

**Minutes of the FERPA Management Committee meeting held in virtual mode**  
**From 18 February 2021**

**Participated** : Lajos MAYER (SZEF), President; Agostino SICILIANO (UIL-UILP), Secretary General; Angeles BRIALES (UJP-UGT), Deputy Secretary General; Mireille PAUME (UCR-CGT), President of the Women's Committee ; Tino FUMAGALLI (FNP-CISL) Treasurer; Eliane DE DOBBELEER (CSC-ACVB); Dick DE GRAAF (FNV); Didier HOTTE (UCR-FO); Domenico PANTALEO (SPI-CGIL); Hubert SCHWIND (UCR-CGT); Werner THUM ÖGB)

**Absent** : METKA ROKSANDIC (SUS), resigned

The meeting was also attended by Henri LOURDELLE, Special Advisor and Jessica MONTIEL, Project Coordinator.

The President, Lajos MAYER, welcoming the members to this virtual meeting and thanking them for their presence, gave the floor to Jessica Montiel beforehand for some technical information and, in particular, the need to use the "chat" to ask for the floor. She also recalled the Code of Good Conduct against violence, adopted by the ETUC Executive Committee on 9 and 10 March 2020, which applies to all trade union meetings.

He then formally opened the meeting by first of all highlighting FERPA's work during the period. He then had the agenda adopted and noted that there were no miscellaneous issues (the Commission's Green Paper on "Active Ageing", to be mentioned in the Secretary General's Communication).

He therefore gives the floor to the Secretary General, Agostino SICILIANO for his Communication.

He began by thanking Jessica and Henri for their work, as well as Eugenia and Julienne from the ETUC's Organisation Unit who provided technical assistance for the meeting. He then stressed that all countries must face the consequences of the pandemic, including the containment, as is the case in Spain and Catalonia in particular, to which are added the economic consequences. FERPA's role is important in this period, all the more so - and this is a great concern - there is little attention paid to the elderly. Then it gives a long development to the important issue of vaccination. In particular, he insists on the way the vaccination campaign is being carried out in Europe, because the elderly are worried and disoriented by the Astra Zeneca vaccine, which is not recommended for people over 55. It is important that there is coordination at European level regarding the distribution of vaccines that can protect all citizens, and that there are no vaccines in Europe that have not been previously approved by the EMEA, as is the case in Hungary. Priority must be given to healthcare workers and people at risk, including the elderly, and all ESC members must ensure that this is done in all countries. He added that FERPA recognised the work done by the President of the Commission. A FERPA campaign should be organised on vaccination and a leaflet was proposed to this effect.

The work of the ETUC encompasses everything that the FNV representative referred to in his message to the members of the Steering Committee. With regard to the Green Paper on Ageing, we need to find a method to respond to it. Similarly, we will have to be attentive to what will happen at the Porto Social Summit on the European Social Rights Base. Our contribution will come from the files that have been started, which is what the Steering Committee is already doing. But it is a long-term task.

FERPA also works within the ETUC, which has undertaken a reflection on its functioning. It has launched a questionnaire to all the organisations, asking for proposals to improve it, and FERPA has undertaken to respond to it. Of course, there is the question of the right to vote, but more generally FERPA would like the ETUC to function better. The ETUC has drawn up a list of amendments to its statutes that will be discussed at its Mid-term Assembly, and among these amendments is the question of taking account of "abstentions" in the voting results. The ETUC's Mid-term Assembly has been postponed to July in order to hope to have a "presence" at the meeting. This decision confirms the decision already taken by FERPA to postpone its Mid-Term General Meeting to October in order to be able to hold it "in person" in Budapest, health conditions permitting. In this respect, the Secretary General expressed FERPA's solidarity with the Hungarian President and people who are particularly affected by this pandemic. However, if this face-to-face meeting was not possible, we would have to fall back on a plan B, i.e. hold the GA in virtual mode, which no one wants.

He then shared the letter he had received from Metka ROKSANDIC (SUS) announcing his resignation from FERRPA's bodies, but without giving any specific reasons. It is too early today to consider how to replace him, but it is important that this region be represented in FERRPA's bodies.

He then reported on the meeting held in virtual mode with Jack JONES of the TUC and the FERPA Secretariat. It took place in a very positive and cordial atmosphere. The representative of the TUC expressed his willingness to

- to better involve the TUC in the work and activities of FERPA
- and to settle the debt his organisation owes to FERRPA.

Today, two federations out of 40 wish to join FERPA, but it has committed itself to lobbying within its bodies to increase membership. The General Secretary believes that the presence of the TUCs within FERPA is politically important and that together we will start and continue a fruitful journey.

The Turkish pensioners' union DISK confederation is seeking to rejoin the FERPA, as its confederation has settled its problem with the government.

The Cypriot union PA.SI.DY continues to call for a revision of the Constitution, particularly on the issue of rotation in the Executive Committee. It is invited to see how this is being addressed.

He then referred to the Croatian Pensioners' Union's appeal for solidarity with the FERPA organisations following the terrible earthquake that had struck the country. This appeal was aimed at addressing the specific needs of the elderly and pensioners particularly affected by the earthquake. The ETUC had also launched an appeal for solidarity to which the national confederations responded. However, the Secretary General regretted that only 4 FERPA organisations (3 Italian organisations and the Slovenian organisation) had actually responded to this appeal.

Finally, the Secretary General proposes a preliminary draft agenda for the Executive Committee meeting in March, which will be held in virtual mode:

- the Secretary General's Communication
- the files to be presented
- the Women's Committee
- the preparation of the Mid-term GA

The President thanked the Secretary General for his report and opened the debate.

With regard to the letter from the Cypriots, it was pointed out that most of the issues that had been raised again had already been decided. The only new issue is that of the rotation of members within the Steering Committee. Some suggested that they should be contacted to find out what they were proposing and then the Steering Committee would discuss it. On the same subject, other speakers were opposed to opening a new debate on the statutes. Several agreed that the overview proposed by the Secretary General was quite comprehensive.

However, if the situation as it stands today weighs on everyone, as illustrated for example by the demonstrations that are taking place, as in the Netherlands, against the measures taken, it is urgent to insist to the ETUC on the "anti-ageing" reactions that would be responsible for the current situation. To use an expression used, there is a real "massacre" of elderly people in retirement homes. They often no longer have the possibility to go to hospital for treatment. Others say they agree with what the Secretary General said about vaccination, because the situation is complicated. All the more so because big companies have never made so much profit, while the poorest are abandoned. FERPA must have a "word" on this subject and they agree with the proposed leaflet. It is also important that there should be coordination at European level, but also to see what is happening in other parts of the world: ensuring the vaccination of everyone, in whatever part of the world people are, should be part of the Human Rights. As far as the Mid-term Assembly is concerned, all the speakers on this subject insisted that it should be held in person, if not in a "mixed" format. Democratic life depends on it. Many pensioners and elderly people do not know how to use the Internet or live in "white areas" where the Internet is not available. The FERPA must set an example that life is about meeting each other! As regards the resignation of the Slovenian colleague, several felt that it was appropriate to wait. However, it is a good thing that the Turks are rejoining the FERPA, just as the TUC would like to become more involved in the work of the FERPA, he said. Finally, regarding solidarity with Croatia, others said that their Confederation had responded to the ETUC's call.

Following this debate, the Secretary General wished to make a few clarifications.

With regard to the document on "Ageing", at the level of the Secretariat, we decided to reply to the questionnaire. But if members also want to reply, please send us their answers, which will be added to our replies. With regard to the letter from Cyprus, what is new is the question of rotation, otherwise colleagues keep repeating the same requests. Rotation exists within the ETUC. Perhaps during the Mid-term Conference we could envisage a small working group of 2 or 3 members to reflect on the issue? For the Mid-term General Assembly, we will of course give priority to "face-to-face" participation. Finally, concerning Croatia, several people indicated that their confederation had responded to the ETUC's call, but we would have liked to do something specific for older people.

The following organisations took part in the debate: FNV, UJP-UGTE, UCR-FO, SPI-CGIL, CSC-ACV, UCR-CGT, FNP-CGIL.

The President then gave the floor to Henri to introduce the discussion on the dossiers. Henri first of all thanked the members of the Steering Committee for the work they had done, especially as they had not always had the responsiveness expected of colleagues from the various FERPA organisations, despite the reminders he had been able to give them. He also reminds them of the work expected today, as he specified in the message he sent them yesterday; it is not a question of going back on the analysis, but of :

- identify the main problems/issues that appeared in the answers received
- identify the claims arising from it
- propose actions/means of action.

This will be submitted to the ETUC Executive Committee for ratification at the FERPA Mid-term Assembly. Of course, it is possible to group together the various issues, such as those concerning pensions and poverty among pensioners or energy poverty and housing for the elderly, for example. But Henri specified that he will not now proceed alone with these groupings, but that they will be the subject of discussion.

It will also be necessary to establish priorities to be submitted to the Executive Committee and a timetable for implementation, all of which will have to be discussed and ratified at the Mid-term GA.

He also specified that Mireille PAUME, the President of the Women's Committee, will then present the "Women's" dossier. Each member of the Steering Committee is therefore invited to present the conclusions of their work, specifying the demands that arise from it.

The Chairman therefore gives the floor to each member of the Management Committee for his or her presentation.

Didier HOTTE (UCR-FO) spoke first and specified that what he was presenting today was in a way an appendix to his presentation of 25 and 26 November before the Executive Committee. There had been no changes to what he had already received from the 10 countries that had replied, representing 19 organisations. However, the Italian unions, Switzerland and the FNV have made clarifications. He agreed to mergers, including his case with that of Dick. Then he gave some thoughts, considering that there was a need to have a clear positioning, notably with regard to the impact of COVID 19 on the financing of pensioners, who, already before the pandemic, had been the object of numerous attacks (reduction, non-revaluations, etc.). And to cite an example, France, where the Minister of Finance has warned that pensioners will have to participate in the reimbursement of the pandemic. He also specifies that concerning the Green Paper on Ageing, the French organisations did not discuss it, so he cannot talk about it here, but he has some reservations about it, such as the proposal to extend working life, for example.

Then he comes to the demands which seem to him to be in consensus:

- freezing of retirement ages
- indexation of pensions, on wages and/or prices (to be discussed) guaranteeing the purchasing power of retired people
- introduction of a minimum pension above the poverty line

- elimination of pension inequalities between women and men, taking into account, for example, periods of pregnancy or periods of care for children or the elderly, since it is still mainly women who provide them
- giving a greater role to the trade union organisations of pensioners in defending their demands.

Suggested actions could be :

- the drafting and distribution of a leaflet in all languages setting out what FERPA wants in terms of pensions and the fight against poverty among the elderly
- making a video recording with our messages, put online on social networks
- a European day of action on these themes (events, delegations to elected representatives or national governments, etc...)
- the production of a press kit made available to FERPA organisations

The floor was then given to Dick DE GRAAF (FNV). He first of all pointed out that the proposal to carry out a campaign against poverty among the elderly had not met with much support from the FERPA organisations. He therefore felt that his dossier on poverty could be linked to Didier's dossier on pensions. He also believes that two subjects should be dealt with at the Mid-term GA

- the ETUC's Social All project on the adequacy of pensions;
- the Porto Social Summit which concerns us.

As for the 7 proposed dossiers, as mentioned in the note he sent to the members of the Steering Committee, they could be reduced to 4 with the related demands, bearing in mind that those on taxation and solidarity between generations are of a different order and should be dealt with separately and differently.

In a transversal way, the main issues that concern women in each dossier should be identified.

Angeles BRIALES (UJP-UGTE) then intervened on her file on energy poverty. She also pointed out the overlap between certain issues such as shelters or care centres for the elderly and housing. In the health dossier, she believes that it takes into account causes, such as that of fuel poverty.

The actions that FERPA could undertake (sent to Henri on 21 February, after the meeting) could be :

- Each organisation affiliated to FERPA will send a report on the detection and location of situations, their seriousness
- Each FERPA member organisation will send a report on the detection and location of situations, their gravity, exponential symptomatology, diagnosis of resources and conclusions in order to resolve the obstacles that will be encountered.
- FERPA, for its part, will make a general campaign in Europe, asking the EU to be energetic with programmes that deal with this specific problem.
- FERPA will ensure that inspections and controls are carried out in homes, residences and all types of premises occupied by elderly people.
- The FERPA will monitor the treatment of the affected population in order to draw conclusions in the short, medium and long term, depending on the seriousness of the problem.
- FERPA will send its particular programme against the EP to the ESC in order to set up joint actions.

- FERPA will have an awareness raising plan with a slogan "Energy poverty must stop".

Hubert SCHWIND (UCR-CGT) then took the floor to specify, in the context of his dossier on housing, the demands that the FERPA could make:

- Retired trade unionism is part of a voluntary action for the right to appropriate and dignified housing for the elderly.
- Europe must universally reinvest in affordable housing for all pensioners who need it.
- The FERPA is calling for quality, adapted establishments and residences specially designed for elderly or disabled people. We must move from a curative to a preventive vision, i.e. anticipate the needs of these people in terms of adapted and quality housing.
- Access to affordable and quality housing is a main concern because the cost of this housing has become an unbearable daily constraint!
- It is necessary to include in the policy debates: professionals, representatives of the first concerned, i.e. the elderly, in order to know their situations, their needs and their proposals as well as their financial possibilities before embarking on an adapted and affordable housing project.
- The challenge of the home is not to build new adaptable housing, it is to find out how to adapt existing housing, by claiming additional allowances to cover the costs of adaptation, as well as for home care.

Eliane DE DOBBELEER (CSC-ACV) spoke first of all on the "health" issue. She indicated that this is a significant issue and with the pandemic, priorities have been confronted and inequalities have been exacerbated. With the privatisation of health centres and "commercialisation", profitability is predominant. And this translates into reduced universal access to quality care. With the crisis, the state should resume its role as a regulator in order to reduce inequalities. As far as older people are concerned, we can see a development of "ageism": they are not or no longer given priority in access to care. There are also gender inequalities. Women are more impacted than men by the pandemic because of their professional careers. They are, in fact, more involved in the care and support of the elderly. For FERPA, one slogan: "Our health is not for sale".

The FERPA claims :

- universal access to quality care
- to combat discrimination against older people
- to invest in health prevention, by buying local, avoiding waste, etc...
- the urgent need for a paradigm shift. That is to say, it is not more resources in health care that are needed to achieve quality of life, but investment in all the other social determinants that have a more global impact.

The proposed actions :

- Working with all those who work in the health field
- Adhere to the European Citizens' Initiative: "No profit on the pandemic. Rights to vaccines and treatments "
- Organise awareness-raising campaigns and participate in the European Health Rights Day in April.
- Produce leaflets to be distributed on social networks.

With regard to "accommodation" in institutions for the elderly, FERPA demands that

- a different type of reception and accommodation in order to offer better quality, more humane, safer care and support, avoiding the risk of spreading pathologies and better working conditions for staff.

- the reorientation of the offer by limiting the number of acute hospitals in favour of the provision of chronic care for dependent elderly people.

FERPA is committed to fighting

- against the privatisation/commercialisation of these establishments to solve the urgent problems of lack of staff, lack of equipment, etc.

- And against the abuse of older people, both in institutions and at home.

And, more broadly, on the occasion of the International Day of Ageing, which takes place on 1 October, to create a slogan specific to FERPA and to present a list of demands taking up the conclusions of the various dossiers.

Henri then intervened again but to present the dossier on Intergenerational Solidarity, in the absence of the Slovenian colleague who had resigned. On the document itself sent by our colleague, he takes up the main lines of the Charter that had been adopted and the proposals it contains. However, Henri suggests adding two more:

- as regards young people, at the level of the national confederations, Henri proposes that regular meetings/contacts be established between the Youth Committee (where they exist) and the FERPA pensioners' unions, in order, in particular, to make them share our objectives and that they understand why they pay contributions and that it is important to do so for their future at the end of their working life.

- At European level, meet the head of the ETUC Youth Group and see with her the possibility of meeting the ETUC Youth Committee on the theme of intergenerational solidarity: what does this mean for our respective organisations?

The President then gave the floor to Mireille PAUME, President of the FERPA Women's Committee. For her, several questions arose, including how to link the work of the Women's Committee to that of the dossiers. The demands must be enriched by integrating the female dimension. The Women's Committee is going to rework its Charter. Today, we are no longer at the point of making observations: the real problem is poverty, which is increasing. What are the female-dominated occupations that will subsequently generate poor pensions? The first demand must be that no woman in Europe should live below the poverty line and that she should have the right to health care and to live in dignity. There are women today who are in housing distress. The question of funding is crucial. The falling birth rate highlights the importance of women and pensioners. There should also be a chapter on women in the world at the time of the pandemic and make the link with Europe.

Mireille then presented two visuals on 8 March.

Werner THUM was then given the floor to present his dossier on taxation. Taxation is a problem for young and old people, especially in relation to what will happen in the future for debt repayment. Who is going to pay it? Why not introduce a wealth tax? We must work to find solutions, because taxation creates funds to finance our needs.

Henri was given the floor to close these presentations. Very briefly, he indicated that he would send a summary of the various interventions in the coming days, focusing on the demands and actions envisaged, with a proposal for grouping the dossiers together, to the members of the Steering Committee to find out what they think and their possible proposals, before they make their presentation to the Executive Committee.

The General Secretary intervenes to draw the conclusions of the Steering Committee. He said that he had listened very attentively to everything that had been exchanged during the meeting and he felt that a step forward had been taken in clarifying our demands. FERPA is not just a think tank but a negotiating federation. FERPA is a useful "tool". We need to act at national level on funding problems, then the FERPA will coordinate the initiatives. We will also have to continue to consider how to use what comes from the European Union and how to implement it. To mobilise for a taxation system that does not give priority to debt reduction but to the fight against poverty. Returning to the resignation of Metka ROKSANDIC, the Slovenian colleague, he asked Jessica to send her a letter on behalf of the Steering Committee to thank her for the work she had done.

He also returned to the letter from the Cypriot colleagues. As had been said during the debate, all the questions they had repeatedly asked had already been answered. However, they are adding one, which is that of rotation within the Steering Committee. The Secretary General therefore proposes the setting up of a small committee, headed by Dick - who agrees - to deal with this issue.

As the agenda had been completed, the President thanked the members for their participation in what he considered to be a fruitful meeting. He also thanked the interpreters and ETUC colleagues for their technical assistance.

Henri