



# Respect and Economic Democracy

**Fifth Annual Conference of the European SPES Forum  
Hosted by the University of Catania, Italy**

**April 17-18, 2009 in Catania, Italy**

## **The European SPES Forum**

The mission of the *European SPES Forum* is to open up spirituality as a vital source in social and economic life. The keyword of SPES is an acronym for 'SPirituality in Economics and Society', but it is also the Latin word for Hope, the virtue that sustains our belief in a better future. The European SPES Forum has a focus on experience-based spirituality that succeeds in making a connection between day-to-day activities and the inner, pluriform quest for meaning. (<http://www.spes-forum.be>)

## **Scientific Committee**

Pasquale Arena – University of Catania & European SPES Forum  
Luk Bouckaert – Catholic University of Leuven & European SPES Forum  
Gianfranco Rusconi – University of Bergamo & Italian Chapter EBEN  
Laszlo Zsolnai – Corvinus University of Budapest & European SPES Forum

## **The Topic of the Conference**

The conference is an attempt to conceptualize self respect and the respect for each other as a potential vehicle to reach economic democracy. Can it be achieved to observe the relationships among love, affection, interest and sensitivity harmoniously in an inner equilibrium and to replace the idea of maximization with the optimization one?

The conference has the purpose to explore a common sense of respect, which can improve the dialogue between people and to act as a guarantor of an ethically balanced resources allocation. At the same time, the conference directs the attention of academics and practitioners to the gap between stakeholders and individuals and the lack or inefficiency of democratic mechanism in business governance.

## **Issues to be Addressed**

What is the meaning of respect? The different aspects and contexts of respect. The balance between self-respect and respect for the others. Respect for nature and future generations.

Respect as a basic value driven by spirituality in the context of globalization. The bottom line of respect as the minimum standard needed in transnational relations.

Taking into account the stakeholder model, is it sufficient that the decision-making process fulfils the needs of individuals? Or do private and public governance need to

look for new frontiers to utilize the resources effectively and ethically? Is stakeholder democracy a viable option?

What is economic democracy? Could we find a connection among motivation, participation, inner equilibrium and democratic business? How can we achieve a broad consensus among diverse stakeholders in business?

How can the ethics of respect and economic democracy support new pathways in business, politics, and society?

### **Place and Date**

“Respect and Economic Democracy” Conference will be held at the venue of the Faculty of Economics, in Catania, Italy. The conference will start on *April 17, 2009* and will end on *April 18, 2009* (from Friday morning to Saturday evening).

### **Publication**

Selected papers presented in the conference will be published in a book edited for the “*Frontiers of Business Ethics*” series at Peter Lang Academic Publishers in Oxford.

### **Participation Fee of the SPES Annual Conference**

*150 Euros* for regular participants

*100 Euros* for SPES members not having institutional support

*50 Euros* for students and accompanying persons

### **Submissions**

Interested participants should send a *detailed abstract* of their planned presentation (about 500 words) accompanied by a *short biographical note* (100 words) electronically by *November 30, 2008* to:

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