Prof. dr. Ferenc Kiefer (1931-2020)

With regret and sorrow we have to inform you about the demise of Professor Ferenc Kiefer (1931-2020). Prof. Kiefer was president of CIPL from 2003 till 2013.

Prof. Kiefer started to attend the International Congress of Linguists in 1967 in Bucharest. In 1992 he became a member of the Executive Committee of CIPL. In 2012 he published *Eight Decades of General Linguistics* together with CIPL’s secretary-general Piet van Sterkenburg in which they brought together plenary talks given by famous linguists at the 18 International Congresses of Linguists held so far and in which they also described the history of CIPL and its importance to the field of linguistics.

Prof. Kiefer was a member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, former director of the Institute of Linguistics of the Academy and professor of General Linguistics at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. He held a chair as visiting professor at Stockholm University for several years and was a regular visiting professor in Paris, Vienna and at many other universities abroad.

Ferenc Kiefer studied mathematics and he started his career as a research fellow at the Institute of Computer Science of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1962. In the meantime he studied German and French, which made him one of the first mathematical linguists in Europe. He was also one of the first who introduced generative grammar in Europe after he had become acquainted with this new discipline during a long study trip to the United States in 1965-1966.

Professor Kiefer’s work in morphology, semantics and pragmatics made his name widely known.

During his presidency prof. Kiefer actively reorganized CIPL together with his friend Piet van Sterkenburg. He was able to save the Linguistic Bibliography which suffered from a considerable backlog when he accepted the responsibility as a president. He was also the one who, in cooperation with Van Sterkenburg and publishing house Brill, managed to transform the bibliography into an electronic database that is futureproof. He also actively promoted CIPL’s priority line of research on endangered languages.

Professor Kiefer, however, will be remembered best as the ambassador for linguistics par excellence and the engaging, friendly person who had an encouraging word for everyone he met. With his knowledge of many languages, he was able to easily access everyone’s heart. His passing away is a great loss for the study of the Hungarian language and for linguistics. He will be sorely missed by his friends and colleagues. Our heartfelt sympathy goes to his wife, prof. Júlia Janczyszyn, his daughter and sons and his wider family.

In CIPL’s Newsletter of March this year an interview with prof Kiefer was published. Read the interview (again) [here](#).