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14/3/2023

**Minutes of the FERPA Executive Committee meeting 14-15.2.2023**

Participants: ÖGB (Austria); CSC/ACV and FGTB/ABVV (Belgium); PESYS-SEK (Cyprus); SUH (Croatia); FPJ-CC. OO; UCR-CFDT, UNAR-CFTC, UCR-CGT, UCR-FO, UNSA-Retraitéés and UNIR-CFECGC (France); MASZSZ and SZEFG (Hungary); FNP-CISL, SPI-CGIL and UIP-UIL (Italy); OGB-L (Luxembourg); FNV (Netherlands); GWU (Malta); Interreformados CGTP-IN (Portugal); FNPS CDLS (San Marino); APTUS (Serbia); SUS (Slovenia)

Excused: PA.SI.DY (Cyprus); UPJP-UGT, USO-AJUPE and ELA (Spain); POPS, CGSR and HGCRP (Greece); ICTU (Ireland); LCGB (Luxembourg); KSS (Macedonia); Solidarnosc (Poland); FNSPR (Romania); FUPS-CSdL (San Marino); NEZAVISNOT (Serbia); Emekli-SEN and Disk (Turkey)

The meeting was also attended by Henri LOURDELLE, FERPA Special Advisor, Jessica MONTIEL RAMIREZ, Project Coordinator and PA of the SG and, on the second day, Maria Dolores RUS PEDRAGON, ETUC intern

The President of FERPA, Lajos MAYER, opened the meeting by welcoming the participants. He then gave the floor to the Secretary General of FERPA, Agostino SICILIANO, for his Communications.

The Secretary General underlined that this was the last Executive Committee meeting of the legislature and that it would be mainly devoted to the preparation of the Congress. He thanked the President and all those present for the work they had done under special conditions. He then returned to the context of war in Europe with the Russian aggression on Ukraine on 24 February 2022. He had heard on the news that two Russian fighter planes had intercepted two Dutch fighter planes. We are at war, he added, and we must not forget that: in addition to the victims who suffer from the aggression, thousands of young Russians are sent to their deaths. At the last ETUC Executive Committee meeting, the situation of Ukrainian trade unions was raised, as they were in danger of having their rights taken away in their country. The ETUC has reacted to the Ukrainian government. The possibility of providing solidarity support to the trade unions in that country would soon be put online. He also mentioned the earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, which had killed more than 60,000 people. He said that FERPA had sent a message of solidarity to the Turkish people, while pointing out that Syria was increasing the obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian aid. The Secretary General then went back over what has happened since the last meeting. First of all, there had been the ITUC Congress, which he had attended, and Silvana had also been there. The problems of older people also exist at international level, not only are they "invisible" but they are "ignored". He managed to intervene to raise the issue of universal rights for retired people. At this Congress, Luca VISENTINI was elected General Secretary of the ITUC and he effectively resigned from his mandate as General Secretary of the ETUC. The last Executive Committee of the ETUC on 5 and 6 December 2022, elected Esther LYNCH as General Secretary of the ETUC. The General Secretary of FERPA was able to vote for her, as this election was done according to the rules of the Congress where FERPA has the right to vote. The ETUC decided to continue its "cost of living campaign". FERPA repeated that pensioners and older people should be part of the 6 points of the ETUC campaign and our October Declaration was attached to the ETUC document. He also mentioned the problems in Italy

where the Government had blocked the indexation of He added that what we see in France confirms what he said earlier. He added that what we were seeing in France confirmed his earlier comments, and the ETUC General Secretary had taken part in the latest demonstration in Paris. He then returned to the latest events in the ETUC, with the detention of the former General Secretary of the ETUC, Luca VISENTINI, and his subsequent release. The ETUC Secretary General convened an emergency Steering Committee meeting and commissioned an external agency to carry out an audit to see what was happening with the ETUC's finances and its possible involvement. The audit was able to establish that no one from the ETUC was involved and that if the former ETUC General Secretary received 10,000 and 3,000 euros in cash it was to finance his election campaign as a candidate for ITUC General Secretary and to help trade union organisations in economic difficulties. Furthermore, in the European Parliament, one of the Vice-Presidents was involved in corruption and was indicted. All this does not give a good image of this institution. He then mentioned the temporary move (until next June or more probably September) of the ETUC, and therefore of FERPA, to the Silver Square which is just opposite the current building, on the other side of the boulevard, because the new building in which the ETUC should move is still under construction. Despite these conditions FERPA has continued to work. In view of the increase in teleworking that this situation entails, FERPA has had to buy new laptops. And will have to buy some new furniture. He wondered where we would hold our next Executive Committee and Steering Committee meetings? For the moment it is not possible to give a date for the next Executive Committee meeting. We have to be patient. He then addressed the issue of the Treasurer. He said that FERPA needs a competent Treasurer: will our dues be sufficient? The Cypriot colleague asked why solidarity aid was being maintained for certain organisations and on what criteria? This question should be taken up in an auditing process. But he also said that it was necessary to be vigilant and to think about how to save money in order to be able to show solidarity with the small organisations or to find other resources. He informed the Executive Committee that at 1.00 pm the Secretariat would meet Esther, probably to give her a better understanding of how FERPA works. He clarified that we are considered as a "Working Group of the ETUC" for the Commission and that the ETUC pays a contribution of 12,000 euros each year. Regarding FERPA's voting rights, Dick is involved in the ETUC Working Group on the reform of its Statutes. The General Secretary did not believe that it would be passed at the next ETUC Congress in Berlin in May 2023. Some organisations that have affiliates in FERPA will continue to vote against. The General Secretary said that it was hopeless this time and that it would be better to withdraw it. In Berlin, the ETUC will celebrate its 50th anniversary. In April 2023, FERPA will reach its 30th anniversary. In 2025, at FERPA's mid-term GA, the anniversary would be celebrated. Finally, he concluded his speech by reminding the meeting that the Executive Committee of these two days must adopt the final formulations of the Resolution and the Statutes and Rules of Procedure which will be submitted to the debates of the Congress, because if we look to the future, a huge amount of work awaits us.

President Lajos MAYER then opened the debate.

Some speakers thanked the Secretary General for the information he had given on the international situation. Others pointed out that when it came to social rights, it was not only in Ukraine that they were being violated, but also in Russia. The FERPA must not forget this and must show solidarity with trade unions in all countries. And on the question of war, it is pointed out that this is not the only conflict on this planet. How can trade unions block the escalation of violence? Of course we have to recognise our limitations, but FERPA must push the ETUC to mobilise all European trade unions. What will our governments do to find a

possible ceasefire? Returning to the question of the right to vote, some organisations are surprised that this is a blocking factor. Admittedly, we are in a difficult situation because, in the Northern countries in particular, the trade unions are primarily for those who are active. In other countries, pensioners' unions do not have their own representation in the confederate bodies and retired people are confined to minor activities. There is often a lack of understanding of the role of retired people. We are trade unions, but if we want to be recognised as such, it is important that the trade union movement recognises the role played by retired people in society, in the world. Elsewhere, however, it is made clear that retired people work with the working people's unions and that they can thus regularly include the issue of pensions in the debates. Perhaps this is also what solidarity is all about, leading struggles together, asked one speaker. It was also recalled that already in 2003, FERPA had asked for the right to vote. But the vote had taken place very late and some organisations had already left the meeting. At that time, the DGB was in favour of it. There is a mixture between the right to abstain and the vote "against". We have to work to see how to act and do the work within the confederations. We are a trade union organisation like any other and we demand the same rights, we are not the "spare wheel" of the ETUC. It is important for FERPA to have a proper strategy and to agree with Esther on what to do. Concerning the ITUC Congress and the fact that the problems of pensioners were not taken into account, it was pointed out that at the ETUC meeting in Strasbourg and in particular during the debate in Parliament, no one spoke about pensioners. The problems and demands of pensioners were also ignored. Yet the absence of the issue of ageing in international debates is also a global challenge, if we take Japan or China as examples. We must have the capacity to bring this issue into the debates. Retired people are the "silver economy" of countries and of the EU. As such, we want to be recognised and respected. We are neither a sports club nor a leisure club. We are "active" and we want to be recognised as such, not to be considered as a burden. The demand that our demands be taken into account is not a "courtesy request" but a legitimate demand. It should be one of the priorities of the next mandate and we should be "pro-active", even if one speaker considered that the question of pensions was not a European question, but a national question. Referring to the struggle of the French trade unions to defend pensions, several organisations wished to show their support for them and pointed out that everywhere in Europe the rights of retired people were being called into question. Already in 1958, some wanted to reduce their rights and the EU was on their side. We must protect pension rights. Several speakers also returned to the Manifesto and asked that it be "pushed forward". It should be fleshed out, enriched and developed and FERPA should achieve concrete results. Finally, one organisation pointed out that tomorrow there will be a debate and a vote on poverty and FERPA should look at this text.

In his reply, the Secretary General noted that we all agreed on everything that had been said. But he returned, first of all, to the question of the right to vote. As had been said, if the pensioners' unions could not vote in their own country, FERPA would not be able to vote at European level either. We must seek consensus and make it clear that the right to vote in the ETUC does not change the organisation of pensioners in their country. In any case, we would only have "one vote", which had above all a symbolic value. He thanked for the support expressed for the withdrawal of our amendment at the Berlin Congress. Referring again to the struggle of our French colleagues, he said that young people must listen to the difficulties of retired people, which were not limited to age but also concerned inflation, health, etc. Our demands were not to be found in the 6 points of the ETUC, but only in the appendix. We must

try to give substance to our demands. Finally, he gave a brief report on the meeting that the Secretariat had had at lunchtime with Esther. After discussing some internal organisational issues with ETUC, the meeting then turned to the issue of FERPA's voting rights. The Secretary General explained that the amendment would be on the table, which would allow him to intervene and set the political debate. Then he would announce that he was withdrawing it. Esther replied that she agreed with his approach and that she would subsequently set up an "Adhoc" working group to discuss FERPA. The Secretary General confirmed FERPA's wish to work on an ongoing basis with ETUC. And it was agreed with Esther to have another meeting in the coming months.

The following organisations took part in the debate: UCR-CFDT, UCR-FO, CSC/ACV, FNV, UCR-CGT, SPI-CGIL, ÖGB, CGTP IN, FNP-CISL, UILP-UIL, the President of the Women's Committee, CFE-CGC, UNSA, SUS

The President, Lajos MAYER then gave the floor back to the Secretary General, Agostino SICILIANO to address the main point of the two-day meeting: the preparation of the 9th FERPA Congress in Vienna from 4 to 6 April.

In his introductory remarks, the Secretary General first of all gave some organisational information. He pointed out that Vienna was full that week. He then reminded the meeting that it was urgent to send in the lists of candidates for the next Executive Committee as well as the delegations, the deadline for sending them being 17 February. It was also urgent to send the list of candidates for the Women's Committee. As far as the Management Committee is concerned, there are 12 candidates with a perfect parity between the number of men and women. However, there were two candidates for the Presidency of FERPA, so a vote would have to be taken. He thanked Dick for accepting to stand for the position of Treasurer of FERPA as well as Silvana for the Chair of the Women's Committee. Regarding the voting, he also said that the President would present to the Congress for decision whether to vote by secret ballot or by show of hands. At the opening of the Congress, the President will put this question to a vote: by show of hands or by secret ballot for individual votes.

The President opened the debate.

The organisations that spoke felt that the composition of the Management Committee was balanced, including regional representation. While one organisation wondered whether a secret ballot was not a sign of a lack of confidence, all the other speakers agreed that we were a trade union organisation and not a club or an association, that it was a question of democracy and that it was provided for in the current Statutes. Moreover, a secret ballot gives the person elected real legitimacy. Others also insisted that things should not be complicated for the sake of it and that constraints should not be imposed where they do not exist. As the Statutes state, the Congress only votes on the General Secretary and this is a position that deserves a secret ballot. Jessica then intervened to say that the material would be ready, but that the problem might arise for the Executive Committee meeting, if secret ballots were held, as there was little time to hold this meeting. In this case, consideration would have to be given to amending the Congress agenda to allow more time for the Executive Committee.

In his reply, the General Secretary first of all stated that with regard to the rotation between the different countries, the size of the organisations had not been taken into account and that the choice of the President by the Executive Committee would have to be based on a geographical rotation system. He fully agreed that in the mode of election there was a question of democracy. However, the Congress would be asked to say whether it would

maintain the 30-year tradition of a show of hands or whether there would be a secret ballot. A solution should be found together and, if possible, by consensus.

The following organisations took part in the debate: UCR-CFDT, SZEF, SUS, SPI-CGIL, FNV, UNSA, FNP-CISL.

Then the President, still in preparation for the 9th Congress, addressed the item on the Draft Congress Resolution. He therefore gave the floor back to the General Secretary to introduce this item.

The General Secretary recalled that for this draft resolution, we had followed the same procedure as for the Manifesto in order to gather all ideas and points of view. A first version had been sent out which had given rise to a number of amendments. It was first envisaged to convene a small committee to analyse them, but the move and, above all, the fact that all the computers were cut off during this period did not allow the exchanges that would have been desirable. He therefore decided to dedicate a meeting of the Management Committee to the analysis of the amendments. This was held on 26 January. This collective work made it possible to include everything that could be included.

In the debate that opened, all the speakers expressed their thanks for the work that had been done in such difficult circumstances. There were several interventions on the substance, without however calling into question the draft text, which was a compromise. Thus, several would have liked a shorter and more incisive text that referred more to the Manifesto. These interventions insisted on the fact that what is important is to carry out concrete activities that give visibility to FERPA. For example, one or two central themes should have been defined, such as the development of women's pensions or having minimum pensions above the poverty line, and then planning multi-annual campaigns around these themes. Others would also have liked a more structured document, with numbered paragraphs with a timetable and a conclusion that includes the main demands that will be implemented. Among the priority themes that could have been identified, there is also the fight against poverty, with a work with the European Trade Union Institute, by identifying the decent income for each country, and to recall that 5 years ago, it was impossible to speak of a European minimum wage, now this demand is no longer taboo. Perhaps in five years' time we will be able to talk about a European minimum pension. One organisation intervened, however, to remind us that we must be realistic and see what we can do. Apart from these interventions on the substance, several amendments of form or vocabulary, or which required explanations, were proposed and they were generally accepted.

The Secretary General welcomed the discussion and the contributions that had been made to improve the draft, which had therefore become largely consensual. He also added that he agreed with those who had said that the written proposals should be implemented.

The following organisations intervened in the debate: UNIA, CSC/ACV, UILP-UIL, SUS, UCR-FO, SPI-CGIL, UNSA, FNV, SUH, FGTB/ABVV, ÖGB

The President then gave the floor to Dick DE GRAAF, Chairman of the Working Group on the Statutes and Rules of Procedure, to present the amendments made.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, Dick began by recalling the composition of the Working Group, the timetable for the work and meetings held, the names of the organisations with their amendments, and the various articles to which they related. He then presented the additions and rejections, justifying what had been done to them. He also specified that the text in italics in the document submitted for discussion was not new but had been restructured. He reminded the meeting that the document to be presented to the Congress

at the end of this discussion would be in French and English, the two working languages of FERPA, and that it was not up to FERPA to translate it into all languages.

Two interventions followed Dick's intervention

- One from the FGTB/ABVV, to recall that in Belgium there was an agreement to alternate during the mandate, within the Steering Committee, between the two Belgian organisations.

Dick replied that this would no longer be possible with these new Statutes

- the other from UNIA, which goes back to gender in the text. Dick replied that Henri, who would read the French version of the document, would check the gender issue in it.

With these clarifications, Dick's paper was approved and the quality of his work was applauded.

At the end of the discussion, the Secretary General expressed his satisfaction with the work done by the Executive Committee over the last two days. He stressed that we are trying to become a federation of trade unionists because we have reasoned as trade unionists. We are now in a position to meet experts from the Commission and the European Parliament. He confirmed that there can be no rotation among the members of the Management Committee, as everyone has received a mandate. He also agreed that the official languages are French and English, but all other languages of the organisations have been added to the website. He added, using an Italian expression, that the Manifesto should be "taken for granted". He encouraged organisations to dialogue with their confederal officers, as we in FERPA do with the ETUC. At the Berlin Congress, the General Secretary would make a political statement, before withdrawing the amendment, which would be taken up by Esther. He recalled the date of 17 February for sending in all lists and candidatures. From a practical point of view, he clarified that there will be no written documents available to the Congress and that organisations and Congress members should bring them with them. We go to "our" FERPA Congress with enthusiasm and pride in the work we have done, because "FERPA is all of us".

After these words of the Secretary General, President Lajos MAYER closed this last meeting of the Executive Committee of the mandate, by thanking the interpreters but also and above all the members for their participation and for the excellent work accomplished. He hoped to see everyone in Vienna next April.

Henri