

Speech by Javier Tejada

TOWARDS “A EUROPE FOR ALL AGES”. Social Innovation Strategies for Active and Healthy Ageing Policies at the European Union

European Parliament's Altiero Spinelli building, Room A5G-3

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start my speech by **thanking** the European Parliament and the research officer Guiseppe Borsalino from the European Commission for their kind invitation. **On behalf** of the project **SiforAGE** (Social Innovation for Active and Healthy Ageing) and the interdisciplinary group **GISME** (Interdisciplinary Reflection Group and Math Solutions for Entities), it is **a great pleasure** and a honour to be here today.

The event we are celebrating today – “Towards a Europe for all Ages” – compels us to provide answers on how Europe will face the **very important challenge of Ageing** in the following years.

Today we Europeans are in a crossroads. We are living in the middle of the so called “**Second Machine Age**”. The preceding age was marked by the invention of the **steam engine**. The

use of such an invention was followed by the sudden boom of the oil industry and the rise of **petroleum power**. In a matter of decades we are already entering a new age: We are bringing our economies into a **digital era**.

**What does the latest historical progress of energy have to do with ageing?** If we consider that the history of humanity did start 8000 years Before the Common Era, **the recent population growth on Earth may strike us**. Looking at the future, we may further conclude that both energy and ageing are two inseparable key words.

The worldwide human population did evolve from few tens of millions of people in 8000 Before the Common Era, to around 500 millions in the time of Roman Empire. That is, **for many thousands of years, humanity followed a very gradual and upward trajectory. Progress was also achingly slow, almost invisible**. Animals and farming, wars and Empires, philosophies and religions, all failed to exert much influence. But just over two hundred years ago, something sudden and profound came up and bent the curve of human history almost ninety degrees. And with it, it curved our demographic and social development.

**This sudden change in the worldwide human population in the late eighteenth century corresponds to the first Industrial Revolution** associated not only to the steam power, but to an unprecedented overall historical progress. For the first time, humanity overcome the limitation of human and animal muscle power and generated **massive amounts of useful energy at will.**

**The conclusion** of what has occurred since the rise of the steam power is that **our progress is driven primarily by technological innovations.** The ability to generate massive amounts of mechanical energy is the main explanation why now the worldwide human population is close to 7.000 millions of people. That is, in less than 300 years we have multiplied the number of people on earth by a factor of 12.

**Now comes the Second Machine Age.** Computers and other digital advances are allowing human beings to overcome previous limitations and to step into a whole new territory. **How exactly this transition will play out remains unknown,** but whether or not the new machine age bend the curve as dramatically as the steam engine is an extremely important question indeed.

**What we can be certain** of is that energy and worldwide human population are tied and this explains why **the search for new energy sources** as well as **how we are working a better tomorrow** are, in my opinion, the **two key problems modern societies** and by extension Europe are currently facing.

**In a nutshell, energy has allowed us to live longer.** According to Eurostat, **life expectancy at birth in Europe** has increased by about 10 years over the past 50 years. Furthermore, the predictions for the future of **other (less prosperous) parts of the world** also point at a dramatic increase of population. In turn, this will most likely be knocking on our doors in the following years. Our capacity to successfully tackle our future is therefore bound to our ability **to promote sustainable population growth.**

There is a very ancient human fantasy that envisions that in the future no one will have to toil an unpleasant task because all the basics for living, namely food, clothing, ageing care, even friendship (!) will be provided by **automated servants that will do our bidding.** Indeed, this fantasy is not that far from reality. Nowadays we can be confident that if an automaton able to perform human tasks does not already

exist, there is a good chance that at least someone is thinking on a version 0.1.

**Our generation** will likely have the good fortune to experience two of the most amazing events in history: **The creation of true machine intelligence and the connection of all humans via a common digital network.** These two events will be essential to allow us to walk down the road towards a **sustainable and welfare society “for all ages”.**

That is, we Europeans have **the duty to use this new knowledge and technologies** to work more intensively on active and healthy ageing with a common objective: To create a **Europe for All Ages. This is the great challenge of our digital era.** And this is **where life-course perspectives, ethical thinking and networking approaches such as the ones offered by SiforAGE** can contribute to make a difference.

Thank you and enjoy the conference!