

## Introduction

**THERE IS MUCH TALK NOWADAYS** about European co-operation, which is quite natural. It is just as natural as this co-operation was in the Early Modern age, although it was not called European co-operation at that time.

Basically, there are political obstacles to common thinking. The rapprochement that has been achieved is mainly due to the work of institutions and private individuals. True, political agreements are needed to provide a frame for this work. Institutional co-operation generally precedes political rapprochement, because the work done together rests on disciplinary foundations.

The present exhibition is a result of the co-operation of four countries. The aim of each of the scholarly workshops and public collections – Slovak National Library, Croatian University and National Library, Burgenland State Library, Esterházy Private Foundation, National Széchényi Library – is to study the cultural heritage entrusted to its care, document its history and not least of all, present it to readers and visitors. The basic message of the exhibition is precisely that we can only work in an effective and truly expert way for the attainment of these aims if we place the realities of the past beside those of the present. The

families whose collections this exhibition attempts to present never gave any thought to which future, 19<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> century nation's past they would belong to. As subjects of the Kingdom of Hungary they served its king and strove to ease its main problems. The overriding concern in the Early Modern age was unification of the country and expulsion of the Turks, in the cultural field it was raising the general civilizational level of the country's population, tending their spiritual needs, in other words, supporting the churches. These families were not simply Croatian, Hungarian, Austrian, Slovenian or Slovak families but, through their members, they formed an integral part of the European aristocracy. Husbands and wives and their families originating from the Italian, Czech, German, Polish, French and other nations ensured this network of connections. On this basis the institutions maintained and supported by individual families – schools, churches, printing houses, etc. – achieved the kind of European co-operation that we are now striving for today.

ISTVÁN MONOK  
*Director General of the National Széchényi Library*