

The European Federation of Older Persons – EURAG

European conference in Budapest on 17 September 2021

The Declaration of Budapest “From Representative Democracy to Participatory Democracy” under the motto “*Leave no one behind*”

Older persons are not a burden to society. They are creators of the quality of the living conditions we can enjoy, they have enormous life experience, and they dream about radical solutions to the current challenges of our present society. They are not to be taken as simple voting folks to be used for particular interests.

The political systems and the administrations of society do not only have to carefully listen to older citizens, but they must make sure that older people can fully participate in the assessment of the needs of the population, the reflection of possible solutions, the decision-making, the strategic concepts to be applied and, finally, the implementation of the agreed measures and their monitoring. People-centred public policies must be an integral part of democracy that respects human dignity, enhances human development, and provides adequate social goods for each citizen, to leave no one behind.

Participation of citizens must find organized forms to become the expression of common ideas, approaches, contributions, and demands – and thus be meaningful, accepted, and appreciated. This requires not only the public recognition of organized civil society but calls for political, legal, and financial support and encouragement.

These considerations lead to the firm conviction that investing in civil society participation is one of the most important, decisive, and productive investments to be made by the political system and the administrative structures of a democratic society.

Apart from the various political and strategic considerations, one condition for sustained and effective participation of civil society in political decision-making processes is of paramount importance: The fundamental right of direct participation, the goals and the elements, the tools used and the required performance processes, must be clearly enshrined in the legal system of society. Otherwise, it will be only based on promises and, eventually, lip service.

A particular aspect of citizens’ participation in political decision-making processes is that it must be focused on the common good of society – and leave no one behind. This means that citizens must be involved through all stages of their lifespan – as they age. Such approach requires enhanced communication and cooperation between the generations to negotiate, develop, and agree upon common positions and solutions.

Politicians must be aware and publicly state that direct involvement of the citizens in political decision-making processes through participatory democracy is one of the foundations and objectives of modern democracy.

This Declaration has been unanimously adopted by the participants of the European conference of EURAG entitled “From Representative Democracy to Participatory Democracy” in Budapest on 17 September 2021.

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