

HL Brussels, 9 November 2017

Report of the FERPA Executive Committee meetings held on 7 and 8 November 2017

Present: Michel Devacht, President; Carla Cantone, General Secretary; FGTB-ABVV and CSC-ACV, Belgium; SUH, Croatia; PA.SY.DY, Cyprus; FEJP-CC.OO, UJP-UGT and USO, Spain; UCR-CFDT, UCR-CGT, UCR-FO, UNAR-CFTC, UNIR-CFE-CGC and UNSA-Retraîtés, France; MASZSZ and SZEFG, Hungary; ICTU, Ireland; FNP-CISL and SPI-CGIL, Italy; FNV, the Netherlands; FNSPR, Romania; SUS, Slovenia; Jacotey, UCR-FO, Chairwoman of the Financial Audit Committee; Ana Martinez Lopez, Chairwoman of the Women's Committee

Also in attendance at the meeting: Henri Lourdelle, Political Advisor and Jessica Montiel, Project Coordinator

Apologies for absence: ÖGB, Austria; POPS and OSTOE, Greece; UIL-UIL-P, Italy; LCGB and OGBL, Luxembourg; GWU, Malta; Inter-Refor.Da CGTP-IN, Portugal; FNP and CDLS, San Marino; EMEKLI-SEN, Turkey; TUC, United Kingdom; Solidarnosc, Poland

The President of FERPA, Michel Devacht, began the meeting by welcoming all those in attendance and **handed the floor to Carla Cantone**, General Secretary, who kicked things off with a brief report on the mid-term General Meeting which was held in Rome from 10 to 12 October 2017.

She re-emphasised the key texts of the Declaration that had been adopted unanimously with one abstention, namely:

- That there is a need for a social Europe, i.e. a better Europe for all
- That serious attention must be given to long-term care
- That there is a battle to be fought to ensure decent pension systems and, therefore, to secure a sufficient amount in all countries
- That the struggle to combat poverty and violence must be continued.

The General Secretary then mentioned the work carried out to date, in particular:

- The work on the constitution carried out by Dick de Graaf of the FNV, whom she thanked.
- The drafting of the Charter on the rights of retired and elderly persons, emphasising the need for a wide circulation of it.
- Concerning the Youth Committee of ETUC, the composition of which is currently undergoing changes, and pointing out that the new chairperson will be invited to the next meeting of the Executive Committee of FERPA.
- Concerning FERPA's voting rights at ETUC, recalling that it was some ten votes short of obtaining the required majority of 2/3. It is therefore necessary to continue lobbying before the ETUC Congress.

She also specified that FERPA will attend the EU Social Summit in Gothenburg organised by ETUC at which time the European Pillar of Social Rights will formally be announced by all heads of state and government. The President, Michel Devacht, will represent FERPA at the summit.

Referring to the budget - which would be discussed during the meeting - she pointed out that 2016 was marked by exceptional expenses, generated by the meetings that she had had with the 31 organisations of FERPA following her election.

Finally, the General Secretary returned to the European day of action which the General Meeting in Rome decided should be held in the spring of 2018, that is intended to provide FERPA with maximum visibility. Over the course of this day of action's events, awareness will be raised by using a platform summarising the Rome Declaration and underlining our core demands. It's also important to see how we can work with ETUC in the context of this call to action.

The meeting of the Steering Committee held on 6 December will discuss the preferred form the day of action will take - should it be a call for action on the same day in each capital or should we hold a rally in Brussels? This all is to take place in the context of what will be decided at the meetings of the Executive Committee on 13 and 14 March 2018.

In the **discussion** pursuant to this presentation, the organisations supported and welcomed the initiative for a European day of action. Several organisations reiterated the need to take action for a truly social Europe, highlighting all of the obstacles that currently exist and that impact retired and elderly persons in particular, such as, for example, the decrease in the number of doctors and hospital staff.

Others focused on the position of retired persons in society, highlighting their contribution - often unrecognised - to social, political and community life. These organisations condemned what has been called "ageism", in the same way that they repudiate sexism or racism. At the same time, society has undergone significant upheavals and there is a need to consider something new and new rights for retired and elderly persons and to distinguish between social security and welfare. It is also necessary to take action, not only for equal pay but for a harmonisation of tax systems. Also mentioned in the discussion was the support that FERPA might be able to garner from the European Parliament, which in recent months has adopted, among other things, a poverty report that FERPA could rely on. More broadly, despite the upcoming elections in eighteen months, the trade union movement needs to take action and commit itself, especially to block the rise of "populism".

One suggestion in terms of FERPA's visibility, is to produce a short film a few minutes long, with the Anthem of Europe in the background, that shows FERPA in action and lists its demands.

Finally, the Belgian unions mentioned the rally that was to be held on 8 November in Brussels on the European Pillar of Social Rights and suggested that a delegation from FERPA could join the Belgian trade union organisations.

In **her response**, Carla Cantone agreed with everything that had been said. Regarding the demonstration by the Belgian organisations, a delegation from FERPA would attend, in the company of its President. She approved the proposal to produce a short film about FERPA. During the spring 2018 event, it would be necessary to talk about all the themes contained in our declaration, including poverty and the tax situation, without forgetting the discrimination impacting retired persons: "they are former workers and deserve respect". As regards health assistance, the General Secretary mentioned the cutbacks in medication and emphasised that care concerns more than just "wheelchairs". She suggested that FERPA take an initiative in autumn on its own in this regard by, for example, inviting experts to talk about innovative medication. She called on the organisations in attendance to submit proposals to her.

She concluded by referring to the political situation in the EU which is beginning to swing to the right and towards populism. She insisted that FERPA has an enormous responsibility to redirect Europe's course towards a pluralist political democracy.

The following organisations participated in the discussion: FNP-CISL, CSC-ACV, UCR-CFDT, UCR-CGT, FNV, UCR-FO, SPI-CGIL, UNIR-CFE-CGC, SUH, UJP-UGT

The President, Michel Devacht, then handed the floor to **Dick de Graaf**, the Constitution Working Group Coordinator. After reminding participants of the composition of the Working Group, Dick listed the work that had already been completed by the group in preparation of a presentation to the Executive Committee for adoption at the next Congress. He also announced that the next meeting of the Working Group would be held on the afternoon of 5 December, the day before the meeting of the Steering Committee.

During the short **discussion** that followed, information was requested concerning the discussion on reform of the ETUC Constitution, the response was that the only two stumbling blocks for now relate to parity within the statutory bodies of ETUC and FERPA's voting rights. These points will be decided at the next ETUC Congress. The composition of the Women's Committee and the exercise of voting rights were also mentioned. These topics will all be included in the documents currently being revised.

To **conclude** the debate, the General Secretary, after thanking Dick de Graaf for his investment and the work carried out, re-emphasised that:

- FERPA is a trade union organisation of people interested in exercising their right of representation
- She agrees with strengthening the Women's Committee
- She would like to modify the procedure for electing people called upon to lead FERPA.

The following organisations participated in the discussion: SPI-CGIL, SUS and UCR-FO

Michèle Jacotey, Chairwoman of the Financial Audit Committee, presented her **financial report**. She pointed out that after reminders had been sent regarding late payment of dues, the situation was being formalised. Additional expenditure, not provided for in an insufficient projected budget, appears on the balance sheet that registered a deficit of €22,600, which can be explained by:

- The projected deficit for 2016 in the amount of €9,000
- Costs still chargeable to the 2015 budget in the amount of €8,600
- A drop in income from dues of €5,000.

The accounting situation as at 10/10/2017 revealed that the line items foreseen for were still in line with the projected budget; however, there still appears to be a deficit of €4,360. It's for this reason that the projected budget for 2018 will take the reality of certain costs into account.

To conclude, she called upon the Executive Committee to once again put its confidence in the Financial Audit Committee.

In the **debate** that followed, several organisations, after thanking the Chairwoman for the work carried out by the Financial Audit Committee, asked for greater transparency regarding dues in

arrears: which organisations and for what reasons, particularly with a view to their specific national situations? Some of these repeated a proposal previously made for the creation of a solidarity fund for organisations facing particularly difficult political situations. Several also emphasised the impossibility of continuing to operate and vote on a budget in deficit. A discussion is needed on financial resources. In other words, after conducting a more in-depth analysis of the deficit, should the level of dues be revised? Finally, it was noted that no further provisions were being made for the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI): does that mean that the initiative has been scrapped?

In **response**, the General Secretary thanked Michèle Jacotey again for the work carried out under trying circumstances. She agreed to the naming the organisations in arrears with their dues as well as the reasons given. There is a need to calmly discuss each of the factors involved: the need for solidarity on the one hand, but also the need to understand.

The deficit issue is a political one, relating to the increase in the number of members. Trade unionism is undergoing a period of crisis and FERPA has found itself in a difficult position. There had been a need to clarify a certain number of misunderstandings; however, in the end, and without much delay, things had returned to normal.

The next 2018 projected budget will be presented at the Executive Committee meeting in March.

The Chairwoman of the Financial Audit Committee, in turn, thanked the participants. While acknowledging that things are not always easy, particularly because the documents requested either aren't returned at all or only returned extraordinarily late, she admitted that a balance sheet does in fact need to be balanced and income must be able to cover expenses.

At the conclusion of this debate, the Chairwoman's report was unanimously adopted.

The following organisations participated in the discussion: UCR-CGT, UNSA-Retraité(s), UCR-CFDT, UNIR-CFE-CGC

The Chair of the meeting then gave the floor to **Henri Lourdelle**, political advisor to FERPA, to present, using a PowerPoint presentation, the result of the work that he had carried out pursuant to the survey conducted among the FERPA trade union organisations on **pension systems in Europe** entitled "European perspectives on retirement...Different structures... Common issues for pensioners..." to which 15 countries responded.

In the **discussion** that followed this presentation, all the organisations that participated highlighted the quality of the work and thanked the speaker. Several emphasised the role played by the financial institutions and the World Bank in the development of second pillar pensions. Certain contributions pointed out that several key areas for demands emerged from this presentation:

- How can the deterioration in purchasing power of old-age pensions be compensated for? Via indexing based on salaries?
- How can acquisition of pension entitlements by women be increased?
- How can a decent minimum pension which should be above the poverty threshold (while highlighting that, in several countries, there is a guaranteed minimum pension for those who have never made or made very few contributions and those who have had a full working career) be guaranteed?

Others provided details concerning the situation in their countries. This was also the case with some organisations that did not respond to the survey.

There were some organisations interested in knowing what kind of influence that pensioner organisations could have on the pensions debate in the various countries. Others noted the close link between poverty and pension issues. Ultimately, both are linked to the challenge of full employment and youth employment in particular. Poverty prevents people from making appropriate contributions to pension schemes. A recommendation was made for FERPA to meet with the leaders of the European Parliament (at least the democratic parties) after the Gothenburg Summit in order to ensure that poverty and pension issues be included in their electoral campaigns. Finally, several organisations would like FERPA to be able to receive funding from the Commission by presenting a European project on this theme.

In his **response**, limited to the technical aspects, and leaving the “political” aspects for the General Secretary, Henri Lourdelle first warmly thanked all those who participated for their support and for the richness of their contributions. This was followed by several responses of a technical nature, mainly concerning a possible project to be presented to the Commission. Clarifying the objectives and contours of the project would be necessary. He asked that any organisations with something to add to the PowerPoint presentation or any requests for clarification in this regard be made quickly in writing.

The General Secretary, Carla Cantone then provided some responses of a political nature. Firstly, and more specifically, she agreed to meet with the political groups in the European Parliament. She would also meet with ETUC to discuss the topic of poverty and to harmonise our efforts.

She also agreed to develop a project to be submitted to the Commission, specifying that a small working group would need to be formed for this purpose to do the drafting and to ensure that everyone feels involved.

She then underlined that if it wasn't possible to have a unified system, there must be a single policy approach. This was why, based on the presentation given and having regard to our Rome Declaration, she was going to extract everything relating to pensions and use this to draw up a Manifesto that would be translated into French, English and more languages if possible, to be presented to the national confederations and to raise a broad awareness during our European day of action next spring.

The following organisations participated in the discussion: SUH, FNSPR, UCR-CFDT, SUS, FNP-CISL, FNV, UJP-UGT, ASRS, SPI-CGIL, UNSA-Retraités, ICTU, PA.SY.DY, FEJP-CCOO, USO.

The floor was then handed to the **General Secretary** for her to provide some information on the future **FERPA Congress**.

Since the ETUC Congress will once again take place in May 2019, FERPA will hold its own during the last two weeks of April 2019.

In the interim, the following work will need to be done:

- Formulate the strategy paper to act as a commitment
- Draw up the Regulations for the Congress
- Consider how to facilitate genuine debate by everyone at Congress
- Determine the procedures and dates for submission of applications

- Select the venue

The Steering Committee meeting on 6 December will decide on the “process” and a preliminary discussion will therefore take place and be concluded at the March meeting of the Executive.

A small working group will be tasked with writing the first draft of the strategy paper.

Following this presentation, a question was asked concerning the procedure for issuing a call for applications.

The General Secretary responded with several clarifications:

- Regarding her own nomination, she had to consider it and discuss it with her organisations
- Other nominations could of course be submitted with the support of a number of organisations.

As for the venue, several aspects had to be taken into consideration:

- The costs of renting the venue where the Congress would be held, as well as the cost of hotels
- The transport facilities available for attending the Congress venue
- The on-site “logistics” (teams, secretarial services, etc.)

A number of possibilities have already been proposed: Belgrade? Madrid? Vienna (but this is an expensive city!)?

The issue therefore remains undecided...

The following organisations participated in the discussion: UCR-CGT

The Chair then gave the floor to **Ana Martinez Lopez**, Chairwoman of the Women’s Committee, to give a **report on the Committee meeting** that had been held the previous morning.

A work programme had been developed that would be implemented during the second part of this term. She then referred to the 25 November campaign and the poster on violence against women that had been presented during the meeting and the discussion that it had triggered. Following the questionnaire that was sent, a monitoring centre will be established to provide data for the discussions and give an overview of women’s situations. This monitoring centre will serve as the basis for any meetings requested from the European Parliament. The Chairwoman will send the translated “Manifesto” that has been discussed by e-mail before the week is up.

The Chairwoman concluded her presentation on the work of the Committee mentioning that a Women’s meeting would be held. This would be organised by a small group. There would be presentations on healthcare, housing, gender violence, societal “glass ceilings”, etc.

Since there were, strangely, no responses to this contribution, the Chair of the meeting then moved on to **any other business**.

- The CSC, back from the Demonstration that had been held that morning, started by thanking the delegation for its participation. She pointed out that it had attracted a lot of people (around 10,000). She used the opportunity to talk to an MEP in attendance, Claude Rollin, former president of the CSC, who confirmed that he was fully prepared to meet with FERPA to raise the issues of retired persons. He suggested contacting his

office to arrange a meeting. She concluded her contribution by thanking Henri for the recent work that his organisation had organised during the seminar on European trade union activism by retired persons, which the participating members greatly appreciated (around 200).

- The FNV, in order to improve bilateral communication between the organisations repeated the request already made for the e-mail addresses of all of the participants. The FNV also requested a number of clarifications on the ETUC's campaign in relation to social rights.
- The ASRS asked whether there had been a response to the letter sent by the General Secretary of FERPA to the prime minister of the Republic of Serbia.

In response, it was specified that:

- The e-mail addresses, which are in the possession of the secretariat, are available and will be sent
- Information on the campaign on social rights is available on the ETUC website
- Serbia has not yet responded to the letter sent

With no other question being raised and with no further items on the agenda, the Chair of the meeting thanked the members of the Committee for their active participation. The interpreters were also thanked.

2018 calendar of FERPA statutory meetings

Steering Committee meetings:

- 15/02/2018
- 23/05/2018
- 12/09/2018
- 06/12/2018

Executive Committee meetings:

- 13-14/03/2018
- 16-17/10/2018