

Simone Emmert:

Report

57th International Study Congress of the AWR “Migration, asylum and minorities. European and national outlooks in a ‘new’ Europe”

The Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius, Lithuania, hosted the 57th International Study Congress of the AWR. Vilnius, which was established 1323 by the Grand Duke Gediminas, is nominated as a European Capital of Culture 2009. It has one of the biggest old towns in Europe combining a wide variety of all European architectural styles and making the town attractive and cosy. This unique old town was 1994 included into the UNESCO list of world heritage.

The Mykolas Romeris University is the third biggest university in Lithuania where currently over 17.000 students are enrolled in more than 50 study programmes leading to the Bachelor, Master or Doctoral Degree. The university is member of major relevant international organizations (e.g. IAU, EUA, UNECC) and cooperates with over 200 international institutions including universities, public and management institutions. With the engagement of Prof. Dr. Rainer Wiestner, president of the AWR, another cooperation had been successfully made between the Mykolas Romeris University, the AWR and the University of Applied Sciences, Wuerzburg, Germany. The first highlight of this new cooperation was the realization of the 57th International Study Congress of the AWR. Further highlights will be annual summer schools which will start next summer.

This year's congress, which took place from 20th – 24th September, was held on the subject “Migration, asylum and minorities. European and national outlooks in a ‘new’ Europe”.

The congress was unofficially opened with the working sessions of the board of directors, chairmanship and scientific council as well as the advisory board of the editorial office on Thursday, 20 September.

The 57th International Study Congress of the AWR was inaugurated on Friday, 21 September by its president, Prof. Dr. Rainer Wiestner, whose opening session was followed by the welcoming address of the Rector of the Mykolas Romeris University, Prof. Alvydas Pumputis, the German Ambassador in Vilnius, Volker Heinsberg, and Hans ten Feld, the UNHCR-Representative for the Baltic States and the Representative of the local authorities.

After a short introduction into the subject of the congress Prof. Dr. Michael Wollenschläger, President of the scientific council and the German AWR, University of Wuerzburg, Germany gave a lecture about “Standardization of European Policy for Asylum and Immigration”.

After a short coffee break the first working session started under the topic “International and European Developments”. Contributions followed from Dr. Stefan Berglund, former representative of UNHCR Germany, Berlin on “Developments in International Asylum Law from the point of view of the Nordic Countries”, Hans ten Feld, UNHCR Regional Representative for the Baltic States, Stockholm, Sweden on “EU-Harmonization efforts and planning in the field of Asylum- and Refugee Law”, and Dr.

Ralf Roßkopf, lawyer and advocate, Schweinfurt, Germany on “European regulations for the protection of minorities”.

After the lunch break the second working session “National aspects” followed with presentations of Laurynas Biekša, advocate and representative of Lithuanian Red Cross and lecturer on Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius and Ass. Prof. Dr. Lyra Jakulevičienė, Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania on “Insights into transposition and implementation problems of the EU Asylum directives in Lithuania” and Avv. Eleonora Masci, Rome, Italy on “Migration and ‘new’ Minorities from the point of view of Italy”.

The following referees had been also part of the second working session: Dr. Reka Friedery, Institute of Legal Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Hungary on “Hungarian asylum policy in a new Europe”, Prof. Dr. Andrzej Sakson, President of the Polish AWR, Director of the Institute of Western Affairs, Poznań, Poland, on “Polish Asylum policy in a new Europe”, Ulrike Prauser, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Nürnberg, Germany, on “The transformation of the Qualification Directive in Germany” and finally Dr. Markus Babo, M.A., University of Luzerne, Switzerland, on “Swiss Migration and Asylum Law in a European Context viewed from a social ethical perspective”.

The congress continued with the presentation of the 5th Research Prize 2007 of the German Section of the AWR. The prize was awarded by Hans ten Feld, the UNHCR Regional Representative for the Baltic States in place of Dr. Gottfried Köfner, Director of the Regional Office for Germany, Austria and Hungary of the UNHCR, Berlin, to Simone Emmert, LL.M.Eur., University of Wuerzburg, Germany for her LL.M.Eur.-thesis on “Migration and Terrorism – Influence of the Anti-Terrorism-Legislation on the Immigration Law from the European and German Perspective”.

Afterwards all the participants had been invited to the reception by the Ambassador of the German Federal Republic in Lithuania, Volker Heinsberg. Everyone enjoyed the delicious banquet and could discuss further aspects of the congress topic with the Ambassador and the referees in a comfortable atmosphere.

On Saturday, 22 September, the auditory got informed about “European migration policy from the point of view of the USA” by Ass. Prof. Dr. Barbara Franz PhD, Rider University, Lawrenceville, New Jersey, USA, about “Migration policy in a new Europe from the point of view of Slovenia” by Dr. Jure Gombač, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts/Institute for Slovenian Emigration Studies SRC SASA, Ljubljana, Slovenia, about “European Perspectives on the Labour Migration from New Member States” by Prof. Charles Woolfson, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom, and about “The situation of the Labour Market in the Baltic States” by Bruno Kaspar, Director of the Swiss Baltic Chamber of Commerce in Lithuania, Vilnius.

After a refreshing break further papers on “National Aspects and Prospects” were presented by Vladimiras Siniovas, Lecturer at Mykolas Romeris University, Vilnius, Lithuania about “Challenges of integration of migrants, refugees and minorities: the need for a foreigners’ integration system in Lithuania”, by Prof. Dr. Albrecht Weber, University of Osnabrueck, Germany about “Reuniting families of refugees in Europe”, by MMag Iris Gachowetz, University of Vienna, Austria about “Steps against Human Trafficking in the European Union considering the EU-Enlargement” and finally Dr. Rita Wiesinger, President of SOS Self-help Project for Streetchildren in India, Vienna,

Austria about “Safety and Security of Migrant children in view of the UN Convention on the right of the Child”.

Each of the working sessions was followed by vivid discussions. Finally the congress officially ended after the General Assembly.

During the following two days most of the participants availed themselves of the opportunity of taking part in a short study trip through Lithuania, competent conducted by Mr Bruno Kaspar. The first stop was Kaunas which is the second largest industrial, scientific and cultural centre of Lithuania and is also a university town.

One of Kaunas architectural attractions is the Town Hall, an impressive white building with a tower 53 meters high, built in the 16th century in the Gothic style with baroque elements, which is also known as the White Swan.

Afterwards the coach headed to Klaipeda, Lithuania's port city on the Baltic Sea. It is the third largest town in the country and is located on the very southern seashore of the Baltic Sea, at a strait connecting the Kursiu Marios lagoon with the sea. Here the group joined a hired boat to Neringa. On board typical Lithuanian smoked fish was served for lunch. Neringa itself is a narrow spit of land running from Klaipeda to nearly as far as Kaliningrad (former Koenigsberg) formerly known as Eastern Prussia. Today Neringa is one of the most popular and prestigious recreation areas in Lithuania, its unique nature with sand dunes, pine forests and golden beaches attracts thousands of tourists every year. Here, the AWR members saw a gorgeous sunset at a golden beach and were impressed by the beautiful landscape of Lithuania. The following day the summerhouse of Thomas Mann in Nida was visited where he spent the summer vacations with his family during 1929-1932. After a short lunch break the group went back to Vilnius being well informed about the latest news concerning migration and asylum law but also about the highlights of one of the new member states of the EU.

Lithuania, having the geographical centre of Europe according to the French National geographic Institute, and esp. the Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius were an ideal place for the 57th International Study Congress of the AWR.