



Presentation of the FERPA Activity Report by the President

Dear friends, dear delegates, dear colleagues,

In 2015, on a proposal from several French trade unions, the Executive Committee elected me President of our European Federation of Retired and Elderly People. My role is to preside, meaning I did not think I would be standing before you to present FERPA's activity report. I do so with much humility, but not without pride.

During the mandate that has just elapsed, the life of FERPA has not just been a "long quiet river" to borrow an image from French filmography.

Indeed, the General Secretary, Carla Cantone, appointed by our Italian colleagues from the CGIL, was elected during the 7th Congress in Budapest, **in September 2015**. For several months she was dealing with family issues that kept her away from Brussels, even though she continued to follow the activities of FERPA from Rome, in collaboration with our colleague Agostino Siciliano. Agostino had agreed to take on the role of acting Deputy General Secretary in the last few months. Let us thank him here for doing so.

Then Carla, having been called on by her political party in Italy, agreed to stand in her country's parliamentary elections. She was then elected as a Member of the Italian Parliament in March. Following that election, she submitted her resignation as General Secretary of FERPA at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Faced with this somewhat unprecedented situation in our trade union history at FERPA, in March, the Executive Committee, on a proposal from the Steering Committee and on Carla's suggestion, asked me to simultaneously take up my role as President of FERPA and the responsibilities of the General Secretary, including that of organising the 8th Congress. As a union activist since 1967, so for 51 years, and a committed European, I did not hesitate. So, it was with pleasure and enthusiasm that I accepted these additional responsibilities.

As a result, today I have the responsibility to report to you on the activities of FERPA over the last three years.

At the start of her mandate, Carla had presented her work programme for the next four years. It was structured around two components:

- one on an organisational level;
- the other on the trade union policy level.

Then, at the Mid-Term General Meeting in Rome on 11 and 12 October 2017, Carla provided an initial assessment of the activities of FERPA since her election to the General Secretariat of FERPA until that date.

Without repeating everything she said at the time, which nevertheless covered the activities carried out by FERPA and its organisations, I would simply like to recall that she focused in particular on:

- the bringing up to date of the FERPA website;
- visits that she had already made to the different FERPA organisations;

- the reminders that had already been given at the time for the payment of dues. She also focused on the involvement of FERPA in the bodies of ETUC (participation in the meetings of the Executive Committee and the Steering Committee, the Mid-Term General Meeting in Rome where the right of FERPA to vote in the ETUC bodies had been put forward, or in the meetings of the Social Protection Committee or the European Social Dialogue, in particular through participation in the negotiation of the Autonomous Framework Agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-Generational Approach).

Finally, I must not overlook the drawing up of two documents during this mandate:

- that of the Charter for the Rights of Retired and Elderly People in Europe in September 2016, which should help us in our interventions with candidates in the context of our campaign for the European elections; and
- the Memorandum of Understanding with the ETUC Youth Committee, in the same year, that we have a responsibility to bring to life and put into practice in our national organisations.

Fortunately, the life and actions of FERPA did not stop after the Mid-Term General Meeting and in particular after Carla's departure!

Thanks to you, the members of the Steering Committee and the Executive Committee, whom I thank today, on behalf of all of us, FERPA has continued to take up its responsibilities with respect to the organisations of which it is a member, such as the ETUC bodies, or in the context of its various working groups, whether it be:

- the Working Group on the Reform of the Constitution, which Dick Degraaf, as the coordinator of the Working Group on the Reform of the Constitution and of the Internal Regulations, achieved for this Congress; or
- the Women's Committee, under the aegis of its Chairwoman Ana Martinez Lopez, with its highlights, such as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Let us give them both our warm thanks here.

Life inside FERPA therefore goes on. Since the Mid-Term General Meeting in Rome, FERPA has held:

- two statutory meetings of the Executive Committee: (on 7 and 8 November 2017 and on 13 and 14 March 2018);
- four Steering Committee meetings: (6 December 2017, 12 March 2018, 29 May 2018 and 12 September 2018);
- two preparatory working group meetings for the 8th Congress (14 May and 11 September 2018).

FERPA also participated and intervened in the various meetings organised by ETUC, namely:

- in the five meetings of the Executive Committee, which were held on 26 October and 13 and 14 December 2017, and 7-8 March, 12 April and 24-26 June 2018 (the last meeting of the Executive Committee was held under the Bulgarian Presidency of the European Union);



- three meetings of the expanded Steering Committee on 21 November 2017, 7 February and 13 September 2018.

FERPA also participated in the ETUC Summer School in Montepulciano, in Italy, in the context of the preparation for the 14th ETUC Congress, which will be held in Vienna (Austria) from 28 to 31 May 2019.

On 21 November 2017, as President, I participated on behalf of FERPA in the Social Summit in Gothenburg on the European Pillar of Social Rights. It was an important meeting.

Regarding the other activities conducted recently, FERPA participated in the consultation organised at the European Parliament on the next new Social Security Coordination Regulation, which guarantees the safeguarding of Social Security rights for workers and their families who move within the European Union.

FERPA also participated in two meetings on the implementation of the Autonomous Framework Agreement on Active Ageing and an Inter-Generational Approach, one of which was a training seminar organised by the European Trade Union Institute.

It also participated in the conference organised in Brussels by the European Trade Union Institute on “The World(s) of Work in Transition”.

FERPA also provided a response:

- with ETUC, to the public consultation organised by the Commission on Gender Equality;
- in the context of the European Economic and Social Committee, to the consultation on “The Future of Civil Society in Europe”; and
- at the 5th ECI Day.

Despite all this work that has been done, with help from all of you, and not forgetting the FERPA Secretariat, I do however have some regrets, including that of not having been able (given the specific circumstances of the last year) to hold the national days of actions that we had decided on at the General Meeting in Rome. I am sure that the new management of FERPA will make it a priority to place this item on the agenda for its programme of action for the new mandate, without forgetting the involvement of FERPA in the preparation for the upcoming European elections next year, in particular in the context of the initiatives that will be implemented by ETUC.

At this point in my speech, I would like to highlight the key role of our friend and colleague, Henri Lourdelle, advisor to FERPA, for the smooth running and the sound preparation of this democratic meeting. I would also like to give a mention to Jessica Monteil, our assistant.

Despite health problems that kept her away from the secretariat for several months, she used her skills for the effective administrative management of this Congress.

Let us give them our warm thanks.

As the good Frenchman that I am, I would like to end the presentation of this Activity Report by mentioning the motto of the city of Paris, which is perfectly suited to FERPA: “Fluctuat, nec mergitur”: we have been **“tossed”**, but thanks to you, to all of us, we have **not “sunk”**, **we have not gone under.**



It is therefore with a certain optimism that at the end of this 8th Congress, I pass the torch to the new FERPA management team.

And I also reiterate to you my thanks for the support and trust you have given me, during this mandate and especially in recent months, and in particular in the new responsibilities that you have entrusted to me that I enthusiastically accepted.

Yes, thank you all and to continue the nautical metaphor: “Fair winds to FERPA, to its crew and to its members!”

Michel Devacht