

**Report of the FERPA Executive Committee meetings held on 1 and 2 March 2017**

**(ITUH, Auditorium)**

**Present:** Michel Devacht, Chairman; FGTB-ABVV and CSC-ACV, Belgium; SUH, Croatia; PESYK-SEK and PA.SY.DY., Cyprus; FEJP-CC. OO, UJP-UGT and USO, Spain; UCR-CFDT, UCR-CGT, UCR-FO, UNIR-CFE-CGC and UNSA-Retraitées, France; MASZSZ and SZEF, Hungary; ICTU, Ireland; FNP-CISL, SPI-CGIL and UIL-P, Italy; LCGB and OGB-L, Luxembourg; GWU, Malta; FNV, Netherlands; INTER-REFOR. Da CGTP-IN, Portugal; FNSPR, Romania; FNP CDLS and EUPS CDLS, San Marino; ASRS, Serbia; UNIA, Switzerland; TUC, United Kingdom

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

**Excused:** Carla Cantone, Secretary General; Michele Jacotey, UCR-FO, Chairman of the Financial Commission; ÖGB, Austria; POPS and OSTOE, Greece; SOLIDARNOSC, Poland

FERPA Chairman Michel Devacht opened the meeting by asking the Executive Committee to observe a minute of silence in memory of Mr Peter Pataky, former Chairman of the Hungarian Confederation MSZOSZ, founding chairman of the United Confederation MASZSZ, and Vice-Chair of the Retiree Section, who died unexpectedly on 5 September.

Then Chairman Michel Devacht, after excusing the absence of Secretary General Carla Cantone for serious personal reasons that may last for some time, proposed, for purposes of efficiency, to temporarily name Agostino Siciliano, from UIL-UILP and a member of the FERPA Steering Committee, to the position of “Interim Secretary General” during the period of absence of the Secretary General. The Chairman specified that this proposal had been previously submitted to the last Steering Committee meeting of 16 February, where it had been approved unanimously.

A brief debate ensued during which the different participants, after expressing their support for Carla, and approving the appointment of Agostino Siciliano, mainly highlighted the necessity of “updating” the constitution of FERPA, which does not provide for this type of situation where the position of Secretary General and/or Chairman may be vacant in between two sessions of the Congress.

At the conclusion of this debate, the Chairman proceeded with a vote on the Interim Secretary General, which was approved unanimously. He then asked him to draft, also unanimously, a letter of support to Carla, the Secretary General, on behalf of the Executive Committee



Organisations that participated in the debate: UCR-CGT, UCR-FO, UCR-CFDT, FNV, FNP-CISL, SPI-CGIL, UJP-UGT, SZEF

The Chairman then welcomed and introduced Peter Scherrer from DGB, the first speaker of the morning. Peter has been the ETUC Deputy Secretary General since the last ETUC Congress in Paris. Prior to that, he was Secretary General of the European Metalworkers' Federation and the European Industrial Policy Officer at IG Metall.

The speaker first brought up the Commission's recently-published White Paper on the future of Europe, the result of a widely inclusive consultation, but that "limits" itself to presenting several possible scenarios for the future of Europe. A supplemental document that should contain more concrete measures/messages has been announced for 28 April.

Then, he came back to the European Pillar of Social Rights and noted that it had been the subject of numerous consultations at the national level. He emphasised that it should inspire the new work programme of the social partners that is currently being drafted. He also noted the important work done at the ETUC level in this area, relating to the campaign that was recently launched with the slogan "Europe needs a salary increase" - a campaign, he specified, that requires the support of all ETUC members.

He came back to the autonomous framework agreement on active ageing and an inter-generational approach that was concluded and will be officially signed on 8 March by the social partners in the (hoped for!) presence of Mr Juncker, President of the European Commission and Mr Tusk, President of the European Council. He emphasised the active role that FERPA played in this negotiation. This agreement creates, among other compulsory provisions, an obligation for companies and public institutions to regularly assess workforce demography so as to anticipate demographic changes in the workplace, and it addresses the skills for which companies are responsible to ensure permanent access to skills and qualifications. To evoke the inter-generational approach contained in this agreement, in particular from the perspective of knowledge transfer and intelligent work organisation, he used an image: "Young people run faster... but older people know the short-cuts"! He ended on this point, insisting that this agreement will be all the stronger because social partners at the European level will be tackling it.

He brought up the question of work-life balance, and the numerous areas for improvement that remain in order to improve the current situation. On this point, there is a deadlock with those employers who refuse to negotiate. ETUC therefore considers that the Commission should take the initiative, within the Framework of the Pillar of Social Rights.

A debate ensued after this presentation. The participants, after paying tribute to the agreement, are especially pleased with the salary campaign, which took over from the ILO campaign and tied it to the retirement question. Because talking about the need for salaries to increase means betting on better pensions in the future, and on the increased spending power of retirees. It

also indicates our desire to curtail austerity. All of this can be summed up in the slogan: “Live well - Work well... to Age well”. Some insisted that a real assessment of the agreement is necessary, including at the European level. Others also brought up the promise made by Mr Juncker to relaunch the Social Dialogue. It was reminded that the Council adopted a new document on poverty last June. In its campaign against poverty, FERPA concurs with this approach. As for work-life balance, this means in practical terms: new rights that must be won for women.

In his response, the ETUC Deputy Secretary General insisted on the fact that ETUC is actively consulting its members on the future work programme of the Social Dialogue to allow them to formulate their suggestions. He invited FERPA to enter this debate. He noted that the question of poverty brought up in the discussion was not currently among the priorities listed in the work programme. He wondered about the way to deal with it in the framework of the Social Dialogue. He also wondered whether the Member States are brave enough to support and encourage the Social Dialogue at their level. Is there a driving force among them? He confirmed the importance of evaluating the agreement at all levels and the relationship that exists between increasing salaries and increasing pensions.

Organisations that participated in the debate: FNV, UCR-FO, UCR-CFDT, SZEJ, UCR-CGT, CISL, FEJP-CC. OO

Two final speakers closed the debate:

- The Interim Secretary General of FERPA, who stressed to the ETUC Deputy Secretary General the vitality of FERPA organisations in the European debate, but especially in the ETUC debates. In this light, he expressed the wish for the Deputy Secretary General to be the FERPA spokesperson for purposes of obtaining the right to vote in ETUC bodies.
- The FERPA Chairman who, while thanking the speaker, reminded attendees that DGB pensioners are not part of FERPA.

Then, Chairman Michel Devacht introduced and gave the floor to Ms Susanna Florio, a CISL trade unionist in charge of international issues, among her other responsibilities. She represented her organisation for several years as a member of the ETUC Executive Committee and as an “Advisor” to the European Economic and Social Committee, where she authored several reports. She is currently Head of unit at Secretariat of the Workers’ Group (Group II), within this Committee.

Susanna first gave a presentation of the Committee and its work. Group II brings together 150 trade unionists appointed by their organisation. It is an advisory body that provides an opinion on practically 95% of legislative texts adopted by the European Union. Moreover, it organised 28 debates at the national level to allow citizens to reclaim the political debate. In addition, it

undertook several studies on certain issues of interest to civil society, including one in particular on poverty among elderly people. From this study - which is the result of a complex debate involving multiple parameters (professional situation, geographic disparities, etc.) - it emerged for example that elderly persons between 60 and 65 years of age enjoy a standard of living that did not suffer economic losses. In contrast, the situation for those over 65 has worsened since the economic crisis.

Like Peter Scherrer earlier, she brought up the Commission's White Paper, published that very morning, which can be summed up as a reflection on 5 scenarios for the Future of Europe, with three in particular:

- The status quo
- Move forward with those who want to ~~move forward~~ do more
- Or a Europe with multiple tiers

The Commission does not seem to be able to indicate the path to follow. Hence the necessity to reclaim the European debate.

Finally the speaker wondered about the way to organise an interaction between ETUC and the Committee, to the extent that most of the time, the subjects dealt with by the Committee are the same ones ETUC is working on, such as for example the European Pillar of Social Rights.

A debate then ensued. Several attendees asked the speaker for details on the study on poverty among elderly persons, pointing out that in this area it is important to set distinctions and that the risk of falling into poverty as one gets older is even greater among women. Others insisted that a democratic Europe is not enough, and that there is an urgent need for a Social Europe. Others also brought up the new international context, in Europe and around Europe with Brexit or the arrival of Donald Trump in the US or what is happening in Russia with Mr Putin or in Turkey with Mr Erdogan, etc. There now needs to be a "new social contract" with European citizens. Indeed the "social contract" is only possible if the investments are shared. The Social Dialogue is possible if there is pressure on the ground. The debate lacks leadership. We need to connect Brussels with those acting on the ground.

In her answer, the Committee representative first made a few clarifications.

Regarding the study of poverty among elderly persons, the study involved "elderly persons", not just "retirees". In the study, which is only available in English, there is no mention of pension schemes but it does talk about poor elderly workers. Here, it is a fact that social protection systems have deteriorated over the years.

In complete agreement with the necessity for a "social" Europe. But are we sure that our own organisations are convinced that it is (also) in Brussels that the battle needs to be waged?

Organisations that participated in the debate: INTER-REFORM. Da CGTP-IN, UCR-CGT, SPI-CGIL, UIL-UILP, FEJP-CC. OO, UCR-CFDT, FNP-CISL, ICTU, SUH

On behalf of Carla, the Interim Secretary General thanked Susanna for her participation. He then came back to the situation FERPA finds itself in. He thanked everyone for the trust expressed via the election but, until Carla takes up her position as Secretary General again, it is important for FERPA to function as best as possible and ensure the continuity of the work already accomplished by Carla. To this end, we must start with the report Carla made at the last Executive Committee meeting and analyse what has happened since then.

Then Agostino raised the question of the mid-term meeting and illustrated the choice of Rome: Carla is there every day and this year also marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Rome. We could open the meeting with a Conference analysing these 60 years: What is the Europe we can believe in today? Our voice must be heard, “we who are the encyclopaedia of this European construction”...

The Interim Secretary General gave a rough outline of what the mid-term meeting could be like with:

- On 10 October a conference on this topic.
- On the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup>, a Women’s Committee
- In the afternoon, a cultural visit
- On the 12<sup>th</sup> there would be in-depth analysis of topics such as the fight against poverty, particularly what we can do to maintain the spending power of retirees, and including health, or equality between men and women, or the agreement with young people, etc.

~~The goal is to convince our members that we are working...~~

Carla is working on a document that will incorporate all these issues. It will be sent to all the organisations in the coming days.

They will have until **15 May to add their thoughts**, with the goal of having a final text by **15 June**.

On that date, the situation will be reviewed and the next steps to take until the mid-term meeting will be determined.

As this part of the discussion elicited no reaction from members of the Executive Committee, Michel Devacht, FERPA Chairman, in the absence of Michèle Jacotey, UCR-FO, Chair of the

Financial Committee, read the report she prepared for the Executive Committee and which had been distributed to the members.

This report elicited several reactions and/or questions, in particular on the monies owed by organisations, some of them dating back several years. What to do in this case? If those organisations are experiencing genuine difficulties, would it not be appropriate to put in place solidarity mechanisms within FERPA? Some expressed surprise that certain expenses had been exceeded and called for the budget to be more thoroughly prepared and implemented. Would it not be advisable to have an actual Treasurer? This question needs to be reviewed within the framework of the amendments to the constitution. Also, several people expressed surprise that there is not yet a projected budget for 2017! Others, lastly, wanted to ease the worries resulting from the late payments of dues and apologised. In response to reminder letters, their situation has now been resolved.

Following these comments, the Chairman specified that the next Steering Committee would have its say on all these questions, in particular the directions to take in the future. He encouraged the organisations to send their substantive comments in writing to the Financial Committee. As for the Interim Secretary General, he reminded the attendees that one of the Secretary General's priorities was to revitalise FERPA by, among other things, travelling to meet with affiliated organisations in their own countries and thereby make communication more efficient. As for him he agreed with everything that had been said, and that it is important for Carla to have this latitude. He added that in the future all expenses would be included in the budget.

Organisations that participated in the debate: UCR-CGT, UCR-CFDT, SPI-CGIL, FNV, OGB-L, SUH, FNSPR

Chairman Michel Devacht welcomed and introduced the next speaker, Marina Monaco, ETUC advisor.

Marina first presented the gender equality file, in anticipation of 8 March.

She then talked about the activities ETUC took part in since October in the area of social protection:

- Presentation of the Resolution on Social Protection adopted by the December 2016 Executive Committee (available on the ETUC website).
- Mention of the European Semester
- Mention of the White Paper on the future of Europe

Marina also emphasised the contacts that the ETUC has with the Social Protection Committee, which is an advisory board of the European Union whose work is intended for ministers responsible for employment and social affairs working together within the "Employment and Social Policy" Council (EPSCO). Its objective is twofold:

- Monitor the social situation in the EU and the evolution of social protection policies in Member States, and draw up reports on social inclusion, healthcare, long-term care and retirement, within the framework of the open method of coordination on social protection and inclusion.
- Facilitate the discussion and coordination of policy approaches between national authorities and the Commission by preparing the Council debates on social protection and country-specific recommendations in the context of the European semester. It also drafts reports and opinions, either on its own initiative or at the request of the Council or the Commission.

It is made up of the two delegates per country and 2 delegates from the Commission. According to Marina, it can prove to be an institutional ally of the ETUC in these areas of expertise.

Finally the speaker concluded with a question: “What can be done?” Which she answered: “Read the documents of the Commission and make comments”.

During the discussion that followed this presentation, after thanking the speaker, some came back to the question of poverty by condemning the fact that the objective set by the Commission to reduce the poverty rate in Europe had not been reached since it has actually increased by 4 million. This would require, some said, the launching of a ETUC/FERPA joint initiative. It would also be helpful to think about the way to hold a discussion about poverty: where does it come from? From the loss of employment? From difficulties accessing services? From single-parent family situations? Without leaving out long-term care... It is also important to be careful when talking about government-guaranteed minimums that it not have a negative impact on the evolution of salaries, so it is important to be attentive to the interaction between these two elements.

As to the universal right to Social Protection, there is another ally in the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions”.

Regarding prevention, contrary to what seems to have been said, it should not be seen as an expense but as an investment.

Others spoke to express their wish that a policy reflection be undertaken, namely: ETUC and FERPA must take the lead and propose ways to have an active citizenry and also stress tax issues to obtain a fairer tax system.

Finally, others, referring to scenario 4 in the Commission’s White Paper on the future of Europe, expressed their worry as to the European ability to take care of Social Protection. How can ETUC take action so that these questions are properly dealt with? FERPA is there to help ETUC.

In her answer, Marina first reminded attendees that ETUC’s objective “is not to level things down”, as evidenced by the ETUC Manifesto at the Paris congress, its Action Programme and the most recent ETUC document on the Social Governance of Europe.

Social protection is the basis for growth and employment. The goal should be to aim for the best and make the case for the best. As for a minimum income, this must be a safety net for “the most destitute”.

As for the Commission’s European Pillar of Social Rights, it is based on three notions:

- Employment
- Legislation
- Social Protection

And to close by recalling the importance of work in life.

Organisations that participated in the debate: FNV, UNSA-Retraités, SPI-CGIL, UCR-FO, UCR-CFDT

After thanking the speaker, the Chairman gave the floor to Dick De Graaf, the Constitution Working Group Coordinator, who gave an oral presentation on the work that has already been done.

After going over the different meetings that had already taken place, Dick first specified that this discussion was complicated by the fact that there are different histories, as illustrated by the 30 amendments received. This accounts for the difficulty in arriving at shared points of view. He expanded the document serving as the basis for the constitution by transferring a part of what was in the By-Laws.

An additional meeting proved to be necessary, which entailed a change to the calendar as initially planned.

This is how:

- A first discussion could take place during the November 2017 Executive Committee meeting
- Followed by a second one in the spring of 2018
- And possibly a third in the fall of the same year
- For a final debate and a vote on the new texts during the Congress of 2019

In the discussion that followed, after thanking Dick for the work he has done and his presentation, several organisations expressed their failure to understand the “amendments” referred to as their organisation had not yet received anything. Several also came back to the question of vacant positions in between two Congresses (Secretary General and Chairman): Is there something in the new texts addressing what to do in such a situation? Others also wondered if an article on the capacity of FERPA to start legal proceedings was under consideration, using the ECI as an example.

In his answer, Dick specified first that we are not without a constitution, as some seem to fear. But the Budapest Congress instructed that the constitution be amended to be more in line with the way FERPA has evolved over time. A Working Group was therefore created and instructed

to undertake this work. Over time it turned out that more time was necessary. With the agreement of Carla Cantone, Secretary General, it was decided not to present the document at each stage of the process, but to present a final, coherent proposal. As to the amendments referred to, they are mainly from the members of the Working Group.

The Chairman then gave the floor to Henri Lourdelle, FERPA Political Advisor, so he could answer the specific point on ECI and FERPA's ability to start legal proceedings. Henri reminded attendees that legal action against the decision of the Commission not to register an ECI is provided under the ECI's Regulation; however, even this Regulation specifies that, as its name indicates, it is not organisations, as such, that can submit a European Citizens' Initiative, but European citizens organised into a Citizens' Committee. And it is this Citizens' Committee that is authorised to contest the decision of the Commission before the Court of Justice of the European Union. This is what has been done.

Organisations that participated in the debate: FNSPR, UCR-CFDT, UCR-CGT, UNIR-CFE-CGC, UNAR-CFTC, PA.SI.DY, FEJP-CC. OO, OGB-L, UCR-FO, SZEJ

To close this debate, Agostino, Interim Secretary General, thanked Dick and emphasised the extraordinary work that has been done. This is the second oral report he has presented. He also picked up on the relevant question that was raised on the necessity of having a treasurer. He also reminded the Committee members that ETUC is in the process of amending its own constitution.

Then the FERPA Chairman gave the floor to Montserrat Mir, who was the last guest of the Committee to speak. He first reminded attendees that Montserrat is the Confederal Secretary, principally in charge of Social Protection and Women's issues within ETUC. She is also responsible for FERPA within ETUC.

Montserrat first came back to the "work-life balance package", regarding which employers refuse to budge or commit to, and the pressure exerted by ETUC to have the Commission take a legislative initiative to advance gender equality. This issue should be presented in the Commission document of 26 April.

She reminded attendees of the lobbying done by ETUC on equal opportunity at the level of the European Parliament, and specifically on 8 March.

She also talked about the meeting she had on 1 March with the Social Protection Committee, which had to do with the document on sustainable pensions being drafted.

Finally, she talked about the results of the project undertaken by the Women's Committee on violence against women, whether in the workplace or in the home. She promised to send FERPA the results of this study.

In the discussion that ensued, several organisations spoke again of the differences in salaries or pension amounts that exist between men and women, to the detriment of women.

Some are upset that property acquired during the course of a professional life is included in retirees' income, as it misrepresents what retirees actually have at their disposal to live on and pay for healthcare, for example. Others wondered how to measure the “adequacy of pensions” Some attendees wondered about the social consequences of Brexit.

Finally, the question was raised as to how to know how citizens perceive the European message. FERPA must not only be a “spectator”, it must also take part in the debate on the development of the social Europe we want. FERPA and ETUC must work more closely together, knowing that there is more of a need for “legislation” than “recommendations”.

In her answer, the ETUC Confederal Secretary reminded attendees that regarding the amount of pensions, national governments are the ones who make the decisions, and the Commission cannot “impose” anything in this area, which falls under the jurisdiction of Member States. Hence the role that must be played by national trade unions.

Regarding ETUC, even though it is not opposed to so-called 2<sup>nd</sup> and even 3<sup>rd</sup> pillar pensions, the objective is to strengthen public pensions and ensure that they guarantee a pension level that allows retirees to live with dignity. These public pensions are founded on solidarity.

As for Brexit, it is a real problem for workers in the United Kingdom. ETUC has created a Working Group with economists to study the consequences and social impacts.

Regarding violence against women, ETUC launched a project in 11 countries with the slogan “Sure at home... Sure at work”, based on which it will propose recommendations.

Finally, ETUC was instructed by the Executive Committee to initiate a discussion on the subject of a minimum pension, even for those who had career breaks.

Organisations that participated in the debate: SUH, FNV, UCR-CFDT, CSC-ACV, SZEF, FEJP-CC. OO, UJP-UGT, ASRS, USO, ICTU.

The Chairman thanked the speaker and then gave the floor to Henri Lourdelle, FERPA Political Advisor.

Henri gave a PowerPoint presentation on the “European Semester”, something that was much talked about during the two days of meetings, but without being precisely defined. In his presentation, he especially stressed the impact it has on pensions and pensioners, and the role that FERPA and its affiliated organisations can play.

He ended his presentation with two pieces of factual information

- He reminded attendees that the agreement on active ageing, while awaiting formal signature by the social partners, had been ratified in advance, as required by ETUC procedures on matters relating to Social Dialogue, by all affiliated organisations except for two, one of which is Solidarnosc. He specified that this is a so-called “autonomous” agreement, and as its name indicates it will not be turned into a

Directive by the Commission because it will be the social partners, both at the national level and the European level, who will ensure its application and implementation, primarily through periodic assessments as provided for in the agreement.

- As for the ECI, it is not completely dead. But the Secretary General was supposed to meet with the lawyer who defended our interests in Luxembourg and who knows the case well and the pitfalls to avoid to have it approved by the Commission, and who agreed in principle to help us draft it. After several postponements, the meeting was supposed to take place in January. However, following the problems experienced by the Secretary General and her resulting unavailability, the meeting had to be postponed again.

In the brief discussion that followed, after thanking the speaker for the clarity of his contribution, there was regret expressed that this is not the first time that such subjects are unfortunately brought up at the end of the meeting, even though they are important. The European Semester represents a technocratic approach on the part of the Commission that we do not support. It is a restricted vision limited to a cost/investment approach. We must compel people to mobilise and challenge this economic model. We must invest in persons in favour of a Social Europe.

The speaker indicated his agreement with these comments, some of which were more addressed to the Interim Secretary General.

Organisations that participated: UCR-CFDT, FNV, SZEF

After also thanking the speaker, Michel Devacht, Chairman, gave the floor to the Interim Secretary General.

He took notice of the fact that no one had commented on the location chosen for the next mid-term meeting, so there is tacit agreement that it will be held in Rome on the dates indicated.

He emphasised that a number of issues raised over the course of these two days are very important: time should therefore be allotted during the next meetings to talk about these issues in greater detail.

Much information was provided involving important actions that need to be put in place.

We must ensure easier and more convenient sharing of information.

We must identify priorities by delving into subjects in more detail in order to identify common ground. We must also ensure that we have a strengthened role within European Union control centres.

These words received wide consent from the Committee, especially the fact that we will identify priorities and focus on those priorities and what can realistically be done. Some also expressed the wish to receive more detailed agendas and preparatory documents on which organisations could work on beforehand.



On these final thoughts, the Chairman adjourned the meeting after thanking the interpreters and all the Committee members for their active and constructive participation over the course of these two days.

Henri Lourdelle