



International Council on Social Welfare – European Region and Vilnius University

European Region conference

“Equal Opportunities for Individuals,
Groups and Nations”

14-16 June, Vilnius University, Lithuania

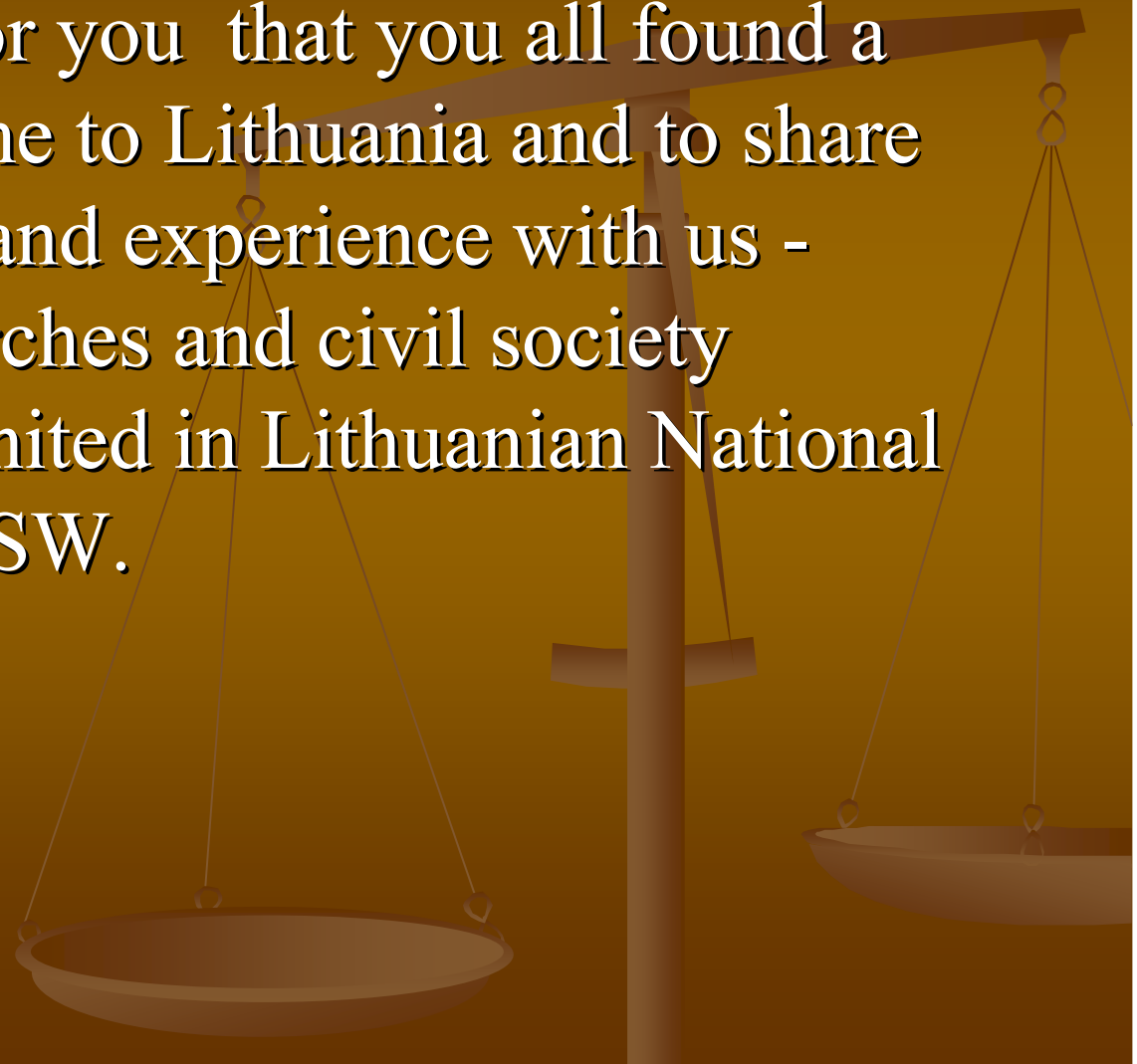
CLOSING SESSION

Angele Cepenaite.

President of Lithuanian National Committee
of ICSW

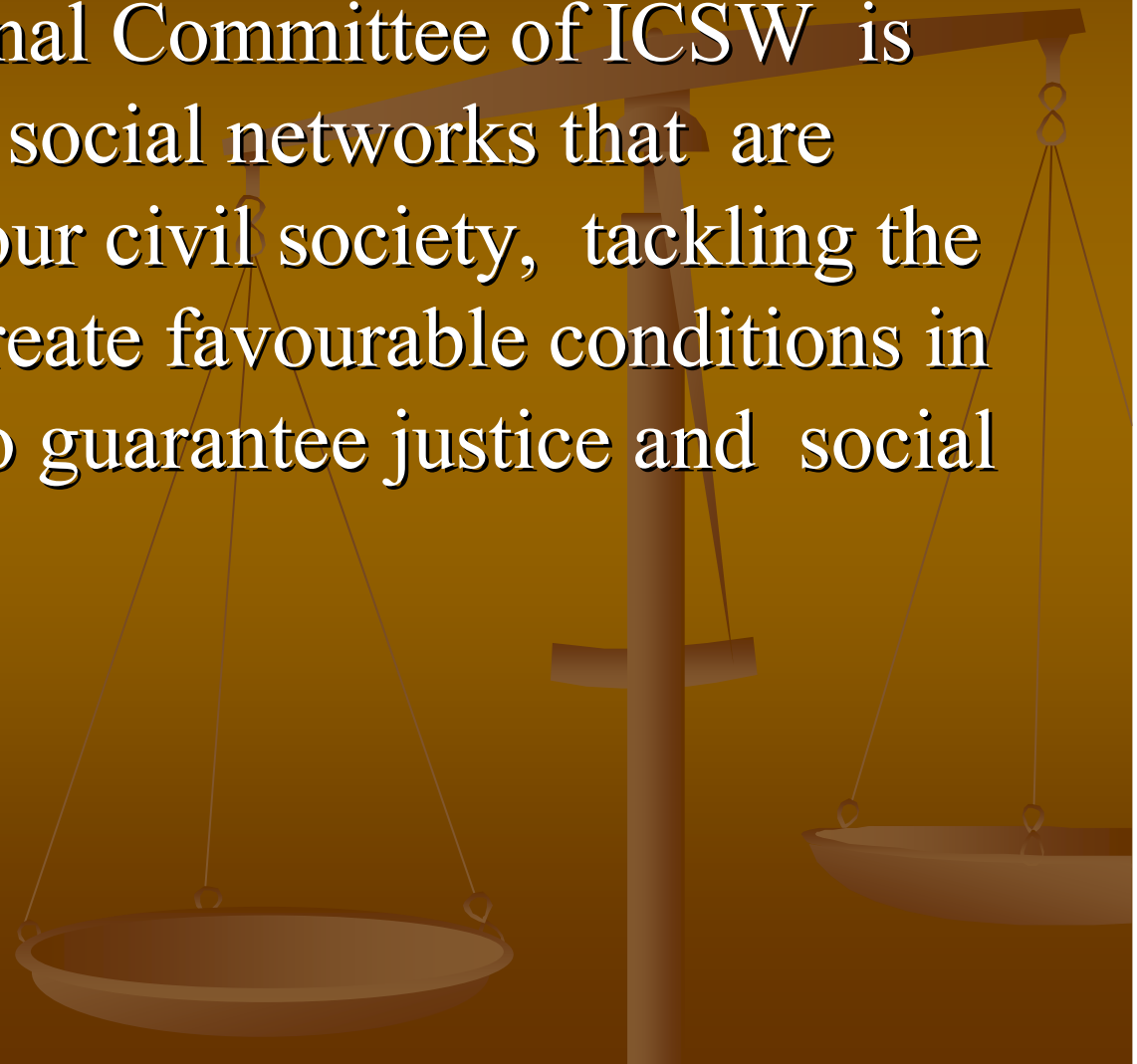
Thanks a lot

- A lot of thanks for you that you all found a possibility to come to Lithuania and to share your knowledge and experience with us - Lithuanian researches and civil society representatives united in Lithuanian National Committee of ICSW.



Lithuanian National Committee of ICSW

- Lithuanian National Committee of ICSW is uniting about 20 social networks that are active actors of our civil society, tackling the social issues to create favourable conditions in our community to guarantee justice and social welfare.

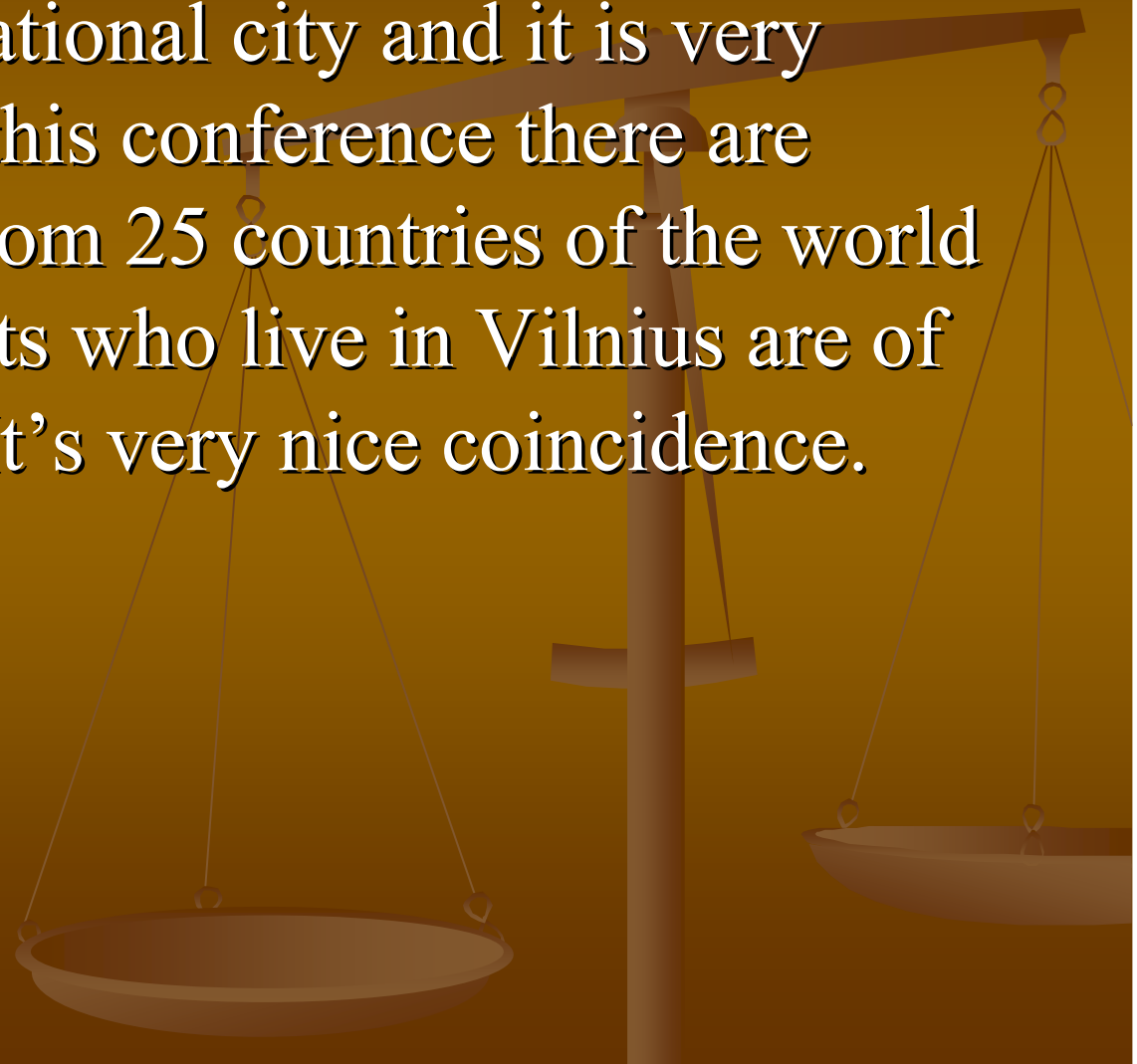


History of Vilnius Conference

- During the conference in Switzerland, Lucerne in 2005 Lithuanian National Committee proposed to organize a conference of ICSW, Europe in 2007 in Vilnius. We are very thankful for Executive Committee, Committee of Representatives, the President of Global ICSW Solveig Askjem, President of Europe Hans van Ewijk, General Secretary Thea Meinema for supporting of this challenging decision upon the conference.

About Vilnius

- Vilnius is multinational city and it is very symbolic that in this conference there are representatives from 25 countries of the world and the inhabitants who live in Vilnius are of 25 nationalities. It's very nice coincidence.



Additional Objectives of the Conference

- In this conference besides our common aim to discuss the issues of Equal Opportunities that are of great importance to all European community we wanted to show you how we live and what are our achievements after restoration of Lithuanian Independence in 1990, our achievements after becoming full members of EU in 2004

“Economist”, 2003 about Lithuania

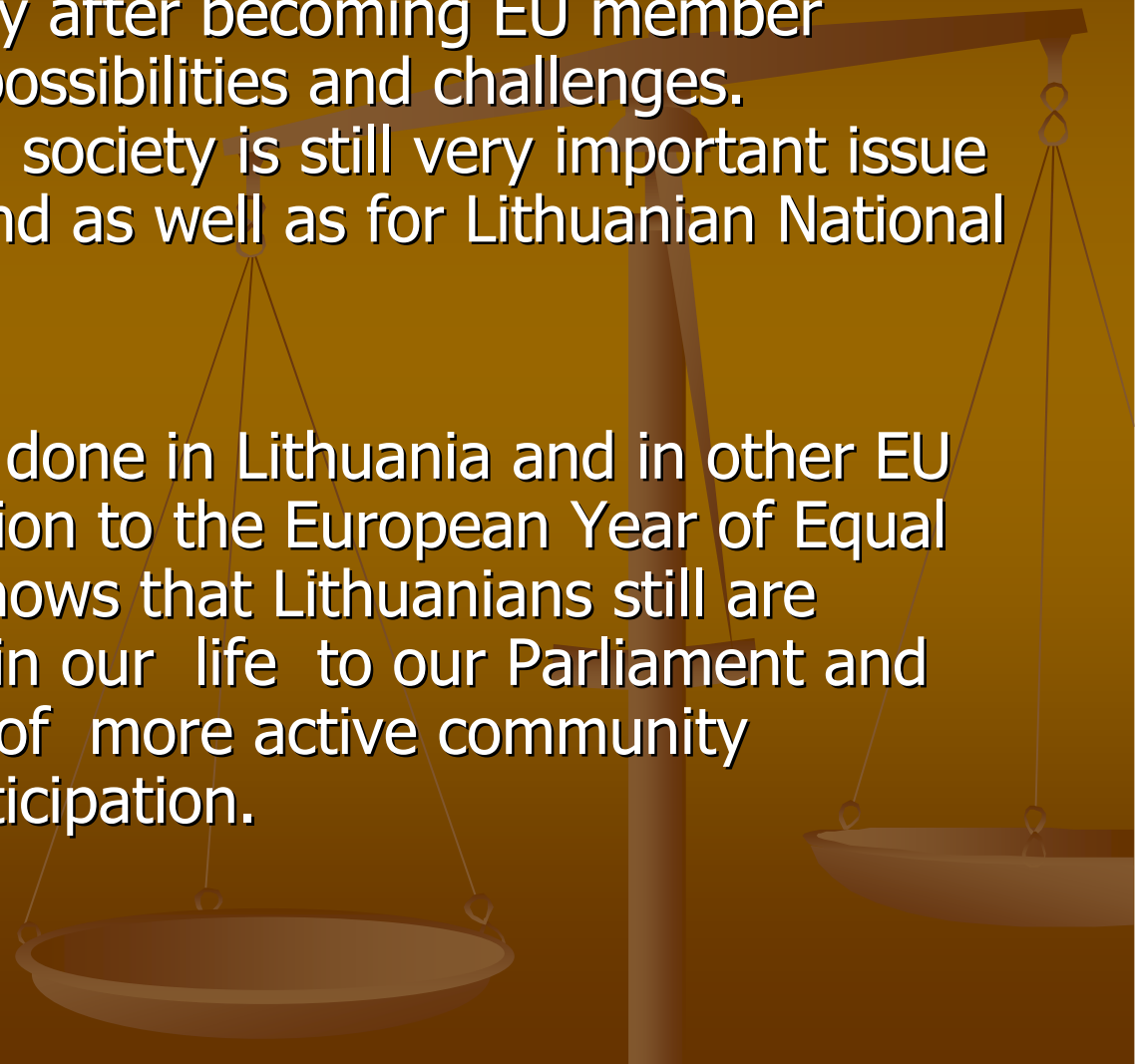
- In July 2003 “The Economist” named Lithuania -“Baltic tiger” and explained: “Name the country with the highest growth rate in Europe last year, booming exports, zero inflation, a rock-steady currency, shrinking unemployment and a budget surplus. Stumped by this happy conundrum? Then look to Lithuania, the southernmost of the three small Baltic states, and for most of the 1990s the quietest and sleepest of them”. I think that “Economist” had in mind that in soviet period, as many other soviet countries we were “sleeping tigers”.

Equal opportunities in the country

- I hope that during your visit in our country you noticed positive changes in our community life. But still our civil society is not strong very much and community sometimes has too much work to follow how the decisions made by our politicians inspired by strong, aggressive capital are guaranting equal opportunities for all.
- In this conference we approached to an understanding of what prof. Jozef Weidenholzer said that "Social inequality is costly, it destroy chances." The results of this conference gave us a lot of inspiration for the future work.

Work Needed in Community

- Lithuanian community after becoming EU member gained a lot of new possibilities and challenges. Strengthening of civil society is still very important issue for our community and as well as for Lithuanian National Committee of ICSW.
- A research that was done in Lithuania and in other EU countries in connection to the European Year of Equal Opportunity for All shows that Lithuanians still are providing a big role in our life to our Parliament and Government instead of more active community involvement and participation.



New Inspiration



- Results of this conference gave all us a new inspiration for passionate work in social welfare sector fighting for social development and justice.
- Thanks a lot to ICSW National Committee member Vilnius university, it's Rector Benediktas Juodka who agreed to have this conference and by this showed that Vilnius university is still carrying a flag of democracy and justice traditions in nowadays international community events.
- And especiall thanks to the head of Social Work department Romas Lazutka for big job that was done by him and his staff in organizing a conference.
- Thanks a lot to the Executive Committee of ICSW, the Global President of ICSW Solveig Askjem, ICSW Europe president Hans van Ewijk, the General secretary of ICSW Europe Thea Meinema for the support and consultancy.

Invitation

- Thank you one more time for your coming. We invite you to visit us in 2009 when Vilnius will be Culture capital of Europe and we shall celebrate 1000 year of Lithuania mentioning in historical documents.
- Enjoy your stay in Vilnius and it's culture life. Till new meetings in ICSW events!