



## TAKE ME OUT OF THE BOX!

### Vegyetek ki a fiókból!

I was ten years old when I first represented Hungary in an international swimming competition, so my Hungarian identity developed early. In an environment where your nationality was identified by the name of Krisztina Egerszegi, it felt great to be Hungarian.

Then the years went by, I left the bubble of professional sport and traveled the world. Sometimes I was proud to be Hungarian, and sometimes my face was burning with shame – who wouldn't know what I am talking about? During my scholarship in Italy, for example, there was a lot more interest in English, Scandinavian or overseas students, and we were often simply sorted out as the people there in Eastern Europe who eat a lot of goulash, make even more porn, and by the way, since we are on the topic, how come I am not blonde like every normal Hungarian girl, I mean Ciccioletta is blond too.

I wanted to tell them how diverse our culture is. That typical Hungarian girls are not all blonde or easy. That the sight of the bridges of Budapest is unparalleled, and that the Danube is the most beautiful at night, when it is flowing in its riverbed like pitch black tar. I would have loved to make them watch *The Treasure of Swamp Castle*, which outdoes every Disney tale and would have fed them my grandmother's plum dumplings. Among other things. Would it have mattered? And is the situation better today regarding our reputation? Because let's face it, Hungary is not doing too well in terms of tolerance at the moment.

That's why I'm glad that I grew up in a professional sports environment, because on the one hand, I traveled a lot, and an expanding horizon means openness, curiosity, and, I think, acceptance as well. On the other hand, we learned there that we are all the same in the pool or on the field. You can be racist or homophobic, you can still easily be defeated by a colored or gay athlete. The restricted boundaries of countries, sexuality, or individual opinions don't matter. Just the person. I'm not going to try to fool anyone by saying I don't have any prejudices because unfortunately I do – how much freer I would be without them! But I was born to think, so I fight them despite negative experiences, because crude generalization is a form of ignorance. It's always the simpler solution, and it's often only abroad that we have to face the feeling of being put in the wrong box based on stupid prejudices. It is not good to be the subject of generalization, but you can always do something about it. For example, you can break negative stereotypes at an individual level, choosing love and value creation over hate, just as the wonderful people on our cover do. And since I've asked them, I'll, too, tell you the top five aspects of my identity, because it's a fun game to think about that. I'm a woman. A writer. A widow. Hungarian. My sister's sister. What are yours? 🍷

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