

Minutes of the FERPA Mid-term General Assembly
held in virtual mode on 21 and 22 October 2021

The General Assembly was first preceded by the Executive Committee meeting to ratify the rotation of Belgian members on the Steering Committee. Luc JANSSEN (FGTB) was therefore unanimously elected member of the Management Committee.

Prior to the meeting, Jessica MONTIEL, Project Coordinator, had provided practical and technical information on the conduct of the GA meeting, in virtual mode.

Then, the President, Lajos MAYER, opened the meeting of the FERPA Mid-Term General Assembly by welcoming the participating members.

The agenda was unanimously adopted.

He then gave the floor to Patrizia VOLPONI (FNP-CISL) and Dick DE GRAAF (FNV) to recall the memory of Mr. BONFANTI, former President of FNP-CISL and Mr. DE VRIES, former President of FNV, both former members of the Executive Committee of FERPA, who had recently passed away, followed by a minute's silence.

The President then gave the floor to the Secretary General of FERPA, Agostino SICILIANO, for his presentation.

He began by outlining the context and the particularly problematic circumstances that had prevailed during the three years since the last Congress.

He recalled the initiatives taken during this period,

- both internally within the ETUC, by participating and speaking, in particular at all the meetings, but also at the Vienna Congress or by participating in the Manifestation organised in Brussels in April 2019
- and externally, with the European institutions, such as sending postcards in May 2019 to the candidates in the European elections, setting out our demands.

The objective was to give more visibility to FERPA.

He underlined that he had devoted himself to reorganising and relaunching the role of FERPA with the formation of a Secretariat which meets every week, but also by assigning to each member of the Steering Committee the responsibility of following up a specific file, corresponding to the essential demands of FERPA, entrusting to Henri, the coordination of this work on the files.

He also mentioned the recent attack on the CGIL offices in Rome by fascist squads during a demonstration against the health passport. He immediately assured the leaders of CGIL and SPI-CGIL of the solidarity of the whole FERPA and denounced this attack on democracy.

He recalled the chaotic and fragmented management of the pandemic in many countries and the protest intervention undertaken jointly by FERPA and the European Federation of Public Services (EPSU) to the European Institutions, asking them to remedy this terrible situation.

Regarding vaccines and vaccination with the ETUC, FERPA has committed itself to demand a strong European coordination on their distribution in the different countries in order to leave no one behind. The pandemic with all its consequences, including social ones, has forced the European Institutions to recognise the importance of the values that FERPA has always advocated, namely the importance of union and solidarity between countries. This health emergency must give rise to a more united, more supportive, more inclusive Europe, capable of protecting and responding to all citizens of all ages. It is essential that part of the economic resources deployed by Europe be used to increase spending on social protection, as the most vulnerable population continues to pay a heavy price for dysfunctional social and health services and the poverty rate is not decreasing.

As recovery and resilience plans are being defined or implemented, FERPA and its affiliates must make their voice heard by demanding social investments. It is also important to give substance to our platform of demands which is the "Manifesto" that we have produced with the Steering Committee and the coordination work of Henri. In it, we demand, among other things, the establishment of a European minimum pension, as a tool to fight poverty and social exclusion, aiming to guarantee everyone the right to adequate resources to live in dignity at all stages of life and in particular at the time of retirement.

In recent months FERPA has also been busy with other important issues such as the "Green Paper on Demographic Change in an Ageing Europe", responding to all the questions raised in this Green Paper, and challenging the unacceptable concept that ageing is a cost when it is a source of investment.

FERPA has also, in the framework of the Conference on the Future of Europe, reinforced, on the EU institutional website, the ETUC's demands for a more social Europe by complementing them with its own demands.

FERPA also reacted to the "Joint Report of the Commission and the Social Protection Committee on long-term care and adequacy of pensions in an ageing society". Since the beginning of the year, FERPA is also part of the Civil Society Liaison Group which is a body of the European Economic and Social Committee.

In November 2017 the European Pillar of Social Rights was approved, FERPA hopes that the joint declaration of the members of the European Council approved in Portugal last May marks a real step forward to start implementing it, while calling for it to become an integral part of the European Treaties.

On 1 October FERPA celebrated the International Day of Older Persons and the year 2021 was dedicated to digital equity for all ages. While FERPA supports innovation, it is extremely careful that it does not mean the "digital exclusion" of millions of older people. It is therefore crucial for FERPA to ensure that older people have access to digital training and that digital innovation is age-friendly.

All these issues, including a Resolution of the European Parliament last November on a more social Europe of solidarity and the conclusions of the ETUC SociAll project in which FERPA participated, have allowed FERPA to confirm and strengthen its demands.

From 8 to 10 November, the ETUC Mid-term Conference will be held in Lisbon, where FERPA's right to vote will be discussed again, as it has been for years, with a proposal to amend the statutes in its favour, i.e. to stop considering abstentions as negative votes. FERPA will continue to fight for the recognition it is due.

The Secretary General concluded his speech by stressing that together, as proposed at the time of his election, we have succeeded over the last three years in creating a visible FERPA with a strong and coherent management group, capable of influencing political choices, including within the ETUC.

FERPA now has a new, modern and functional website containing all the news of FERPA and its affiliates and always updated thanks to the financial and organisational commitment of UIL-P, which the Secretary General thanked. And he concluded by thanking also the colleagues of the ETUC Organisation Department for their organisational support which allowed FERPA to hold all its statutory meetings by video link. He also thanked the interpreters for their professionalism.

He concluded by saying that we must now move from words to deeds!

After this speech, the President opened the debate.

First of all, everyone was happy that this GA could be held, even if in virtual mode. Many felt that the Communication covered well the whole activity of FERPA in the period and thanked for the work done. Many insisted on the need to put social issues back on the agenda of the European Union and on a European Union based on tolerance. The role played by social protection systems is fundamental for citizens. The pandemic has put a strain on health systems and the people who work in them. Moreover, due to budgetary constraints and/or restrictions, beds are being cut and the hospital system is being weakened. It is therefore necessary to strengthen human resources in this area and to keep qualified staff. More resources are needed to meet the needs. FERPA must react, because public health cannot be subject to the laws of the market. Furthermore, at European level, the EU must acquire its pharmaceutical and medical independence, so that it is not exposed to buying on the world market under conditions imposed on costs, quantities delivered or delivery times. As far as vaccination is concerned, there must be the greatest possible information and transparency. We also need to think about the Europe we want. Many also stressed the quality of the Manifesto and the work done. Other organisations expressed their solidarity with the Italian trade unions and their concerns about the rise of "extremes" in Europe. Some returned to the issue of the digital divide and suggested working with the ETUC on training in digital tools, particularly for retired and elderly people. Others insisted on the importance for FERPA to obtain the right to vote, as this would be an objective recognition of the work it does, whether at European level or within the ETUC. Finally, the importance of combating stereotypes about older people as a homogeneous group unable to make their own decisions was also stressed. FERPA must take a firm stand, including for a greener society. One speaker added: "Without memory, we do not exist."

In his response, the Secretary General repeatedly insisted on FERPA's right to vote and on the need not to consider abstentions as negative votes. He also referred to the pandemic which had changed our lives but which had also shown the fragility of the economy. The Stability Pact must no longer function as it did in the past. The European Commission must be obliged to act by means of a directive and not by means of recommendations, both with regard to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and for any initiative in the social field. The Secretary General also insisted on the need to have more interaction between us, more listening between us and more participation. For him, it is important to devote more time to European affairs and not only at the level of FERPA, but at the national level by lobbying the Governments for example. Finally, he said that we have a lot to do to give content to our demands. We must therefore continue to work and not wait until the day after tomorrow.

The President thanked the Secretary General for his answers and added that one of the essential keys was to invest in people and not only in infrastructure.

The following organisations took part in the debate: UCR-CGT, UCR-FO, CGT-IN, FGTB, SPI-CGIL, UIL-UILP, UNIA, ÖGBL, UNSA, UGTE, USO

In the meantime, he welcomed Mrs Klara DOBREV, Hungarian Vice-President of the European Parliament, who addressed the GA members by video.

In Hungary, as almost everywhere in Europe, there is a tendency to play on the oppositions between young and old or between those who are in employment and those who are not. In the 21st century, these problems must be tackled. Development policies must be put in place. And if we ask ourselves why some countries are doing better than others, we have to admit that it is those that invest in people. If you look at the Scandinavian or Baltic countries, you can see that the support they give concerns all citizens. It is a question of everyone's interests, including young people. What is their future in today's society? Should they stay or leave? Are they being treated fairly in relation to their grandparents?

In her country, pensions (on average 200 euros) are insufficient to live in dignity. They should also be properly indexed, which would help to narrow the gap between employees and pensioners. In Eastern Europe, the elderly only count during election periods. The situation of women and their lack of social recognition, except for the tasks traditionally assigned to them, is similar in the EU. The ageing society is an opportunity to strengthen confidence in society.

The Secretary General thanked, on behalf of FERPA, Mrs Klara DOBREV. He noted that many of the points that had been raised concerned FERPA. It was an encouragement for FERPA to have allies in the Parliament, including its Vice-President. FERPA demands a minimum pension, linked to the quality of public services. The elderly often play a key role in households, and the elderly often support the young. There is a need to work together, to have a common work. The future of young people is our future. Barriers must be removed.

The President then gave the floor to Henri LOURDELLE, Special Advisor to FERPA, to present the Manifesto.

With the help of a short PowerPoint presentation, Henri recalled that it had been almost two years since the Secretary General had launched this "project", based on the compilation of dossiers, with the aim of involving all FERPA organisations in their preparation and reflection. He thanked all those who had contributed to its development.

He also and above all thanked the members of the Executive Committee who had accepted the responsibility entrusted to them by the Secretary General to take charge of a specific "dossier" and to have carried out the work despite the difficulties (certainly the pandemic, but also and already before, the slowness of the feedback or sometimes, the non-responses)

It is certainly not perfect, but it has the merit of being the fruit of collective reflection and it is intended to bring people together.

Here is a reminder of its structure:

- A title that sums it all up: The Right to Live in Dignity for Retired and Elderly People
- Then a preamble
- Then, four themes, each of which is broken down into concrete proposals and which are essential rights for FERPA: the right to decent pensions for all, the right to quality health care

for all, the right to quality housing that takes into account the needs of the elderly and the right to access to energy and essential services.

As this is a public document, as requested in June, it does not contain

- the definition of our priorities

- nor our proposals for action. These will be specified in the following debates

Finally, it specifies what is expected from this first debate. We do not go through the document paragraph by paragraph. At the June Executive Committee meeting, this work was done. Without "reopening Pandora's box", it could still be amended, but only marginally...

Members are therefore asked to confirm their support for this text, which will be and is our common thread for our future demands/trade union action. Indeed, if in its drafting, it marks a point of arrival, it is in reality a point of departure, because, as the General Secretary will explain, we will have to use it, popularise it, with our members, our teams but also with the public authorities at whatever level. By adopting this Manifesto, as we will be asked to do following this first debate, the organisations will thus mark their agreement to make it live.

Following this presentation, the President opened the debate.

Several people thanked the work done, particularly during the pandemic, and considered that it was a unifying element. Overall, the interventions also emphasised that it was a good "product", well produced, concise, well written and in line with the ETUC's action with the SociAll project. An observation was made on the follow-up to the key points of the Manifesto, such as how to calculate the minimum pension. It was suggested to use Eurostat and/or ask for help from Eurofound. Short and medium term objectives should be defined, and even action sheets should be drawn up. A suggestion was made to include the issue of the digital divide in the Manifesto.

In his response, Henri thanked all those who intervened for their broad support for the Manifesto. With this document FERPA clearly shows what it wants. And as it has been widely underlined, it is a federative document and sufficiently broad for everyone to find their way. As for the question of the digital divide, it seems difficult to introduce it now, because, even if it is important and topical, this point has not been discussed among us. However, it remains on our minds and will certainly be taken up again at a future Executive Committee meeting.

The President put the adoption of the Manifesto to the vote. It was adopted unanimously.

The following organisations took part in the debate: FNV, UNSA, UIL-UILP, ÖGBL, SUH, CSC-ACV, UCR-CGT, USO, UCR-FO, SPI- CGIL

The President then gave the floor to the Secretary General of FERPA, Agostino SICILIANO, to introduce the modalities for the publication and dissemination of the Manifesto.

The Secretary General reminded the meeting that everything must be done with the same conviction and that we must now move forward, as this platform must be known. He therefore proposed that the letter that would accompany the Manifesto should not be signed by the Secretary General alone, but that it should be signed by all the leaders of the FERPA organisations, accompanied by the acronym of their respective organisation. As the Manifesto will be sent to all the European Institutions and in all countries, as well as to all the ETUC organisations, even those without pensioners' organisations, this will give FERPA visibility and an identity: people will know who FERPA is. It will be possible to take initiatives for the dissemination of the Manifesto, including travel. It will be necessary to have support at the national level. We must be convinced that we are right.

After this presentation, the President opened the debate.

The speakers confirmed their agreement with the Secretary General's proposal to ensure that the Manifesto is distributed as widely as possible, even in a solemn manner with regard to the European Parliament. And/ or the Commission. A nice presentation of the Manifesto will have to be made. The Manifesto could also be disseminated on social networks, or perhaps a video could be made to present our demands? The dissemination should be done in a consensual way. However, the question of languages for dissemination arises.

In his reply, the Secretary General insisted on the need to have the signatures of all the leaders and to have the acronym of all the organisations, because, as one member pointed out, it was not conceivable that, having voted unanimously for the Manifesto, we would refuse to sign it. The Secretary General's proposal concerning the signature of all the leaders was put to the vote. It was unanimously approved, less 3 abstentions (FNV, UNIA CGTP-IN), some organisations wished to consult their members beforehand.

The General Secretary then proposed to wait for the December Executive Committee to take a final decision. In the meantime, the graphic design would be prepared.

The following organisations took part in the debate: UNIA, SPI-CGIL, UCR-FO, USO, FNV, UIL-UILP, UCR-CGT CSC-ACV, UCR-CFTC

The President, Lajos MAYER, then gave the floor to the General Secretary of the ETUC, Luca VISENTINI, for his intervention.

The General Secretary of the ETUC spoke by videoconference from Strasbourg, where he was attending the Conference on the Future of Europe.

He began by returning to the health crisis and the pandemic which, he said, had disrupted our daily lives. Adequate protections must be put in place for those who have been unable to work or have lost their jobs as a result. A system of compensation between the 27 countries must be established and schemes developed at European level such as the SURE programme. The ETUC is doing its best on employment and health and public services. Long-term investments are needed, including in the service areas. Those who work from home are the 'heroes' of this pandemic and they have a right to protection. Good protection of the population means free access to vaccination, and in this area the elderly must be vaccinated as a priority. However, there are still too many people who are not vaccinated, either because of a lack of vaccines or because they do not want to. The ETUC advocates access to vaccines for all. While the ETUC is in favour of the mutual recognition of vaccines, it must be said that there are problems with Russian and Chinese vaccines. As far as economic recovery is concerned, the price to pay for the ETUC is that investments go to employment, health, social services, workers and citizens. A different model for recovery must therefore be chosen. A few days ago the Commission launched a consultation on tax reform. The ETUC will develop its own priorities in this area and launch a consultation. As for the energy transition, jobs in fossil fuels must be replaced by quality jobs. As for the digital transition, it affects the whole population, including the elderly and retired. If climate change policy is not managed properly, there will be fractures. There are opportunities for Europe to become energy independent. There is a need to rebuild our European social model through the principles of the European Socle of Social Rights, which must be implemented at policy level. The Secretary General then mentioned the various initiatives taken recently by the Commission, such as the Directive on transparency of remuneration or on equality between women and men. He also mentioned the Recommendation on the minimum wage, while stressing that there is nothing on the minimum pension. But, for the ETUC General Secretary, the "Recommendations" are insufficient,

guidelines and a framework are needed to enable people to live in dignity. This is an essential point, he stressed, at the top of the ETUC's priorities. As for democracy, including social democracy, it is linked to the Conference on the Future of Europe. Attacks from the far right were increasing and he too denounced the attack on the CGIL in Italy. He then returned to the issue of FERPA's right to vote. He indicated that an amendment, supported by the entire ETUC Secretariat, would be submitted to the ETUC Mid-term General Assembly in Lisbon. He encouraged FERPA to repeat this demand and to continue the battle together. It was a matter of principle, pointing out that there were European Industry Federations that did not cover all the countries of the EU and that still had voting rights. He concluded his intervention by congratulating FERPA for its commitment and for its website. He was impressed by the innovations that have been put in place and congratulated the Secretariat and the Management Committee of FERPA.

Following this intervention, only one question was asked by the SPI-CGIL concerning the Year 2022 which will be the "European Year of Youth". Luca replied that indeed, with the ETUC Youth Committee, actions were envisaged, including with FERPA. The year 2022, which would be the year of preparation for the ETUC Congress, would also be devoted to this priority. He strongly encouraged FERPA to be in contact with the ETUC Youth Committee.

The Secretary General of FERPA then intervened to thank Luca for his intervention and to tell him that he was going to participate in the event created by the Youth Committee the day before the ETUC Mid-term General Assembly in Lisbon. He also told him that the Manifesto had been unanimously adopted the day before and that it would be submitted to the European Institutions and the ETUC. It would be circulated to all the members of the ETUC Executive Committee and he asked the ETUC to help him with this. Luca replied that he agreed to circulate it to the members.

The President then gave the floor to Mireille PAUME, President of the ETUC Women's Committee.

The President began by apologising for her absence the previous day, as there was a new General Secretary and a new bureau in the CGT pensioners' union. In addition, the CGT was preparing to organise a large demonstration on 1 December.

Concerning the activity of the Women's Committee, some things have been done, she said, but not all. On the website there are three working reports with proposals for action. There are also posters for 8 March and 25 November against violence against women, and she notes in passing that violence against older women is increasing. She acknowledged that she had not succeeded in setting up the office. She noted that the posters and reports had been circulated widely, but that there had not been much feedback. Mireille then raised several concerns, including that of retired women who are often close to the poverty line. It is important that the situation of retired women, which is deteriorating, is brought to the fore. She also mentioned the situation of employed women, particularly those working in the health sector. She emphasised that emerging from the pandemic is extremely complicated. She noted the difficulty of making the link between employed women and retired women. She mentioned the situation of women in Moldova who work in underestimated professions. Finally, she noted that all the problems identified in the Manifesto are multiplied for women. Everyone has been impacted by the pandemic and its consequences, but women have been impacted even more. It is important to stand together.

After this speech, the President opened the debate.

First of all there were thanks for the posters, but there were also a number of questions about the Women's Committee, its role and the Women's Committee Working Group. For example, it was noted, what is the role of the Women's Committee? It was suggested that at least a video conference be organised to take stock of the situation, particularly with regard to the Committee's problems. But perhaps it was pointed out that there is a question of resources? Other questions were also raised: How are retired women recognised in society? How can they be followed up logically by gynaecologists? How can the Women's Committee contribute to restoring an image of pride to women? Without ignoring the negative sides, we must show the positive side. More specific but important points were then raised, such as the health system and the question of how to pay for cures, or the difference between women's and men's pensions, or the reversionary pensions, i.e. the pensions of widowed women. It was suggested that a working group should be set up on these issues relating to women's pensions. Others insisted on intergenerational solidarity: if salaries, if pensions, if maternity leave is taken into account, then later pensions are better. The real problem is before retirement, so we should think about what we can do with our trade union colleagues. The need for joint work between the ETUC Women's Committee and the FERPA Women's Committee was also stressed. Finally, several interventions asked about the objectives for the next two years? To know how to move forward, while stressing that the wage gap was not the only problem.

In her reply, Mireille said that she should have set up an office and that she was at fault. But she promised that by the end of the month there would be a call for applications for the office. However, if she sends a letter, there may be a translation problem. She agreed to address all the issues that had been raised and also shared the importance of women's development at all ages and the place of retired women in society. The stumbling block remains the work-retirement link and in particular the taking into account of periods that are not currently taken into account or are poorly taken into account. As far as relations with the ETUC are concerned, the question is not so simple. When the ETUC Women's Committee meets, she is entitled to one minute of speaking time. The problem is that retired women do not fit into the ETUC's discussion slot. Wanting to be active is a personal choice, she added. In conclusion, Mireille undertook to set up the bureau and to reflect on the relationship with the ETUC and in the ETUC Women's Committee. And together, she added, the second part of the mandate would be defined.

The following organisations took part in the debate: UNIA, CFDT, FNV, SUS, UIL-UILP, SUH, CGT-IN, UCR-FO, ÖGB

The President then gave the floor back to Henri to present the priorities of FERPA to be implemented in the Manifesto.

As an introduction to this third debate on the Manifesto, Henri briefly reminded the meeting that it was necessary to determine which priority(ies) to retain, which priority(ies) to implement, in other words, where to start?

He insisted that it was necessary to be realistic because we could not do everything at once: we did not have the means, particularly in terms of human resources... He reminded the meeting that the members of the Management Committee had discussed this in preparation for the debate. It appeared to them that the question of pensions, and everything that revolves around pensions (their amount, the minimum old age pension, their level, etc.) seemed to be

the priority to be retained first of all, even if we are not yet out of the pandemic and that health issues also remain essential.

However, it is the question of pensions that conditions everything else, namely access to :

- health
- housing
- to basic needs and in particular to energy

Following this short intervention, the President opened the debate.

Everyone recognised that it was always difficult to make choices, but it was stressed that it was necessary to concentrate on one subject and put all one's energy into it. All the speakers agreed that the issue of pensions was crucial and that it was therefore a priority. It must be the red thread in our demands. Having decent pensions means being able to lead a dignified life when you retire. But also, it was stressed, having good pensions also allows the economy to survive. Moreover, this demand is in line with the ETUC's European campaign on the minimum wage. It is important to know and to be able to influence the direction/inflection that the Commission wants to give to this question of pensions and their future: a survival income? However, it was specified that having priorities does not mean that other subjects are neglected. The European or international days should be used to focus on the other essential demands of FERPA.

Following this debate, the Secretary General intervened to clarify that of course health systems are also part of our priorities, that the minimum pension is important to fight poverty among the elderly and that national systems must be taken into account.

The President then put the matter to the vote, so that pensions are our first priority. The vote was unanimous.

The following organisations took part in the debate: FGTB, UIL-UILP, the President of the Women's Committee, USO, UCR-CFDT, UCR-FO, UNIA, FNP-CISL, FNV, ÖGBL, SPI-CGIL, UCR-CGT

The President gave the floor back to Henri for the fourth debate on the Manifesto, i.e. what actions should be taken and implemented?

Henri began by asking what actions should be taken at European, national and/or local level to achieve our demands/priorities. He then reminded the meeting that, as before, the members of the Steering Committee had discussed this debate in preparation. In the previous debates, proposals had been made in anticipation (video, circle around the Parliament, etc.). The debate is delicate, because we have a lot of ideas and ambitions, but...we have to take into account our means (financial) and who we are (human means...). However, some proposals have been formulated which can, of course, now be completed/enriched, with a reference event: the International Day of Older Persons on 1 October 2022. Until then, until then :

- as already said by the Secretary General, dissemination at all internal and external levels of the Manifesto (with translation, careful graphics, videos, etc....)
- drafting of a leaflet for activists to set out and explain our demands, with a call for mobilisation on 1 October to support them.

On 1 October 2022, in all member states where FERPA organisations are present, in forms to be defined nationally, organise a FERPA mobilisation: everywhere on the same day. At European level, a delegation composed of members of the Steering Committee and the Secretariat to the Commission and the Parliament to present our Manifesto and our demands

for pensions that allow older and retired people to live and die with dignity. In addition to the drafting of leaflets, other suggestions were also made:

- Making posters
- Find a way to contact the media and raise awareness through local and national press conferences on the occasion of this day.

We also need to think about how to "get the working class unions on board"? Young people? Without masking our visibility
etc.

We have to choose/slice at this GA. The practical details of what we decide will be discussed at the Executive Committee meeting on 1 and 2 December.

The President then opened the debate.

There were many interventions that largely supported what Henri had said. Only some clarifications were made. Thus, for example, strong emphasis was placed, first of all, on the dissemination and promotion of the Manifesto. This is the first and most urgent action to be taken. It must be translated at the national level and disseminated to all the unions and confederations, even those that do not have specific pensioners' organisations. National, regional and local initiatives must be prepared. Demonstrations have already been reported in some countries, where the Manifesto will be distributed. In the actions mentioned, there is also the questioning of ministers at the level of each country. We also need to define targets at national level at different levels. For 1 October 2022, it is suggested that the focus should be on the European level, but also that actions at national level are important, especially by 1 October 2022. It was even mentioned that with the savings made during the pandemic period, there should be the means to organise an event in Brussels, as an extra effort needs to be made. However, as has been said, we need to assess our real economic margins and our "human" means. It was also mentioned not to forget the existing European platforms, such as the "European Health Network" or the World Health Day on 7 April 2022. Regarding the proposed dates, it was pointed out that 1 October falls on a Saturday and that this date is a few days before the parliamentary week in Strasbourg (3-6 October) and that 7 April falls during the parliamentary session. Finally, attention was drawn to the fact that in these "International Days", FERPA could have its full visibility. Finally, concerning the point on pensions, it was proposed to get closer to Eurofound and, at European level, to the 2021 report on "The adequacy of pensions".

To close the debate, the General Secretary intervened to say that with the Manifesto we had changed our modus operandi. It is important not to wait and adapt. If there are changes to be made, to adapt, we will do so. If there are savings, the Executive Committee will decide how much money to spend and how to spend it. It will come back to the actions to be taken and the timetable for their implementation.

The President put the proposals for action discussed to the vote. The vote was unanimous.

The following organisations took part in the debate: UGT-E, SUH, FGTB, SUS, FNV, SPI-CGIL, UNIA, CSC-ACV, USO, UCR-CGT, UCR-FO, UCR-CFDT, CGTP-IN, UNSA, ÖGBL UGT-E

The President then gave the floor to the General Secretary to set the date for the next FERPA Congress.

The General Secretary recalled the circumstances that had led to the last Congress being brought forward by 6 months, i.e. 17 and 18 October 2018. If FERPA were to meet the deadline

of 4 years, the next Congress would have to be held one year after this GA. He therefore proposed to postpone it to the traditional dates, i.e. just before the ETUC Congress, i.e. in April 2023.

He also mentioned the working group on the statutes, and proposals would also be made to the next Executive Committee.

Finally, he mentioned the ÖGB's proposal to hold this Congress in Vienna, an event which would also mark the end of Werner's trade union involvement, as he had begun his militancy in...1956!

Following this short introduction, the President opened the debate.

There was unanimous agreement to postpone the date of the Congress to April 2023. Some speakers already expressed their agreement that it should be held in Vienna. Others, however, wished to wait and see if there would be other bids to host the Congress. There was also agreement to have the proposals concerning the Working Group on Statutes at the next Executive Committee.

The General Secretary thanked colleagues for having accepted his proposal to postpone the date of the next Congress to April 2023

The following organisations intervened in the debate: ÖGB, UIL-UILP, SPI-CGIL, FNV, PA.SY.DY, UCR-CFDT, FNP-CISL, UCR-FO, FGTB, UCR-CGT, UNSA, UGT-E, USO, CC. OO

Finally, the President gave the floor back to the Secretary General to address the last item on the agenda, namely the next Executive Committee meeting.

This was scheduled for 1 and 2 December. It had initially been planned to hold it in person. However, the information on the health situation in Belgium was not reassuring. In the current conditions, the maximum number of people that can be accommodated in the auditorium is 50, which would mean excluding about 20 members. Which ones? On what criteria? Furthermore, we do not have the financial means to organise a meeting in hybrid mode, as the ETUC can afford to do when it holds its mid-term conference in Lisbon in a few days' time, bearing in mind also that, technically, we are still in the early stages of meetings held in hybrid mode. There are still many problems.

With this information, the President opened the debate. Although several speakers mentioned that they were tired of meetings held in virtual mode, the majority agreed with the Secretary General's proposal. The Executive Committee meeting on 1 and 2 December would therefore be held in virtual mode.

The following organisations intervened in the debate: FNP-CISL, UIL-UILP, UCR-CGT, UCR-CFDT.

As the agenda was exhausted, the General Secretary just wanted to thank the members for their active participation, for the wisdom they had shown in the decisions to be taken, for the work done and for the quality of the debates.

For his part, before closing the FERPA Mid-Term Assembly, the President thanked the interpreters and the colleagues of the ETUC Organisation Unit for their help and technical assistance.