István Barankovics' philosophy and political views are very close to that of the great European Christian Democrats: Konrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman and Alcide de Gasperi.

His career, journalistic works, the articles published in Hazánk weekly, and the political and parliamentary speeches, as well as his studies, lectures during his emigration and his entire spiritual heritage prove that as a thinker and politician he considered his task not only the enforcement of Christian values but he used them to serve universal national interests.

His writings reveal that he deeply empathised with the internal struggles of not only Hungarian but also European culture; he followed consistently the Christian, humanist spiritual trends pointing to the future and took account of their outstanding European representatives.

István Barankovics was born in Polgár, County Szabolcs on 13 December 1906. A child of a Catholic people's teacher, he grew up with the farmers' children, and he did not forget about them in the Cistercian Grammar School in Eger. The Hungarian village captivated him through his entire life and political career by his silent oath.

Following his Cistercian Grammar School studies in Eger, he continued at the Budapest Pázmány Péter University's Law School. He undertook a leading role in the Catholic conservative reform movements, and he became general secretary of the National Hungarian Catholic College Student Association in 1928. Under his leadership, the association got more actively involved with the Catholic young intellectual movements, spiritual forums and societies. First of all, they sought to reform the social and political system unfolding after World War One and insensitive to social issues, asserting Christian slogans, and which was also insisting on obsolete privileges of the orders.

István Barankovics was especially attracted by literature, journalism and public life. He stopped his university studies and sustained himself from working as a home teacher and writing. He gained public recognition as co-editor of political journal Ország Útja pressing for social renewal, and then as a member of the Magyar Történelmi Bizottság (Hungarian Historical Committee), as a representative of spiritual defence against Nazism. As an unswerving fighter for national independence and resistance, he took over the editorial job of Magyar Nemzet following the death of Sándor Pethő (the founder of the Magyar Nemzet) in 1944 until the paper was banned by the German Gestapo. He survived the siege of the capital city in hiding.

In 1945 the Keresztény Demokrata Néppárt (Christian Democratic People's Party) called him to join its ranks. He proclaimed the election programme of the opposition as the General Secretary of Demokrata Néppárt (Democratic People's Party – DPP) in 1947 in the spirit of Sándor Giesswein, a scholarly canon of Győr, and the sign of ocumene. At the elections DNP received most of the legitimate votes. István Barankovics built the long-term programme of Hungarian Christian democracy on the human rights expressed in the principles of the law of nature, the social declarations of the churches and the Atlantic Charter, as well as the San Francisco resolutions. He emphasised that the state is absolutely bound by the respect for the person vis-à-vis the individual; the individual is bound vis-à-vis the state by the unconditional command to serve public good. Concerning the vocation of the DPP, he believed that it cannot be a denominational or class party but a party of a universal purpose and programme which strives for serving humans when in addition to fully satisfying their material needs, it also requires the most efficient way of meeting their transcendental

needs. On behalf of the DPP he made the promise concerning the socio-economic demands to be fulfilled that he would always be at the vanguard of the social programmes outlined briefly any time it comes to effectively vouching, protecting or augmenting the welfare, social rank and political freedom of the working strata, the workers, peasants and intellectuals. István Barankovics pressed for institutionalising political education, setting up a political academy to ensure a more profound and higher standard culture in public life.

In his speeches in the National Assembly, and leading articles he continued to update and clarify the agenda of Néppárt and represented it with the leading orators of the party without compromises. Public opinion was informed about the politics of the party in its weekly Hazánk.

István Barankovics gave his most eloquent speech in his parliamentary function but perhaps also his public career against the bill on the nationalisation of church schools submitted on 16 June 1948. The last speech of reckoning with communist dictatorship in Parliament by the General Secretary of Demokrata Néppárt remains another declaration of historical significance on 14 December 1948 in which he pointed out the contradictions between the initial election promises of the government and the reality with respect to all questions.

After fierce parliamentary struggles, at the pressure of a dictatorship threatening with violence he was forced into emigration in 1949. After a short stay in Europe he settled in New York. He was member on the Hungarian National Commission and the Executive of the Hungarian Committee after 1956. From 1958 on he was involved in public life as Chairman of the Union of Central-European Refugee Christian Democratic Parties until his death in 1974.

Zoltán Kovács K., who recently passed away, one of the eminent figures of Hungarian Christian Democracy is to be credited for exploring, maintaining, caring and interpreting in today's context his intellectual heritage and establishing the Barankovics Foundation.