

### **Minutes of the FERPA Steering Committee**

(7<sup>th</sup> floor room ITUH, 12 September 2019)

**Present:** Lajos Mayer, SZEZ, President of FERPA; Agostino Siciliano, UIL-UILP, General Secretary of FERPA; Angeles Briaies, UJP-UGT, Deputy General Secretary of FERPA; Tino Fumagalli, FNP-CISL, Treasurer; Dick De Graaf, FNV; Didier Hotte, UCR-FO; Domenico Pantaleo, SPI-CGIL; Werner Thum, ÖGB.

**Also present at the meeting:** Jessica Montiel, Project Coordinator; Henri Lourdelle, Special Advisor.

**Apologies for absence:** Eliane De Dobbeleer, CSC-ACV; Mireille Paume, UCR-CGT, President of the Women's Committee; Hubert Schwind, UCR-CGT; Metka Roksandic, SUS.

The **President of FERPA, Lajos Mayer** opened the meeting by welcoming the participants and interpreters. He informed the participants of the recent death of our colleague François Thierry-Cherrier, from the UCR-CGT (France), who was a member of the FERPA Executive Committee. He invited the members of the Steering Committee to observe a minute's silence in his memory.

He then asked the Steering Committee if it had additions to agenda for the meeting and, if this was not the case, to proceed to its approval. The FNV representative requested that an information item be added concerning the WHO's (World Health Organization) preparation of a Decade (2020-2030) of Healthy Ageing. With the addition of this item, the agenda was adopted.

The **President** then gave the floor to the General Secretary to deal with the first agenda item on **FERPA's strategy**.

**Agostino Siciliano, General Secretary**, recalled that it had been one year since the FERPA Congress, a period marked by:

- the European elections and preparations for them;
- the ETUC Congress; and
- the first ETUC Executive Committee meeting following the elections.

Regarding the European elections and their effects on the composition of the new Parliament, the General Secretary referred for details to the minutes that Henri drew up for the last ETUC Executive Committee meeting, which includes an update on the results of the European elections.

He stressed that, contrary to what might have been feared, they had not been won by populists, even though the EPP and S&D lost their absolute majority. He also noted that Italy has made up ground in Europe by obtaining the Commissioner for Economic Affairs portfolio, given to Paolo Gentiloni (S&D).

Therefore, it will henceforth be necessary to work with a "Parliament of 4 partners" and no longer of 2, as before. In this new European balance, it will be important to pay attention because certain concerns remain, particularly with regard to the European Pillar of Social

Rights, on which not all members of the Coalition agree. Also, while the composition of Parliament is not “Sovereigntist”, vigilance will be necessary, because its supporters are lying in wait and have not lost their ability to cause problems.

What should FERPA do in this context? How can we ensure that retired people are taken into consideration, particularly in the implementation of the European Pillar, which includes very important provisions concerning them? What pressure should be exerted in the different countries where FERPA is present? Who will be our counterpart in this context?

The “postcards” campaign, which summarised our key demands and focused on the problems of retired people, was an initial response to try to bring these concerns to Parliament.

Prior to the elections, the General Secretary of FERPA had met with the future President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli (S&D). Then, once he had been elected, the General Secretary sent him a letter of congratulations in which he recalled FERPA’s key demands and took the opportunity to invite him to meet the Executive Committee of FERPA on the occasion of its next meeting on 5 December. The President accepted this invitation and he will therefore be with us on 5 December.

The General Secretary believes that, while this positive reply from the President of the European Parliament is a clear response to those who believe that FERPA is not important, it does not mean that FERPA’s actions must be limited to this laudable initiative. We need to find ways of meeting with elected MEPs to assert our demands.

Perhaps, with the help of the President of FERPA, a meeting could be arranged with the Hungarian Vice-President of Parliament, Ms Klara Dobrev (EPP).

The **President** sincerely thanked the General Secretary for the information he provided and congratulated him for having managed to make contact with the European Parliament at its highest level, i.e. with its President.

He then opened the **discussion** with the members of the Steering Committee.

Several members joined the President in congratulating the General Secretary, while stressing the need to have meetings with the elected MEPs, in particular those who had been contacted before the elections. In this regard, some members stated that they had sent “postcards” to candidates on the Left, while considering it a waste of time to send them to candidates on the Right. These candidates that they had contacted had replied that they understood and shared our issues, but there had been no formal commitments.

The general tone of the interventions concerning Parliament was that it is necessary to strengthen contacts with Parliament and the Commission in order to enable a general mobilisation. In this way, it is necessary to set up an initiative to ensure a dignified life for retirees. This is because while the representation of populism in Europe has been limited, the danger still exists.

Some are also wondering what the Parliament plans to do, even though this question may appear somewhat premature insofar as it is in the process of settling in and organising itself. Some stressed the need to have, together with ETUC, a strong intervention for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Others also raised FERPA’s Charter for the Rights of Elderly Persons and the Youth Protocol as points of departure for our potential mobilisation. We have big “declarations” and “fine” texts, but what do we do next?

Finally, several members raised the situations and problems encountered in their countries (Austria, Spain, Italy, France, etc.), as illustrated by the various trade union movements organised in them and concerning:

- in particular, long-term care or pensions, areas in which economic concerns take precedence over the social aspect;
- the political uncertainties having an impact, since elections are going to be held in several countries and the Left often appears divided, meaning that new coalitions could emerge and challenge social gains.

A positive note is, however, provided by Austria, where pensioners' organisations have negotiated pensions for next year and obtained an increase in minimum pensions to 1,100 euros.

In **his response, the General Secretary** reiterated the importance of the European Pillar of Social Rights, several provisions of which directly concern pensioners. Unfortunately, he lamented, this Pillar is not sufficiently known and is not mandatory: sadly it is “optional” and concerns mainly the “eurozone”.

As for the European Parliament - and we will ask it when its President will address the Executive Committee - it is important that there be a body within it where we can express our views and have our problems heard. The General Secretary underscored that our aim is to “have a voice in Parliament”.

**The following organisations participated in the discussion:** FNV, UJP-UGTE, SPI-CGIL, FNP-CISL, ÖGB, UCR-FO

Then, after having thanked the various speakers, the **President** addressed the next item on the agenda, which concerns **the new organisation of FERPA** and in particular **the handling of major protest issues**.

The **General Secretary** first of all recalled the need to continue, if not revive, work with young people in the context of intergenerational solidarity.

He then referred to the “SocialAll” project launched by ETUC on the theme of “Social Security for All”. FERPA is a stakeholder in this project. Thus, Dick participated in the “Steering Panel” meeting held in Rome on 9 July. Concerning the project, the General Secretary (Dick not being available) will participate with Henri, both representing FERPA, in the meeting that will be held in Zagreb on 23 and 24 September concerning the follow-up to this initial meeting.

The General Secretary also stressed that, on the issues raised by members of the Steering Committee, it is necessary to work in a team, for example Dick and Didier on retirees, working closely with Henri, who is responsible for coordination.

The **President** then gave the floor to **Dick De Graaf** to discuss **his case file**.

He reported on **the Rome meeting** of 9 July 2019 concerning ETUC's “SocialAll” project where he represented FERPA and for which he provided a written summary to the members of the Committee.

Twelve initial countries, as well as France, FERPA and the Women's Committee are partners in this project.

As part of this project, the purpose of this meeting was to bring together EU pension policy experts and social security in general, to discuss a core document that had been prepared by the project's experts and the methodology for a questionnaire to be adopted for research in

each country. An initial proposal to this questionnaire on social protection systems was discussed. The contact persons are also responsible for collecting these data. During this meeting, the members of the group of experts, among other suggestions, requested that the language of the background document be more union-oriented, as it contains excessive “European jargon”. It was also requested that the gender dimension be introduced into it, since it was underrepresented. This project requires long-term work, with output scheduled for 2020. The Zagreb meeting is part of this approach and will be a meeting of all the experts and researchers, including contact persons from the 13 countries, to present the methodology for the national research projects.

The **President** then gave the floor to **Didier Hotte**, who represents his country, France, in this ETUC project.

Didier stressed that, in his view, this ETUC project is important in order to counter the Commission’s neo-liberal approach, which favours the financial sustainability of systems rather than their social dimension.

With regard to the issue for which he is more specifically responsible within FERPA and which concerns pensions, he has already drawn up a short questionnaire on this subject, but will develop it further in order to present it to the Steering Committee in November.

The floor was then given to **Angeles Briales**, who is responsible for energy poverty among pensioners. She has already prepared a draft and a questionnaire on this subject, which she has discussed with Henri by email. She will send the questionnaire she produced in order to develop it further at the next meeting of the Steering Committee.

**The General Secretary** then spoke to highlight the importance of the subjects being addressed today and the floor was given to **Henri** to clarify the methodology to be followed regarding the implementation of case files.

Henri began by thanking Dick, Angeles and Didier, who had sent him their first drafts.

He then recalled what the General Secretary had already said at previous meetings: it is not a question of carrying out exhaustive studies but, based on the realities experienced by retired and the elderly, identifying trade union issues and demands resulting in actions and initiatives (action plans) to change things.

In concrete terms, this means:

- writing a brief presentation paper on the situation experienced, the problems encountered and the issues arising from it;
- then sending a questionnaire to illustrate the point, based on the realities experienced;
- finally, defining protest actions and proposing courses of action/action plans to the General Secretary and the Steering Committee in order to submit them for discussion, ratification and implementation in the Executive Committee.

The whole is being coordinated by Henri to ensure consistency between the different contributions and in particular avoid “duplication”. Thus, we could have an end product that could take the form of a general document, divided into different chapters according to the themes addressed (this, however, is to be confirmed and/or clarified).

It was also specified that the organisations are requested to contribute to the development of the various issues. Nevertheless, these contributions must be brief. It is not effective to send the person responsible for a case file all the research work that has been carried out in one organisation/country or another - however interesting it may be - without having first summarised it.

The General Secretary confirmed this approach as a whole.

After thanking the previous speakers, the **President**, Lajos Mayer, gave the floor to **Tino Fumagalli, Treasurer of FERPA**, to deal with the next item on the agenda concerning **finances**.

Taking stock of the situation, Tino recalled that, in the past, FERPA had encountered several problems concerning the drawing up of the balance sheet and the budget, something which was also noted by the Finance Committee meeting on 11 September. The committee took stock of the work to be done to be able to better draw up the documents. It took note of the Auditor's report which certified that, despite these shortcomings, FERPA's financial management is sound.

The Treasurer then stated that he would present the draft budget for 2020 at the Steering Committee meeting in November.

With regard to the dues and, in particular, the late payments from certain organisations, the Treasurer noted that while, in response to the reminder letters sent to them, the situation has improved in most cases, the problem continues in the case of four organisations, including the British TUC. An initial reminder letter has already been sent to them, but it has not yet been answered. If there is no response by the end of the month a letter will be sent to them again that will be more threatening, indicating that if the situation is not remedied a proposal will be made to the Executive Committee to apply the FERPA Regulations for such an infringement, namely those calling for the suspension of the organisation in question. Finally, the Treasurer ended his intervention by asking a question: will we next year again combine FERPA's Mid-Term General Meeting with an Executive Committee meeting, in order to generate savings?

Since there were no comments on this statement by the Treasurer, the **President** thanked him and gave the floor again **to the General Secretary** to present the first draft of the **agenda for the next Executive Committee meeting on 5 and 6 December**:

- Minute of silence in memory of François Thierry-Cherrier, General Secretary of the UCR-CGT and member of the Executive Committee of FERPA
- 1) Approval of the agenda
- 2) Address by the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli (discussion)
- 3) Address by the Confederal Secretary of ETUC, Liina Carr: situation following the ETUC Congress and situation within the European Union (elections to the European Parliament, composition of the new Commission, etc.) (discussion)
- 4) Meeting of the Women's Committee (2 p.m. - 4 p.m., first day)
- 5) Report of the President of the Finance Committee followed by the statement of the Treasurer: 2019 interim budget and 2020 provisional budget (discussion)
- 6) Update on the new organisation of FERPA
- 7) Progress on case files: Presentation and discussion
- 8) Initial discussion on the Mid-Term General Meeting: date-place-theme-financing - visibility of FERPA
- 9) Other business

The **General Secretary** of FERPA, referring to the Mid-Term General Meeting, stated that it is appropriate on this occasion to be pleased with the work carried out following the new organisation of FERPA: people are responsible for case files and have a willingness to "get things done".

Furthermore, it is necessary to make the most of this event to give FERPA greater visibility, hence the importance of the choice of location.

In the short **discussion** that followed, the FNV asked two questions:

- What is the situation with the work plan for the Women's Committee?
- What will the people with responsibility for case files have to do during the Executive Committee meeting?

The General Secretary replied that:

- the President of the Women's Committee will be contacted, regarding the first question; and
- with regard to the second question, the necessary information will be sent.

The **President** then addressed **other business**.

The first item concerned the issue of **the rotation in the Steering Committee of the UGT-E and the CC.OO.**

On this subject, he gave the floor to the **General Secretary**. The latter believed that the matter had been decided insofar as, with the support of the Steering Committee, at the last meeting he had reminded the CC.OO which had written to him and to which he had replied very courteously (this exchange was provided to the members of the Steering Committee) that:

- FERPA has no mission or mandate to interfere in disputes between national organisations;
- he had requested the sending of a letter signed by both General Secretaries confirming the implementation of this agreement, with this request not yet having been acted upon.

He also stated that he welcomed dialogue and friendship between the two organisations.

The **President** then gave the floor to the **General Secretary** to introduce the second item of other business, namely **the Cyprus issue**.

Since the Cypriot representative had written and raised a number of questions relating to the Constitution and the Congress, the General Secretary asked **Dick** to respond to them, which he did (the letters are available to the members of the Steering Committee if points require further discussion during the next Steering Committee meeting). The General Secretary stressed the good work done by Dick.

However, the latter added one proposal and two comments:

- the proposal: as regards the amendments to the Constitution, this issue must be referred back to the next Congress;
- two comments: on points 2 and 5 about the Congress remarks, are not included in the minutes of the Congress.
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The **President** opened **the discussion** on these two items of other business.

Regarding the **Spanish problem**, the Committee considers that the position adopted by the General Secretary is the right one. However, we are faced with a political problem that must be resolved at the highest level of the two bodies in question. It is necessary to consider whether there should be a mediation intervention by the ETUC General Secretary, Luca Visentini, and if all those concerned by this subject should be brought around the table.

Concerning the **Cyprus issue**, the Congress is considered to be over and, while clarifications may be provided, there is no question of putting issues that have been decided “back on the table”. Of course, a solution must be found with Cyprus. The discussion brought problems to light and it is necessary to look at what needs to be changed in our Constitution. One member suggested that the Mid-Term General Meeting could perhaps be used to discuss this. Finally, the Steering Committee instructed the General Secretary to send the Cypriot trade union PA.SY.DY the work carried out by Dick.

**The following organisations participated in the discussion:** FNV, SPI-CGIL, ÖGB

Finally, to answer a question raised by the representative of the FNV during the adoption of the agenda of the Committee, the **President** gave him the floor. **Dick** informed the Committee that the World Health Organization is preparing a Decade (2020-2030) of Healthy Ageing. He wondered how ETUC and FERPA could get involved, as several points could concern us. After discussing it with Henri, he forwarded the documents concerning this WHO proposal to Eliane De Dobbeleer, who is in charge of the “health” issue.

There being no further business on the agenda, the **President** welcomed the good work of this Steering Committee meeting and the rich discussion to which it gave rise. He thanked the participants and the interpreters for the work carried out within the time available, despite the full agenda.

Henri