

Brussels, 24th April 2024

Mr Walter BAIER
European Left Party
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Brussels
BELGIUM

Dear Sir,

In your capacity as "head of list" and candidate of the European Left Party Group for the European Parliament in the elections to be held in June, the European Federation of Retired and Older People (FERPA), the leading European organisation representing older people, with 10 million members in 21 European countries, is taking the liberty of addressing you. It wishes to draw your attention and ask for your support to the situation of the more than 100 million elderly and retired people in Europe, a section of the population that is largely ignored in debates and proposals. Retired people, as a whole, are nonetheless voters who demand full citizenship.

FERPA is convinced that we need a more cohesive and inclusive Europe, capable of guaranteeing the dignity of all European citizens, whatever their age. To achieve this objective, the role of the European institutions is fundamental.

However, the various austerity plans and budget restrictions implemented in recent years within the European Union have had a dramatic negative impact on the resources of older people and pensioners, around 30 million of whom are poor pensioners in Europe.

In many European countries, they have seen their pensions stagnate or even fall. The situation is even more alarming for retired women, who make up the majority of this section of the population and whose pensions are on average 25% lower, because they have often had to interrupt their careers when they were employed to bring up their children or, today, to care for sick relatives, and also because they have always had lower salaries than men for the same skills and work. All this means that today women have more difficulty in finding food, housing, clothing, transport and healthcare.

What's more, as you know, the elderly have paid a heavy price for the COVID19 pandemic, which has hit them hard, worsening their already difficult situation. They were the main victims: their mortality rate was particularly high, especially in retirement homes, often due to a lack of staff and care!

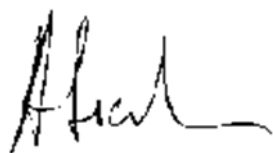
This is why, along with the question of income, loss of autonomy and the health care and support it implies are one of the major concerns of FERPA and its members. Caring for retired people who are losing their independence, whether at home or in an institution, requires a sufficient number of properly paid and well-trained healthcare workers.

All this is set out in the Manifesto (attached) that FERPA has launched, in which it sets out its main demands, which relate to four priority rights: the right to decent pensions indexed to wages and/or the cost of living, including the introduction of a European minimum pension, in all EU countries, above the poverty threshold, to combat poverty among older people, particularly women; the right to high-quality, long-term healthcare; the right to decent housing, the fight against energy poverty and the right to social inclusion.

FERPA therefore expects you and your elected representatives to make a firm commitment to take these situations into account and provide a satisfactory response, in the interests of retired people whose lives and past labours have contributed to the growth and development of their own country and the European Union. It is legitimate and fair that, when they reach retirement age, they should receive a fair return.

We are available and entirely interested in meeting you, individually or otherwise, to present our demands during the election campaign and, of course, after your election.

Yours respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Siciliano", with a stylized, flowing script.

Agostino SICILIANO
General Secretary