

FERPA STEERING COMMITTEE
16 FEBRUARY 2017
BRUSSELS, ITUH, Room C 1st floor

Present: Michel Devacht, Angelines Briaes, Dick De Graaf, Ron Douglas, Ehsan Malik, Lazslo Juhasz, Tino Fumagalli, Ana Martinez Lopez, Jessica Montiel, Agostino Siciliano, Alois Schlager, Simone Welti, Emmanuel Wietzel.

Apologies for absence: Carla Cantone, Dominique Fabre, Henri Lourdelle, Jasna Petrovic

The Chairman opened the meeting. In Henri's absence, he asked for the report on the meeting to be entrusted to Emmanuel unless there were any objections.

The absence of the General Secretary, Carla Cantone, for serious personal reasons was likely to continue but the Constitution does not specify what should be done in the event of a vacant position. There is no mention of a Deputy Secretary General position either. It was therefore on the basis of a proposal from Carla Cantone and in the interests of efficiency that the Chairman proposed to the members of the Steering Committee that one of its members assume temporarily, the role of interim Secretary General. The Chairman proposed Agostino Siciliano, who is Italian, lives in Rome and therefore has the ability to meet and to coordinate the work with the General Secretary Carla Cantone. In the absence of any other candidate a vote was taken. Agostino did not participate in the vote and his candidacy was unanimously approved by those present. (0 against and 0 abstentions).

Carla's proposal to delegate Agostino will be presented by the Steering Committee during the next meeting of the Executive Committee to be voted on for approval by the sovereign body between two meetings of Congress.

Agostino took the floor as the interim Secretary General. He stated that during the absence of the General Secretary, it will be a difficult period to deal with and that we have to continue the work already started by Carla Cantone. He therefore accepted the responsibility as FERPA had to continue its work, in which each of the members present had to be involved. He appreciated the confidence that had been shown in him by the vote and emphasised that the work was a collective effort and that he needed a close-knit team, not only with Jessica and Henri in Brussels but also with all the members of the Steering Committee. He stated "our responsibility is to lend Carla our aid, to reassure her that FERPA is continuing to work along the lines that she has set out waiting for her to fully assume her role as General Secretary."

He explained that the trend in Europe and worldwide was towards withdrawal (increase in nationalism in Europe, and now with the election of Trump in the United States), but the task of trade unionists was to reverse this process. There is no rule in the Constitution providing for a replacement in the event of a vacancy in the position of Secretary General or Chairman. This vote would therefore have to be taken at a meeting of the Executive Committee so that the interim SG could speak for the organisation externally. In this way, the new SG will have the powers and authority required to speak on behalf of FERPA. This is not an arrangement between friends; the rules listed in the letter Carla Cantone sent to the members of the Executive Committee must be respected: they now know that the issue needs to be resolved.

1. Mid-term meeting

Preparations for the Mid-Term Meeting from 10 to 12 October 2017. An alternative proposal to hold it in Austria and Spain was put forward in light of the current situation. The proposal is to hold it in Rome, not only because this would be helpful to Carla Cantone, since she lives

there, it's a very difficult period for her and it's easier to prepare the work and her participation is very important, but also because the ETUC is organising in May its mid-term conference in Rome as part of the 60 year anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. European retired persons will, in this way, because of their history, be present to celebrate the signing of the Treaty.

They will be able to explain their vision of Europe, highlight the benefits of Europe and enlist young people in continuing their founding action. That is the political merit of this choice. The increased costs would need to be taken into account; however, an attempt should be made to use Italian organisations to help find less expensive solutions. It was announced that Luca Vicentini would be participating in the first day of work.

Regarding the amendments to the Constitution: this is a long-term undertaking and will depend on the changes decided upon by ETUC concerning the role it intends to assign to FERPA. The Chairman opened the floor to questions.

1st question & answer session

- Request for details on costs: what contribution from organisations and what share will FERPA contribute.
- Three days in Rome instead of the two initially planned. Why an extra day and what extra will be done?
- Need to discuss the themes for the General Meeting via a committee.
- The budgets are available or have been sent to the secretariat of FERPA.
- The General Meeting would therefore revolve around the 60 year anniversary of the Treaty of Rome; however, how would the themes of poverty affecting retired persons and women be addressed?
- Why would there be no written report from the interim SG?
- Necessity of providing for the position of "Deputy Secretary General" in the new Constitution to deal with any similar situation likely to occur in the future.
- The theme of migration must be discussed during the General Meeting in Rome. It is an important theme that has to be addressed and it will be good to have three days to deal with everything.

Answers

Jessica explained that FERPA would take care of interpretation (and it will be necessary to choose the languages that will be catered for), the technical aspects (technician, booths) and rental of the meeting room (certain hotels provide meeting rooms, meals). Participants will pay for travel just as they do for a Congress. The organisations will contribute financially to organising the Meeting (a chart will be sent to them). FERPA will therefore cover part of the accommodation costs: single room in a hotel (the surcharge for a double room will be paid by the participant).

As for the decision to extend it by one day, Agostino explained that the agenda was very full, which is why an extra day was needed. He also pointed out that it would be a shame to be in Rome and not do the traditional sightseeing and that the General Meeting was not a business meeting. He added that it was also easier to organise the arrival of the delegations at the meeting and this would enable everyone to start at the same time. It would also be possible to have some time set aside to commemorate the Treaty of Rome.

As regards the themes, proposals for the agenda of the General Meeting could be made at the next meeting of the Executive Committee. As for the written report, Agostino was of the opinion that there was a need to remain flexible with regard to functioning but that Carla Cantone was still the Secretary General.

2. Executive Committee meeting of 1 and 2 March 2017

The Chairman explained that it was necessary, before anything else, to have Carla Cantone and the Steering Committee's proposal to appoint Agostino as interim Secretary General approved. Henri will review the different areas for which he is responsible.

During the Executive Committee meeting it will be necessary to address the situation in Europe and specify FERPA's role with regard to the issue of poverty or the flow of migrants.

- Attendance of the Deputy General Secretary of ETUC (Peter Scherrer)
- Attendance of a representative of the European Economic and Social Committee for poverty-related issues
- (To be confirmed) Attendance of Monserrat Mir
- The financial report will be read out.
- Organisation of the mid-term meeting will be discussed.

The Chairman opened the floor to questions.

2nd question & answer session

Anna took the floor to say that all the organisations had received a questionnaire on pensions, one from the Women's Committee and another from Henri. These questionnaires had to be dealt with.

Dick announced that, on the theme of poverty, there was an EU report published in June 2016 available in all languages. An annex in English points out best practices for combating poverty in countries. The member organisations would need to comment on the conclusions of this report. There is already a framework and it is possible to start considering the options in FERPA. Dick can send the link to Jessica who will send it to the members.

The FERPA Women's Committee carried out a survey, the results of which are contained in a report by the Chairwoman of the Women's Committee. (The countries that responded to the survey were Luxembourg, Spain, the Netherlands, Hungary, San Marino, Poland and France). That means that some member organisations did not respond to the survey. The final report will be presented in Rome and a book will be created based on the report for distribution in PDF format to all committees of the ETUC so that FERPA highlights the issues of retired women in Europe. FERPA will then be able to decide whether the book should be published in hard copy format.

There are three campaigns underway: two for 8 March and another for 25 November. The drafting work for 8 March will be finalised next week, then sent to the members of the Steering Committee. It will focus on women's access to senior roles within trade union organisations.

3. FERPA Constitution

Dick reported on the state of play of discussions on the Constitution. The Constitution of FERPA is currently comprised of two documents: the Constitution and the By-Laws. The objective of the work is to improve consistency between the Constitution and the procedures. The Working Group (WG) has discussed it in detail. Members of the WG have proposed that parts of the By-Laws also be transferred to the Constitution.

The second version increases the size of the Constitution and reduces the size of the By-Laws. The Chairman of the WG commented that there is a large part dedicated to the Constitution in the most recent version, and that there should perhaps only be a single document now...

He pointed out that it was not possible to discuss this document before the meeting and that the procedure must therefore be postponed. According to Dick, the WG will come up with a final proposal for the ordinary Congress in 2019. There will be several meetings of the Executive Committee to discuss the document in detail and there would be a general discussion at

Congress. There is now more time to prepare the new Constitution which already contains a procedure for replacing the Chairman and Secretary General but no procedure for creating a position of Vice-Chairman or Deputy Secretary General.

All of the content has been discussed and it is now possible to consider reorganising the articles. Dick will give a similar presentation at the next meeting of the Executive Committee. The Chairman opened the floor to questions.

3rd question and answer session

- That the Executive Committee does not possess a draft version of the Constitution constitutes a problem.
- It is important to point out that there is now more time and 90% of the work has already been completed. A dialogue is also needed with the ETUC. The meeting dedicated to the amendments to the ETUC Constitution will be held on 15 March 2017. It is therefore important to wait and see what the ETUC will decide in March with regard to FERPA's role. FERPA now has plenty of time until 2019 as it is only Congress that can amend FERPA's Constitution.
- A WG has been established and the work completed by Dick must be respected, but there is a need to have an idea of what we are heading towards.

Answers

There will be no finalised draft for the next meeting of the Executive Committee because the WG is not ready. The draft will be provided in 2018 as a new WG needs to be held to clarify certain terms in the Constitution. Most of the work has been done, but the lengthy work to ensure consistency will need to be carried out in 2017. In 2018, it will be possible to evaluate the work and to bring the amendments before Congress in 2019.

The Chairman will explain at the next meeting of the Executive Committee why no text will be proposed and the Chairman of the WG (Dick) will provide explanations. Dick suggested that the member organisations send him a presentation on how their national constitutions provide for a replacement where a Secretary General is absent.

Jessica explained that the work of the WG is very complex due to the numerous working languages used. The amount of work involved in gathering the proposals that are then sent to be translated and which sometimes do not convey the nuances correctly is not very evident. She asked Simone to convey these difficulties to the French organisations. Finally, she pointed out that when the WG was held, interpreting had to be done in a booth so that the discussions could be more easily understood.

The Chairman of the WG added provisions to the new version dealing with cases where there was a vacancy in the positions of Chairman or Secretary General, taking inspiration from the constitutions of other European federations; however, he stated that further reflection on this point was possible.

In any event, it was not wise to send documents that have not been properly finalised. Confusion must be completely avoided and final versions given to Congress and the Executive Committee.

4. Miscellaneous points

Dick recounted a discussion with a member of the FNV- who was appointed to sit on the ETUC. This person reported how discussions within the ETUC were structured: for each subject discussed there was a preparatory WG. Should FERPA give more attention to being able to express itself on the ETUC Executive Committee?

Anna explained that the FERPA Women's Committee wanted to be more visible in the ETUC. Once there is a WG chaired by Monserrat Mir (from ETUC), Anna is automatically in attendance to represent FERPA. There was a need for both a voice and a VOTE. This was the only way to be able to express an opinion on any subject affecting retired persons (social policy, women, etc.) The main thing is to choose the dates carefully to minimise the cost to the organisation.

Michel and Jessica gave details of the places where FERPA is involved:

- ETUC social protection WG,
- ETUC Women's Committee,
- Social Dialogue Committee,
- Youth Committee (as an observer),
- Macroeconomic WG (depending on subjects),
- Negotiating group on active ageing (this was a very important first step for FERPA),
- WG on ETUC Constitution,
- ETUC Steering Committee
- ETUC Executive Committee.

As can clearly be seen, FERPA has a significant presence but the problem is that Carla has to assume most of the workload as this is expensive for FERPA.

Agostino explained that the next meeting of the ETUC Executive Committee would be held in Malta. The agenda includes an item on FERPA during which the issue of FERPA's status within the ETUC will be addressed. Those (Michel, the Chairman, and the Chairman of the Constitution WG, Dick) who will be going to Malta will play a very important role in securing the right to vote during the meeting of the Executive Committee. Indeed it will be necessary to secure 2/3 of votes to obtain an amendment of FERPA's right to vote.

With no other items on the agenda, the Chairman thanked those present and concluded the meeting.