

Prof. György Könczei, Phd (1958)

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"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure."
Nelson Mandela

The last 34 years of his life have been entwined with the people with disabilities movement. His active participation and learning experience from prominent representatives of this movement helped him to develop a personal philosophy on (Critical) Disability Studies (DS, CDS). He strongly believes that among the experts of Disability Studies researchers and persons with disabilities play an outstanding role.

As a researcher he published over 200 scientific papers and invited presentations on DS (and European social law) since 1984. His main fields of interest are *history, sociology, economics* of disability, and *anti-discrimination legislation* of disability.

- In his historical studies, he intended to answer the following questions: "How did human societies react to the phenomenon of disability at their different stages of development?" and "What are the roots of oppression of people with disabilities?"

- The aim of his sociological research was to understand the factors leading to the genesis of the independent living movement. ("Are there factors determining the continuous development of disability issues in modern societies?")

- In economics, he described several models of controlling disability related problems ("cost of disability benefit", quota-levy system, active labor market policies, job coaching, etc.) in modern economies.

- He served as a Fulbright research professor in CUNY, Brooklyn College

- Legislation, in his view, provides us with a *long term* opportunity to change negative dominant attitudes of the society towards disability. His research included the examination of different national acts (e.g., the Canadian legislation, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and European pieces of legislation).

- He was the founder chief editor of the Hungarian language DS periodical *Fogyatékoság és társadalom* (Society and Disability) between 2009- 2017.

As a policy analyst he used to be involved in shaping and developing disability policies as a social scientist and as a national and international policy analyst.

- On the national level he had to learn to lobby and fight for a noble aim while we were preparing the Act No. XXVI of 1998 on the rights and equal opportunities of persons with disabilities. As the executive officer of this act, he worked with the organizations of people with disabilities very closely. *The only Hungarian reference* in the *Disability Studies Handbook* (Albrecht et. al. eds. 2001, p. 552) refers to this co-operation.

- In international forums he worked for the creation of the [Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities](#) in Vienna 1992/1993 and for making the European Social Charter Revised in Strasbourg in the mid 1990's, and worked with representatives of governments and the civil society for the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) between 2004-2007.

- In 2007-2009 he chaired the Governmental Committee for the European Social Charter in Strasbourg.

- In its first two years he served as a member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for two years in Geneva, Switzerland.

As a teacher he encourages the students to develop their critical thinking and reasoning, problem solving and critical reading skills.

- He carried out research since 1984 in Disability Studies, and taught it for almost 20 years at undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels.

- He founded an Open University on Disability since 2006 (run for three semesters), and also the Disability Studies Doctoral Workshop in 2007; and worked for the Disability History Touring Exhibit in Hungary.

Nowadays, he works as the head of Institute for Disability and Social Participation. Its mission is creating new knowledge and supporting knowledge transfer in Disability Studies.

Among several research grants he received

the Knight Cross of Excellence Cross of Hungarian Republic for 22 years of teaching and research in Disability Studies in 2006;

Charles Simonyi research grant in 2008;

Iustitia Regnum Fundamentorum Prize of the Ombudsman (Máté Szabó, PhD) in 2009;

Gabor Zalabai Prize for Equal Opportunities from István Tarlós, the Lord Mayor of the City Budapest in 2012;

Prize of Excellence (by the Rector of Eötvös Loránd University) in 2016;

Pro Ingenio Award of Excellence (Eötvös Loránd University) in 2017.

Some books (in Hungarian):

- *People with Disabilities in the Society*. Further Contributions to the Anatomy of Being Expelled. Gondolat Publ. Co., Budapest, 1992

- *European Social Law*— with Tamás Gyulavári —, Osiris Publ. Co., Budapest, 2000

- *From Taigetus to Equal Opportunities*—with Sophia Kalman— Budapest, Osiris Publ. Co., 2002

- *From Equal Opportunities to Taigetus?* (eds.: G. Konczei and I. Hernadi). Budapest, L'Harmattan, 2017.