

For a more united and inclusive Europe

I. The European context

Between 2020 and 2021, Europe faced a terrible pandemic that killed more than one million people, especially among the elderly population. This situation revealed the decrepit nature of health systems and the weakening of social protection systems. In a world in which peace and social justice seem remote, while inequalities related to age, gender and geography are more pronounced than ever, the role of the trade union movement for a united and inclusive world and Europe is becoming crucial. The consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, moreover, in addition to the many deaths and the exodus of thousands of Ukrainian women and children, have resulted in heightened global tensions, creating political, economic, and social implications and consequences. Europe must overcome this situation by establishing a genuine peace process. The war has caused a very significant increase in the cost of gas, energy, raw materials and basic necessities and a very sharp increase in inflation, giving rise to serious repercussions on the world of work, on families and, in particular, on the elderly who make up almost a quarter of the European population. In EU policy, this proportion of elderly people has often been treated as a burden on society and a cost factor.

- ***Against this backdrop, FERPA's action will demand:***

- a constructive, more united Europe, free from war and capable of facing the future with unity and determination, with a more social and inclusive outlook, which guarantees the protection of all citizens without leaving anyone behind;
- social and economic measures that guarantee efficient, high-quality, public health systems accessible to all;
- wage and pension increases to combat the inflationary emergency;
- the absolute necessity of avoiding a return to the stability pacts, which have proved to be austerity pacts, and which, in some countries, have been the main cause of cuts in healthcare and pensions and increased poverty, particularly among the elderly;
- the application of the European Social Charter, the Social Progress Protocol, the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the proposals of the final report of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

In line with the position adopted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Trade Union Confederation, FERPA's approach to the elderly in Europe is firmly rooted in a rights-based approach.

II. The approximately 100 million elderly and retired people must be recognised as an important resource for Europe

In Europe, the population has been gradually ageing for several decades, with different percentages depending on the country. The ageing of the population is mainly due to two factors: a decrease in the birth rate and an increase in life expectancy.

- ***FERPA will therefore fight:***

- for a welfare state, at the level of each Member State, remodelled so that ageing is considered an opportunity and not a cost, for all citizens;

- for a Europe that strengthens the rights of all citizens and relations between different peoples by rejecting any discrimination based on gender, skin colour, religion, country of origin and especially age;

- to call for public investments for the social well-being of all citizens, reaffirming that economic recovery also requires positive responses to this major section of Europe's elderly population, which has the right to economic resources and effective services to age with dignity;

- to be consulted and involved in the decisions of the European institutions concerning elderly and retired people. This rule should also apply in all EU countries.

FERPA will mobilise on 1 October, International Day of Older Persons, celebrated by the United Nations. It will use this day each year to communicate and support its demands through actions and initiatives.

III. The Manifesto

The Manifesto is the result of the collective work of all members of FERPA, carried out even under difficult conditions due to the pandemic. It was developed and adopted unanimously as part of the reforms resulting from the implementation of European plans.

- ***For FERPA, the Manifesto will be the tool it uses for its demands for:***

- public and universal social protection in all European Union countries to concretely improve the lives of elderly and retired people and to reduce the number of them living in poverty;

- the right to decent pensions, to their full revaluation indexed to changes in salaries and at a minimum the cost of living, capable of protecting their purchasing power, and to a minimum pension, in each country, the amount of which is above the poverty line which allows people to live in decent conditions;
- improving the situation of elderly people, particularly among women;
- the universal right to quality long-term public healthcare;
- the universal right to decent suitable housing;
- the universal right of access to energy and essential services;
- the universal right to social inclusion and the full participation of elderly people in social, political and cultural life, in an intergenerational spirit;
- pensions should not be seen as a simple cost, but as a right for all citizens who have contributed during their working lives.

FERPA strongly rejects claims that the only solutions for the sustainability of pension systems are to raise the retirement age and freeze the revaluation of pensions.

IV. Implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights

The European Pillar of Social Rights was proclaimed in 2017 in Gothenburg as a strong political commitment by Member States to promote social rights in Europe. For FERPA, which believes in a united Europe, this proclamation raised positive expectations in the belief that it would contribute to improving social rights in Europe. Since then, however, the 20 principles envisaged have not yet been fully implemented.

- ***FERPA is therefore committed to:***

- urging the European institutions and national governments to continue implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights as a key element for development and recovery, for the protection of millions of people, especially the elderly, and to promote active, dignified and healthy ageing.

Asserting that the European Pillar of Social Rights must become an integral part of the European treaties in order to be implemented in all EU countries.

V. For a European tax policy

FERPA considers it essential that European institutions promote European fiscal policies that tend towards greater fairness.

- ***FERPA therefore demands***

- more uniform and egalitarian tax policies in all European countries, particularly on pension taxation, also introducing specific deductions for retired people;
- waging a determined effective fight against European tax havens and for the taxation of European superprofits.

VI. Intergenerational solidarity to strengthen the rights of citizens of all ages

For a better Europe, based on the principles of solidarity, equality, justice, social cohesion and peace, it is necessary to promote an intergenerational pact between young and old at all levels.

FERPA is committed to updating the agreement signed in 2016 with the ETUC Youth Committee, in order to initiate a real bridge between the generations of the different countries and Europe as a whole. The aim is to best represent and defend the interests of young people, elderly people and retired people vis-à-vis European institutions and governments of the various countries.

- ***FERPA therefore demands:***

- the updating of the agreement;
- urgent action to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour force with the creation of stable and high-quality jobs, to provide new generations with economic autonomy and a confident future, even when retired;
- to move towards full employment, with more and better jobs in order also to ensure the long-term sustainability of current and future social protection systems, paying particular attention to the ratio between the number of active workers and the number of retired workers, which in some countries continues to decrease;
- European policies, taking into account demographic changes, which guarantee effective economic aid and social services;
- migration policies based on respect for fundamental freedoms and human and labour rights;
- facilitating the passing on of experience from older workers to younger workers to encourage their better integration into the world of work, accompanied by

intergenerational transition processes, by ensuring the quality and stability of employment contracts, economic income, health benefits, without excluding health and safety conditions and working conditions and respect for rights, without any discrimination, especially for young people entering the world of work;

- joint action against poverty, demanding the right to live in dignity at all stages of life with adequate economic resources

FERPA is committed to participating actively in the fight against climate change, which is compromising the present and future of the planet.

VII. A more digital Europe that leaves no one behind

Rapid digital innovation has transformed all areas of society, including services for the elderly.

- ***For FERPA it is essential that:***

- this challenge is met through concrete actions to make the most of these technologies, particularly in the area of services, health, home automation and communication, with particular attention to the risks of exclusion and loneliness faced by elderly people;

- elderly people are guaranteed ongoing training and support in the digital field to benefit from these services;

- in all cases, an alternative to digital technology is offered to each citizen, in particular elderly people, to enable them to access all services and procedures equally;

- greater attention is paid to the digital exclusion of millions of elderly people, especially women, who experience digital inequality to a greater extent than other groups;

- the entire European territory is fully covered by a high-quality internet network accessible to everyone at an affordable price.

VIII. FERPA is a large European federation of unions representing retired people

FERPA, together with its organisations, is the main representative organisation for elderly people in Europe. As the Federation of Retired and Elderly People of ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation, FERPA is the most relevant organisation for European seniors in their demands vis-à-vis the European institutions.

In a Europe where the elderly and retired population continues to grow, strong representation by the European Federation of Retired and Elderly People is becoming essential.

Trade unions that are members of FERPA represent elderly and retired people from all areas of the world of work and thus offer FERPA a broad vision and experience in all sectors.

- ***FERPA is therefore committed to:***

- strengthening its voice in Europe, which should also strengthen its position within ETUC because, too often, ETUC statements, raising general questions and grievances, do not sufficiently integrate the position of elderly and retired people. Strengthening FERPA's position within ETUC should be accompanied by closer cooperation at national level between ETUC affiliates and FERPA affiliates. In addition, FERPA should extend its membership to organisations in countries with ETUC members who do not yet have an organisation affiliated with FERPA;

- strengthening FERPA's teamwork, so that it is increasingly able to propose, aggregate, mobilise and, where necessary, protest and collectively respond to any request in the context of negotiations;

- using the spaces on the new FERPA website made available to members of the Steering Committee to insert, through the secretariat, all the documentation necessary to offer better support to all organisations of retired people with useful and up-to-date news.

IX. Equality and gender policy

Ageing, in Europe and in the different countries, has significant gender dimensions.

In many, if not all, European countries, women make up the majority of the elderly population. They live, on average, longer than men and often face a loss of autonomy and the risk of living alone as they age. They have lower pensions and are therefore more exposed to poverty and social exclusion.

- ***FERPA, also through the Women's Committee, has always been committed to:***

- representing and advocating for the rights and needs of elderly women and men, heedful of equality and the gender dimension;

- combating any discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation;

- making the Federation increasingly suitable for women and men, by highlighting specific gender characteristics, promoting equal opportunities and democratic equality;

- increasing the representation of women in its bodies, by also considering more appropriate ways of participating in the life of the Federation through a greater collective effort by women and men from all affiliated organisations.

- active participation by the FERPA Women's Committee in the meetings of the ETUC Women's Committee. This participation is essential to define joint work on issues affecting women and, in particular, elderly and retired women, and to ensure that FERPA's voice is heard within the ETUC Women's Committee.

X. The relationship with ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation

FERPA actively participates in all meetings of ETUC bodies, helping to define its policies to ensure that the living conditions of retired and elderly people are duly taken into account in the debate and in the positions taken.

However, FERPA regrets that the amendment to obtain the right to vote in ETUC bodies was not approved during the Lisbon Mid-Term Conference.

- ***FERPA is committed to ensuring that:***

- its member organisations intervene with their confederation to secure their agreement to support approval of FERPA's voting rights in the ETUC bodies in order to ensure inclusive trade union action towards the large and significant part of the population made up of elderly and retired people.

These are the broad policies and demands that we are committed to supporting during the new term of office. They can only be achieved with a joint commitment and through the collective effort of women and men from all FERPA organisations.

The implementation procedures will be discussed at the ordinary Executive Committee meeting following the Congress.