



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION
OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCILS
AND SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS (AICESIS)

C. E. S
România

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
OF ROMANIA
(CES)

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ADDRESS GIVEN BY MR. IACOB BACIU, PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OF ROMANIA, TO THE AICESIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT HIS INAUGURATION AS PRESIDENT OF THE AICESIS FOR THE 2017–2019 TERM OF OFFICE

DEAR President, Dear Secretary-General, Dear colleagues,



Address given by Mr. Iacob Baciu, President of the CES

I am honored to be here, in Santo Domingo, to take over, as President of the Economic and Social Council of Romania, the important position of President of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions, during the 2017–2019 mandate.

On behalf of the Economic and Social Council of Romania and on my own behalf, I would like to express our gratitude and deep appreciation to Mr. Agripino Núñez Collado, President of AICESIS, for his outstanding leadership of our Association during his 2015–2017 mandate.

I would like, as well, to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Patrick Venturini, Secretary-General of AICESIS until June 30, 2017. We must highlight the remarkable activity carried out by Mr. Venturini as Secretary-General, and I would like to assure him of our praise, congratulations and appreciation for his valuable contribution to the growth of AICESIS.

The Economic and Social Council of Romania is a founding member of AICESIS and has served its third term as member of the AICESIS Board of Directors.

The Economic and Social Council of Romania has always considered the work of AICESIS as highly important, and has been wholeheartedly involved in all the actions initiated by AICESIS.

The Romanian ESC participated in all the meetings of the AICESIS General Assembly and Board,

as well as in numerous international meetings organized by the Association.

Our Council organized, in cooperation with AICESIS, two General Assembly meetings, in 2002 and in 2014.

Also, the Economic and Social Council of Romania organized in June 2016 an AICESIS international conference on “Migration in Europe: the role of ESC-SIs in addressing challenges, responsibilities and solutions”. The conference was attended by members of Economic and Social Councils from 16 countries of Africa, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.

I must note that this year it will be 20 years since the Economic and Social Council of Romania first appeared and began its work.

The Economic and Social Council of Romania is organized and operates under Article 141 of the Romanian Constitution and in accordance with the provisions of Law 248/2013, as subsequently amended and supplemented.

The Economic and Social Council of Romania is a consultative body of the Parliament and of the Government of Romania in the fields of competence established by its Law, and an autonomous tripartite public institution of national interest, set up with the aim of achieving tripartite dialogue at national level between employers’ organizations, trade unions’ organizations and representatives of non-governmental associations and foundations of civil society.

The consultation of the Economic and Social Council on draft acts initiated by the Government and on legislative proposals of deputies or senators is mandatory. The result of this consultation takes the form of opinions on draft legislation.

The fields of competence of the Economic and Social Council are:

- economic policies;
- financial and fiscal policies;
- labor relations, social protection, wage policies and the promotion of equal opportunities and equal treatment;
- agriculture, rural development, environment protection and sustainable development;
- consumer protection and fair competition;

- cooperatives, liberal professions and independent activities;
- civil rights and freedoms;
- public health policies;
- education, youth, research, culture and sports policies.



All the fields of competence are coordinated by standing advisory committees, each composed of nine members, three per each group that is a constitutive party of the ESC.

The ESC Plenary is composed of 45 members, including the President and Vice-Presidents.

The nomination of the members of the ESC Plenary is made as follows:

- 15 members nominated by the employers' confederations representative at national level, representing the employers' Party;
- 15 members nominated by the trade union confederations representative at national level, representing the trade unions' Party;
- 15 members representing associative forms of civil society, appointed by the Prime Minister, upon a proposal by the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Protection and Elderly.

The President of the Economic and Social Council is elected on a rotating basis from among the constituent parties of the ESC. Each constituent party of the ESC holds one vice-president position.

The Economic and Social Council is served by a Technical Secretariat, which represents the specialized technical and administrative apparatus. The Technical Secretariat is headed by a Secretary-General appointed by the ESC Plenary.

The Economic and Social Council of Romania proposes for approval by the Minister for Justice the persons who shall hold the positions of legal assistants in the Courts which settle labor disputes, following the nomination by the employers' and trade unions' groups that are part of the ESC.

Practically, the scope of the Romanian Economic and Social Council extends to the areas of activity of the three branches of state power: the legislative power (the Parliament), the executive power (the Government) and the judicial power.

The Economic and Social Council of Romania nominates the representatives of Romania, on the

part of trade unions, employers and civil society, for the European Economic and Social Committee.

My intention during my term of office is to take action for developing social dialogue as a main tool of information, consultation and negotiation between the social partners and the Government, with a view to drafting and promoting a fair and decent labor legislation capable of offering a predictable development for professional careers, social protection, job creation and job maintenance, poverty and social inequality eradication, social inclusion, prosperity.

I will encourage the members of our Association to be more actively involved in our fight for sustainable democracy, for the development of participative democracy, for poverty eradication and for the initiative and promotion of prosperity and economic development of the population, in accordance with the principles of United Nations and with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As President of AICESIS, I will promote the strengthening of the collaboration with the European Economic and Social Committee, with the aim of correlating the activities of the two organizations in order to better achieve their goals, to encourage the reciprocal exchange of information on all subjects of common interest, to organize joint activities.

I will militate for the creation of Economic and Social Councils in countries which do not yet possess them. Particular attention will be devoted to the countries of North America, South America and Australia.

AICESIS needs to develop strategies to attract countries of the above-mentioned continents in the process of creating and developing Economic and Social Councils and of cooperation with AICESIS.

AICESIS needs to become an active voice, heard by global political and economic decision-makers. It needs to develop an active system for communicating and providing information to member organizations and to the population. It needs to militate with force and determination for solidarity, by becoming actively involved in the analysis and drafting of the strategies for solving the problems facing mankind: poverty, discrimination of any kind, wars, social inequalities, lack of employment, wage inequalities, lack of social protection, social exclusion and terrorism.

Solidarity between states, solidarity within our Association, social solidarity represent the primary principle for which I will fight and which I will promote during my term of office.

Without solidarity, our work will be limited to statements and good intentions, expressed but never put into practice.

I urge you to make a solidarity pact, to show that we care that there is so much poverty in the world, that many, too many people live on or below the poverty line, that hundreds of thousands of people and children starve to death, that entire populations are deprived of medical assistance, that millions of people are illiterate, being denied the right to education, that

there are millions of refugees who have fled their countries, in search of haven from wars and discrimination.

I appeal to you to turn together our work into more action and less talk, I ask you that each of us would do something in his/her own country so that social dialogue might become the tool for reducing inequalities, for imposing fair working relationships, for guaranteeing peoples prosperity and safety. Let us advocate together, globally, within the international institutions, for a safe and prosperous future for all the countries of the world.

We are in a time when history seems to be at a challenging crossroads. The industrial and technological revolution seems to have exhausted its resources and is being replaced by another one, less anticipative, less well known.

The digital revolution becomes more and more actual and announces major economic and social changes.

Old jobs are threatened to disappear, new jobs will be performed by machines rather than people, working relations will be affected.

Many people talk of the advantages the digital era will bring, and even more are worried that these changes will find us unprepared.

The great men of the world raise questions and expect answers from the experts.



At the last congress of the European Trade Union Confederation, Martin Schultz, then President of the European Parliament, expressed his concern about the effects of the digital revolution and said: "Soon, our fridges will be filled up automatically, our cars will run without human drivers, and our health will be monitored by a computer. The digitalization of the world brings forth unexpected opportunities, greater transparency and participation, greater access to knowledge and information, better medical care and better services. We need to exploit these innovations, if we want them to improve people's lives. However, digitalization does not come without risks and threats. The monopolistic targets of major global groups and the mass supervision of secret services may generate a fundamental debate in Europe. But we do not talk enough about the effects of digitalization in the world of work. This forces us, for the start, to raise some critical questions: Do we

truly have more freedom when we have access to our Smartphones at any moment, and, consequently, are we more capable of working differently, without time limitation? How can we exercise our right to self-determination in relation to information, during a time of commercial exploitation of data? How can we protect our copyrights and how can all these guarantee us a fair pay for the work we perform?"



We are now in a delicate time, to say the least. This is why I propose as a working theme, during my term of office as AICESIS President, "The impact of the digital revolution on the future of mankind", which I would like to bring to your attention and ask you to reflect and debate upon it.

It is a theme that will ask for clarification concerning major issues that are or will certainly be raised more and more urgently.

First, we cannot imagine the future without considering the problems facing youth. In fact, youth is made up of active citizens who will live and work in our future.

Young people are especially interested in digital development on the labor market, being strongly dependent on the use of information technologies.

Today, there are over five million unemployed young people in Europe. Five million destinies at the beginning of their professional careers do not find their place on the labor market. This is an unacceptable situation, which calls for urgent solutions.

After a brief analysis, I can highlight a few of the causes of this tragic situation affecting young people, who are future citizens:

- Many young people hold one or more university degrees or at least a technical qualification. Nevertheless, those who are active on the labor market work in occupations other than those they have been qualified for. We ask ourselves which might be the cause of this phenomenon. Might the lack of correlation between their initial qualifications and the labor market demands be one such cause?
- Although many young people are highly qualified, they do not find a job. We ask ourselves, have the qualifications obtained in universities not been updated in accordance with the labor market demands?
- Has anyone completed a serious study on young people's aspirations, on the problems they face at their work place, on the careers they wish to pursue?
- How can an employer compensate for lack of ex-

perience on the part of young people: by capitalizing on their enthusiasm, on their imagination, on their interest for novelty?

I strongly believe that young people are the key to success for a future without wars, a tolerant and prosperous future, which might offer all countries the possibility to define their identity and to develop their potential in harmony with the other countries.

What we need to do is simple. We only need to remember that these young people exist, that they have aspirations and fears, that they often face situations where they should not be left alone, that they need protection, education, our concern and care.

They seem to be most adapted to the new digital era, but they are also most vulnerable to the negative effects it could produce.



Second, we must raise the question: how safe will our life be in the digital era?

Of course, the daily use of information technology can have many advantages:

- rapid communication and information;
- reduction of routine activities;
- accurate product design and implementation;
- supervision of dangerous activities;
- accurate medical diagnosis;
- transport safety;
- non-invasive surgical procedures;
- ocean and space exploration etc.

It can also have many vulnerabilities concerning:

- the right to private life;
- manipulation of information;
- communication safety;
- protection of goods;
- safety of interbank or private financial transactions;
- data protection safety.

The latest events surrounding the election of the president of the United States and the possibility, suggested by some experts, that these might have been manipulated through a misinformation virtual campaign can serve as an example of negative side effects that can arise due to lack of legislation concerning the use of virtual data and information.

This is why we need to raise the attention of the national and international authorities to the need to draft clear rules regarding the access to and the

use of data, the information transfer and information control, clear regulation concerning the limits and conditions of supervision, clear regulation concerning the level and extent of the use of digital information in public and private life, in economy, administration or in the army and security.

Third, the evaluation of the impact of generalized digitalization is mandatory.

Traditional trades might disappear and be replaced with other trades, automated and performed by machines.

In this context, unemployment will rise at high levels and workers will have only one alternative: professional requalification, which is costly and more difficult for persons over 50.

Labor relations will undergo important transformations, as the use of information technologies and the substitution of people with machines will no longer require salaries and labor contracts.

The major groups controlling global economy will have new and more efficient levers of power in the process of globalization and of resource access, due to the protection of information and data access and to advanced technologies that make the security of data maintenance by national authorities vulnerable.

The gap between poor and rich countries will widen, the access to new technologies being limited and conditioned by those who possess them.

All these scenarios must be avoided.

We all need to sit down at the negotiating table: political decision-makers, trade unions, NGOs, employers, experts in all fields, scientists, and to think of how to make the impact of the digital revolution upon the future of mankind advantageous for people, how to make it safe, secure, controllable, adjustable, easy to correct and oriented towards human values: solidarity, peace, tolerance, civic spirit.

The digital era has begun. It is only up to us to understand it, to anticipate its effects and to exploit them.

At the end of my speech, I would like to thank once again Mr. Agripino Núñez Collado for his remarkable and efficient work as President of AICESIS.

I wish with all my heart that he would give me the privilege to stay close to me and to continue to watch over the activity of AICESIS.

Dear colleagues, representatives of Economic and Social Councils and of Similar Institutions, thank you for the confidence you have placed in our council at the AICESIS Board meeting in Luxembourg, on March 2, 2017, when it was decided that Romania should take over the AICESIS presidency for a two-year term.

During my term as President of AICESIS, I intend to continue the work of my predecessors and to bring my contribution to the development of AICESIS, to the promotion of the activity of our Association, to the implementation of AICESIS missions and to the strengthening of AICESIS at international level.

May the force of solidarity be with us and guide us. ■