

European Restorative Justice Award 2018

Borbala Fellegi & the Foresee Research Group

Thanking Speech by Borbala Fellegi, Gábor Hera and Dóri Szego

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*Të ndëruor zonyá dö zotrin! Ju falenderoj për mik prityien nëk të dörtesze të bukur!*¹ Thank you! To the EFRJ board and the secretariat! We are so happy that we as a team can be here and get this award and that we as a community can be here altogether in this room!

First, let me give the floor to Gábor and Dóri, the “two sociologist muscates” within Foresee. As researchers they are the ones who ensure that whatever we do in the field is documented. They go there before, during and after our field works, to ask questions and listen. They write wonderfully, and build theory. I am so proud I can work with you, Gábor and Dóri and that we all can stand here together!

[Gábor's speech is included below]

I am awfully proud of being a sociologist who supports the work of Foresee and I am awfully happy that I have also contributed to this work that is acknowledged by the EFRJ community. At the same time, I am a bit sad that our beloved colleagues are not here and cannot celebrate with us. I also have some worries about the tendencies that nowadays have been arising in several European and non-European countries, especially in Hungary. I am talking about the approach that does not listen to the voices of the people who are oppressed, does not support the people who are in need and does not accept the values, views and ideas that do not belong to the mainstream. To be honest, I am a little bit afraid of our future. Still, I feel reinforced now. I clearly know that we are not alone in Hungary and we are not alone in other countries. I know that there is a powerful network and background behind us. I know that there are a lot of people, a lot of friends and colleagues of us, who share our ideas, values and beliefs. This is the RJ Award for me – not being alone and the sense of support we get from you all.

¹ In Albanian: “Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you very much for your kindness and for welcoming us here in this beautiful place!”

[Dóri's speech is not included here]

This is my 16th anniversary in this family of the European Forum for Restorative Justice. I literally grew up in the EFRJ and now I am almost an adult ☺. My first memory is from 2002 in Oostende (Belgium) at the 1st EFRJ conference. I was 22 years old then. I will never forget that atmosphere. I was inspired and supported by all those friends, especially by Ivo Aertsen, Christa Pelikan, Martin Wright (former RJ Award Winners). Thank you for being fathers and mothers for me in this field since then! And later: Kris Vanspauwen, Tim Chapman and Edit Torzs: thank you for being our buddies from Leuven. You all mean so much to us! Why? Because through RJ you showed us that people, even within serious conflicts, can sit down with each other.

The EFRJ has had its original tradition of focusing on the role of RJ within the criminal justice system. Still, the EFRJ has also recognized in its most recent changes that the issues of the criminal justice system are only the tip of the iceberg! We are coming from a country that has suffered serious traumas in the last centuries and people could never really talk them through. Their impact are huge and still in our mind and heart. Underneath, there is so much shame, suppressed feelings and thoughts in our society, amongst everyday citizens. So we desperately need to look beyond criminal justice and reach ordinary people and help them to talk and reflect. By any means! We need to show them that it is okay to think and feel differently and still, they can be respected as human beings. We need to help them to tell to each other what is going on in their mind and heart!

This is our job. This is the mission of Foresee and this is the job of all of us here in this room! And also, this is the job of our generation. Because what we are able to help to bring to the surface and talk through towards social healing, our kids don't need to do anymore. So they can have other jobs...☺ So my message for today is to all of you is that you (working in RJ) – sitting here in this room – all have the capacity to empower people around you by encouraging them to talk about their stories, feelings, views, share their disagreements in a safe environments. So do it, by any means! Even if it is sometimes hard not to judge what we hear. But still, let people freely express themselves and find their connection to others. I believe this is the only way to reduce tensions in our societies.

What we also learnt: that we cannot do it alone. This is why i love the colourful team of Foresee: Gabi, Gyuszi, Era, Szilvi, Laci, Éva, Dóri and Gábor and all the others who have helped our work in the last 10 years! I wish they all could be here today! This is why I love the EFRJ as a professional community! Use your capacity that you can really listen to the

people and that you can help people around you to listen to each other as well, and use the power of your community in this work!

Let me quote here my favourite jazz singer, Juli Fábrián, who is my childhood friend and our deep sorrow is that since last December she cannot be here with us anymore. But her words are here with us, through her song "Shine":

*Shine like glass in the sand,
See that each straight wants to bend,
Once you've heard, you can't pretend,
Go follow the calling of the sacred land.*

**You know you should get off the ground,
Shine like you wanted to shine,
Blessed with your life, you're divine,
This world is yours, just shine**

So my message to all of you is to shine and enjoy this Conference! Thank you for this Award, for your support and for your attention!

