

## MANFRED WEISS

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*Magnifizenz,  
Members of the University Senate,  
Mrs. Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany,  
dear colleagues, dear guests,*

I would like to thank wholeheartedly the members of the University Senate for having granted me the great honour to become a *doctor honoris causa* of the Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest. My deeply felt thanks also go to the members of the Faculty of Law for having recommended me as being eligible for this honour. I am proud to get this title from this prestigious university in a city and in a country to which I have close ties for many years.

Since the mid eighties I annually participated in Hungary in a seminar on Comparative Labour and Social Security Law. This was a unique opportunity for scholars and students from East and West to exchange ideas, to create networks and to establish an ongoing communication on issues of common concern. And in particular it was an opportunity to get rid of mutual stereotypes and prejudices: in short an excellent set-up for mutual learning. It was in this context when I got to know my labour law colleague Csilla Kollonay-Lehoczky, with whom I have been closely collaborating until today.

After the downfall of the Iron Curtain I had the great privilege to be in many ways involved in the transformation of labour law in different Central European States, in particular in Hungary. In discussions with colleagues, judges and Government officials I not only got the chance to develop a better understanding for the problems this country was confronted with, but also to learn more and more on the richness of the Hungarian history based on institutions like this 370 years old university. In this process Hungary has gained a very specific identity and culture to which I am very much attached, and which I consider to be an important asset in the extended European family. The richness of Europe – and this also applies to the project of the European Union – lies in the variety of these national cultures, which hopefully will be maintained in the future. Of course there is one element in the Hungarian culture, which is almost impossible for a foreigner to get acquainted with: the Hungarian language. I have to confess that in spite of my close affinity to your country I never succeeded to speak even some words of Hungarian: a language the sound of which I like very much, but which is just too difficult for me to be mastered. Therefore, I beg your pardon if I stand here speaking in English.

„Comparative labour law” as an academic discipline was perhaps never more important than today. Globalization and Europeanization make it impossible to treat this field merely with a domestic perspective. Borders have to be transgressed in order to learn from each other. In this trans-national discourse it is important to get a sense for the specific needs and the specific possibilities in different countries. Models, which might work elsewhere, cannot simply be transferred to other environments. The difficult task consists in finding out how to adapt the institutional framework to the specific circumstances of given countries. It is in this spirit how I understand my comparative work. This mutual learning from each other is highly gratifying for everybody involved in it. Therefore, it is with great joy and pleasure how I see the collaboration with my Hungarian colleagues in the past. The honour granted to me today will stimulate me to even more intensify this fruitful academic discourse in the future. I now proudly feel being part of your academic community. Therefore, once more I would like to thank you very much for having chosen me to become a doctor honoris causa of your university.