

# Striving for balance

*The need to be multifunctional and have various different skills is a cultural necessity, and it is an ongoing struggle to find appropriate balance among the various aspects of professional life, the women shortlisted for this year's Women of Excellence Award agree. The young and successful women were selected from some 50 nominees, and this year's award went to Szilvia Gyurkó, advocacy director of UNICEF Hungary. The BBJ asked the women on the shortlist about their careers, goals, values and priorities.*

"I don't really know of any successful people who are great in one single profession only, and who are focused on one single area only," says Szilvia Gyurkó, this year's winner of the AmCham Women of Excellence award, talking about the many roles a successful woman is expected to excel in, and especially the various aspects of one's professional success."

"It may be because of the limits of the country or the size of the market we work on, but clearly, young professionals need to have a holistic, almost Renaissance-like approach in that they have know a bit of every-

thing," she says. Others in the room agree. The women we are talking to are all aged between 25 and 35, and were shortlisted for the 2012 award. Although the winner was Gyurkó, none of them seems disappointed. In fact, there does not appear to be any ranking among them whatsoever. They are all successful in what they do, they all chose professions, or missions, rather, that require an extremely high level of social responsibility and sensitivity, and the quality that most spectacularly binds them together is the passion in their eyes when they talk about their jobs. They may

struggle at times, but they keep the balance between staying committed to their non-profit causes and finding their way in a highly competitive environment regulated by profit and other ruthless market mechanisms.

"Finding this balance is not a real added value," Gyurkó notes, "it is more of a pre-requisite, or a basic condition to be successful. No matter what you do exactly, you have to step back, and see the bigger picture of how the world is put together. It is like a ball of yarn: no matter where you pull the thread, it will affect the whole construction somehow. And the

same goes with passion. No matter how hopeless it seems at times, we all believe that, sooner or later we will reach the critical mass, and make a difference. This is what keeps us going even at the hardest times," she says.

Borbála Fellegi, Criminologist, mediator, founder and CEO of the Foresee Research Group, an interdisciplinary think tank of social scientists focusing on promoting principles and practices of alternative dispute resolution, restorative justice, crime prevention and helping the integration of marginalized groups in the society. She has been working for the European Forum for Restorative Justice and did consultation work for international organisations, such as the UNODC and the Council of Europe. She is also lecturing at several universities.

"It is a really difficult balance to find," says Katalin Bársony, sociologist, filmmaker and CEO at the Budapest-based Roma NGO Romedia Foundation. "It is an ongoing struggle in which we have to be focused on the artistic part of our work, but also need to be deeply involved in the financial

background. At most times we find solutions that do not exactly seem rational, but this is how we work, and we think that it is the only way to keep ourselves motivated on a daily basis."

Barbara Baska, designer, artist and film director, says,

"We keep hearing that people should mind their own business, and if they want to be successful they have to 'make themselves'. But the truth is that if we all do everything for ourselves, our life will become lonely and weird. It takes courage and dedication



Henriett Dinók, Barbara Baska, Katalin Bársony,

to realize that I will become more by helping others, even when it means giving away something that is uniquely mine. Teaching is a good example: we have all seen teachers who have held back a piece of their knowledge just to make sure that they will always remain the authority, and will know more than their students. I think its a twisted way of seeing things: teaching or in other ways, you have to help others, do it fully, and this will become the real source of your self-fulfillment, too," she adds.

Not only have these women found success in their professions, but they have also found this success at home. They might be highly educated, speak

and I was seriously considering going abroad. But in an environment like this, even very minor changes or feedback can go a long way. And these minor changes become apparent every now and then. Changing attitudes is never easy, so we have to appreciate every little sign we discover."

"When you work in a prison," explains Fellegi, "you will see that there is a bigger chance to change things where there is nothing left to lose. Similarly, in Hungary, it is a lot easier to do something good – and a lot more difficult at the same time. As criminologists, we don't aim to create 'good' people from 'bad' people; our goal is simply to change

## WOMEN ON THE SHORTLIST

**KATALIN BÁRSONY** is an award-winning filmmaker and executive director of the Budapest-based Roma media organization Romedia Foundation. She directed the Mundi Romani – the World through Roma Eyes documentary series, the first-ever documentary series on Roma communities around the world to be broadcast on a mainstream television channel (Duna Television Hungary).

**BARBARA BASKA** Designer, artist, filmmaker. At 14 she designed the image for a European Council project called Democracy for School. Her diploma film at the University of Theatre and Film, Kelen, was showed in the Urania cinema, and was invited to the Hungarian Film festival (Filmszemle) in 2012. As a designer she has won various international awards including the Ferrari's Award in Turin, Italy.

**HENRIETT DINÓK** Lawyer, a former researcher at the University of Chicago, at present a researcher at the Hungarian Academy of Science's Social Science Researcher Center of the Institution of Law. She is involved with civil organizations such as the European Roma Rights Center and the Helsinki Commission. She is also the member of the curatorium of the Chance for Children with Disadvantaged Backgrounds Foundation, and a volunteer worker at the Romaversitas Foundation.

**BORBÁLA FELLEGI** Criminologist, founder and CEO of the Foresee Research Group, the only NGO in Hungary dedicated to giving scientific answers to the complex questions of preventing and reducing social inequality.

**SZILVIA GYURKÓ** Advocacy director of UNICEF Hungary. After graduating from law, as a teacher at ELTE Science University, she became the professional leader of a program called law clinic. For years she has been a staff member of the National Institute of Criminology. She was a leader of the Family, Child, Youth Association (Család, Gyerek, Ifjúság Egyesület), and has been the legal advisor to several important organizations.



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Szilvia Gyurkó, Borbála Fellegi

numerous languages, travel a lot, but they also deem it important to remain connected to their roots, and stay in Hungary.

"We try to bring home a piece of each of the countries we visit and the cultures we see," says Bársony. "Our work is received very well abroad, and this feedback is of great importance, because it gives us the strength we need to soldier on with the daily work."

Gyurkó agrees. "Whenever we are abroad, our main motivation is to bring the knowledge home. A few years ago there was a point in my life when I thought I was doing something that is not at all timely in Hungary. It was a very lonely feeling,

these people for the better. It can be a big change to someone, and something much smaller, or even nothing, to someone else, and I think the same goes for the country. We have to value every inch of progress we make," she concludes.

AmCham's Women of Excellence award is deliberately not a career award, but a prize that celebrates women who are successful in many different walks of life. Consequently, it is impossible to ignore the question of work-life balance.

"I miss a clone," Baska exclaims. "At first I thought I was missing a twin sister, but no, what I really need is a clone. Of course I want a fam-

ily, but currently I have way too much on my plate even without children." Bársony is also planning to settle down, but not just yet. "According to Roma traditions, I am definitely considered as an old maid, as all my cousins I grew up with have children by now," she says. "When you spend 16 hours a day in a studio, that will challenge any relationship. And I don't subscribe to the traditional model anyway. I think it all depends on finding the right person, with whom you have the same values and priorities. But before thinking about a family, I strongly believe that we will have to raise a second generation of professionals within our organization," she says.

"It is definitely difficult," adds Fellegi, a mother of two, "but the truth is that the birth of my daughters turned out to be when my career gained the biggest momentum. In fact Foresee became an organization from a one-woman show, simply because I was forced to delegate tasks, and teach people how to do them well. I once had a dream, where my daughters and I were sitting in the middle of circle formed by my mother, my grandmother, and all our female ancestors. The message was, I figured, that regardless of work and career, our biggest task in life is to take care of our family," she concludes. **ZsB**

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HERCZEG ÁGNES  
wine expert

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WWW.HERCZEGAGNES.COM | INFO@HERCZEGAGNES.COM