2010 the "For the Minorities of Hungary" Award and, in 2011, the Kemény István Award.

With the Justitia Regnorum Fundamentum Award, we would like to express our appreciation for his diverse scientific achievements and his high-standard, exemplary research and educational activities. We congratulate him from the bottom of our hearts and wish him further success.

Budapest, June 26, 2017