

Welcome Address

by Berthold Unfried, ITH President, 22 April 2014, Auditorium Maximum, University of Vienna

The *International Conference of Labour and Social History* (ITH) is an international network of associations, research institutes and historians of labour and social movements. Why would you celebrate the 50th birthday of such an organization? As historians, we are dealing with the past. But as an organization, as a network, we are of course operating in the present and we have our faces turned to the future. We should not mistake the object of our studies for our programme as organizers in the present.

Against this background, we have planned the programme of this evening. As an introduction, Susan Zimmermann, will be speaking on the history of our organization. As the keynote of the evening, Marcel van der Linden will then be looking into perspectives for its future.

A word on the present orientation: The ITH has adopted the *Global Labour History* approach. It sees its endeavour as part of the burgeoning field of *Global History*. This is an ambitious, challenging approach. By its very broad concept of labour – including free and unfree, subsistence and household labour, industrial and agrarian settings – the approach certainly includes the majority of labouring people in the world. It is thus leading out of the defensive position of the old „new“ labour history, which has lost much of its previous attraction in the academe as well as in public. The concept of *Global Labour History* is taking the offensive, integrating formerly separate fields of research such as Development Studies, Area Studies, studies of the economy of the household, Gender Studies and the history of social movements. In this perspective *Global Labour History* is a fascinating project aiming at a multitude, implicitly probably the majority of fields of research in *Global History*. This research is ahead of us. The ITH is participating in the effort of putting the concept into practice by communicating research results particularly via its international conferences – places of exchange between emerging and established researchers.

This celebration is a cooperation with our partners: the Department of Social and Economic History of this university, the “Wiener Vorlesungen” of the City of Vienna and the Vienna Convention Bureau. Our thanks also go to the ESSHC for hosting this event.