ZOLTÁN ÉSIK (1951 – 2016)
IN MEMORIAM

On May 26, 2016 sad news reached us from Luca Aceto that our friend Zoltán Ésik had passed away unexpectedly the day before in Reykjavík. His sudden death tore him, being with almost 65 years at the height of his creativeness, apart from current scientific work. The week before, he had stayed and worked in the home of Werner Kuich and almost finished his presumably final paper as co-author entitled "Continuous semiring-semimodule pairs and mixed algebraic systems".
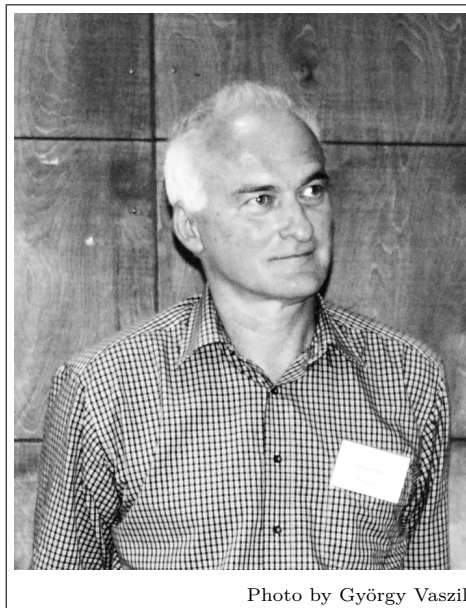

Photo by György Vaszil

Zoltán was one of the world's leading researchers in the fields of automata and formal languages, iteration theories, algebra and logic in computer science, and in particular their connections. His speciality was applying deep theorems of some area to problems of other fields, yielding particularly short, beautiful and mathematically concise proofs. Often, this provided new insight into structural results of both fields and their connections. Here, we only want to point out one of his scientific achievements: The Bloom-Ésik Transformations translating statements on matrix iteration theories to statements on Conway semirings and to statements on weighted finite automata; and translating statements on matricial iteration theories to statements on

Conway semiring-semimodule pairs and to statements on weighted Büchi automata, and vice versa.

Zoltán Ésik has done outstanding service to the TCS community in all aspects one can think of. First, he was Member of the Council of the EATCS for 12 years, Member of the Steering Committee and the Executive Board of the highly important European project AutoMathA, and Member of the Board of the EACSL. Furthermore, he was in the steering committees of international conferences including FCT, CAI, FICS, AFL. He also was editor of leading international journals including Theoretical Computer Science for more than 16 years. He was PC chair of many international conferences, often organizing them in Szeged himself (a very time-consuming and arduous task), and member of PC's of even more conferences. For this, he also has done very remarkable editorial work: he has edited more than 30 books for international conferences and special issues of journals. Zoltán Ésik was full professor and head of the Department of Computer Science in Szeged for more than 12 years. He is author of more than 230 publications and two books, one of which got even translated into Russian and is being used in Kaliningrad for upper course work.

As a recognition of his achievements and work, Zoltán Ésik was elected Member of the Academy of Europe in 2010. In 2016 he was elected Fellow of the EATCS. He received a number of further awards including Humboldt and Fulbright Research Fellowships, the Renyi Research Award, the Farkas Research Award and the Szechenyi Professorial Award. He attracted and successfully completed more than 20 research grants, and he has supervised a number of by now themselves prominent PhD students. Clearly, Zoltán Ésik was Hungary's leading researcher in the Foundations of Computer Science.

With Zoltán we lose a scientist of highest mathematical competence. His ingenuity in combining different mathematical fields, his demand for mathematical quality, his work in research and lectures will always remain an ideal for us.

Zoltán combined his magyarian patriotism with scientific cosmopolitanism. He was known to be eager visiting other researchers all over the world, in particular in Japan, France, Germany and Austria, as exemplified by numerous research visits. He was a convivial companion, not rejecting a glass of wine at the proper occasion, he was an enrichment for any community and open for discussions of any topic. His colleagues respected, his students admired him.

We would like to express our sincere condolence to Zoltán's widow Zsuzsa. She was the soul of their Szeged home, always welcomed guests and cared for their well-being. Due to Zoltán's frequent scientific traveling she had to make huge sacrifices – the scientific community is obliged to thank Zsuzsa for her support for Zoltán's work which enabled him to reach peak achievements. We also express our condolence to his son Robert and his daughter Eszter. Zoltán was a leading figure in our scientific community. We will always remember him. May he rest in peace – requiescat in pace.

Wien and Leipzig, September 2016   Werner Kuich and Manfred Droste