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*The European Federation of  
Older Persons*

*Fédération Européenne des  
Personnes Agées*

*Bund der älteren Generation  
Europas*

*Federazione Europea  
delle Persone Anziane*

**Conference of EURAG**  
**In cooperation and with the support of HISTADRUT**  
**on the topic of**  
**“Challenges and effects of financial, economic and cultural changes on the  
living conditions of senior citizens”**

**Tel Aviv, 05 September 2023**

**Contribution by Dirk Jarré,  
President of the European Federation of Older Persons, EURAG**

Shalom to all of you!

Honourable Minister, representing the Government of Israel,  
Chair of the Histadrut, the generous host of this conference,  
Representatives of important Israeli civil society organisations,  
Dear friends and colleagues of EURAG, especially the Israeli ones.

First, I would like to start with the expression of admiration and warm thanks to the President of Israel, Isaac Herzog, that he has taken so much interest in EURAG and this conference, and has honored us with a special opening contribution.

And then, many, many thanks to Histadrut and all the persons, who have so kindly and efficiently prepared our stay in Israel, have offered their admirable and generous hospitality to EURAG and its participating members and have, after all, made today's conference possible. My warm thanks and great appreciation go, in particular, to the chairperson of Histadrut, Arnon Bar David, and all his colleagues, to Shmulik Mizrachi, Chairman of the Association of Israeli Senior Citizens-Histadrut, and his wonderful team, to my long-standing dear friend



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Razi Zwang and, last but not least, to the great Histadrut Choir “Shir Mitchadesh” with the wonderful Jasmin Wirth who also acts so admirably as conferencier.

It is, indeed, a great privilege and honour for me – as president of the European Federation of Older Persons, EURAG – to now share some very brief personal reflections on the topic of this important conference, which addresses the relationship – and even often tensions - between human beings and the socio-economic system they live in, and which determines largely their living conditions and self-understanding.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As members of our society, we necessarily play several different important roles we might wish to have a closer look at:

First, we are all “homo economicus”, economic subjects, and perform various important functions:

- We act as producers of goods and services in our economic system.
- We also act as consumers of the goods and services offered.
- But we also are creators of immaterial goods, like
  - creative ideas,
  - cultural performances,
  - scientific advancement,
  - and so on,

and last, but not least, we maintain societal values and attitudes, like:

- social cohesion,
- solidarity among ourselves,
- compassion with those in need,
- mutual respect,
- etc.

Thus, we all are also “homo socialis”.

What must be of paramount interest for us all the time is to analyse carefully what are the structural conditions and the distribution of decision-making power under which we can, and are obliged, to function as “homo economicus” and as “homo socialis”.

This leads us to another, very important, role of the human being in society: this is our role as “homo politicus”. The crucial question really is: Where, when and how much do we have – as

individuals and as societal groups - the right and the opportunity to influence or take part in important decision-making processes in the society we are living in?

Again, we must look at this issue from various perspectives:

- from our role as producers of goods and services,
- from our role as consumers of goods and services,
- and from our role as maintainers of values and creators of ideas in society.

The possibilities and limitations of our influence depend largely on where we are positioned in our society in terms of socio-economic class, gender and also age.

Let's have a closer look at these issues.

- Consumers we are all at any time of our lives – from birth to death – as we constantly need goods and services to be able to survive.
- Consumers – in terms of current economic theory – we are basically from after leaving formal education until the statutory retirement age.
- Potential political subjects – meaning deciders in a more or less visible form – we are from when we get our civil rights with majority until our death.

But can we presently really and effectively decide – as individuals and societal groups - on the economic and social conditions we live in? Unfortunately, we must state that this is hardly reality.

To my understanding, there is pressing need to seriously reflect in our so-called democratic societies how we can truly empower all citizens – according to their personal needs, will and capacities – to shape responsibly and according to our common values and goals the system determining our living conditions – for us today and for the future ..... including for our still unborn children and grandchildren. When doing so, we should not only use the present capacity of people but make every effort to further develop their abilities, creativity and willingness to contribute to the quality of society.

It is ample time to apply a new view on the principle of continuous participatory democracy open to all living in our society, irrespectively of our background, but throughout our lives “as we age”, from youth to the end of life. And within this approach, we must create strong and solid cooperation structures over all age brackets to achieve a new kind of solidarity and cohesion in society.

“Co-creation” should be the systematic approach, involving all members of society in the production processes, from developing the starting ideas for goods and services people need for living better, through the ways and means of the production conditions right to the way of how we want to consume and, finally the monitoring and evaluation of our individual and collective behaviour in the way we use what our precious environment – the nature we live in - offers to us so graciously:

- food items, water and air,
- natural resources and energy,
- co-existence with other species,
- and so on.

Such an approach will empower us all to carefully and responsibly shape the world we are living in and which we want to pass on the coming generations.

You all are participating in this conference have certainly many excellent ideas on these lines of thinking which you can share and discuss during the conference – for our mutual enrichment.

Many thanks for having so patiently listened to me.

Dirk Jarré, President of EURAG

Bad Ischl, August 2023