

Minutes of the FERPA Executive Committee meeting 3-4/XI/ 2022

Participants: Lajos MAYER, President of FERPA; Agostino SICILIANO, Secretary General of FERPA; ÖGB, Austria; CSC/ACV and FGVB/ABVV, Belgium; PA.SY.DY and PESYS-SEK, Cyprus; UJP-UGT, FEPJ-CC. OO and USO, Spain; UCR-FO, UCR-CFDT, UCR-CGT, UNIR-CFE CGC, UNSA, France; Union of Greek Pensioners, Greece; MASZSZ and SZEF, Hungary; SPI-CGIL, FNP-CISL and UILP-UIL, Italy; OGB-L, Luxembourg; GWU, Malta; FNV, Netherlands; Interreformados CGTP-IN, Portugal; NEZAVISNOST and APTUS, Serbia; SUS, Slovenia; UNIA, Switzerland

The meeting was also attended by Henri LOURDELLE, Special Advisor and Jessica MONTIEL RAMIREZ, Project Coordinator and PA. of the S.G.

The President of FERPA, Lajos MAYER opened the work of the Executive Committee by welcoming the members, then proceeded to the adoption of the agenda of the meeting and the minutes of the last meeting, both documents were adopted unanimously. He then submitted for ratification by the Committee the appointment of Silvana CAPUCCIO (SPI-CGIL) in the Steering Committee, replacing Ivan PEDRETTI, who had resigned. He emphasised that Silvana had a long international experience. The nomination was unanimously ratified. He then gave the floor to the General Secretary, Agostino SICILIANO, for his Communications.

The Secretary General underlines first of all that it is appropriate to recognise the work that has been done everywhere by FERPA and its organisations, since the last face-to-face meeting of the Committee in December 2019. But, it must be noted that COVID is still there. In spite of this, FERPA has continued to work. He recalled that during his mandate, there was the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the nuclear threat, etc... What worries us is the suffering of the Ukrainian people. The situation has deteriorated with the war, with harmful consequences for the Ukrainian population, because the Russian armies are attacking civilians and the country's power stations, with consequences for their operation and the lives of the population. This escalation cannot be accepted and Ukrainian citizens must be respected. Everything must be done to encourage negotiations. The Russian occupation of Ukraine and the sanctions have had negative consequences, such as the blocking of grain imports and the supply chain of raw materials, and the energy crisis and pandemic have led to higher food prices and inflation. We must not forget that there are, in particular, elderly people. It is important that the ETUC fights for wage increases, but we must also talk about retired people who risk becoming increasingly vulnerable. He then mentioned the general strike that was due to take place on 9 November, indicating that the Belgian confederations on strike should be respected. He then explained that during the ETUC Executive Committee meeting last week, at 1 p.m., the FERPA Secretariat had received an e-mail from the Head of the Social Dialogue Unit in the Directorate General for Employment, following up on the one he had sent, expressing concern that he had not received any news.

He said that the ETUC had exhausted all the funds available for the activities of its Standing Committees and, in particular, for covering the travel and accommodation costs of

participants in the meetings, bearing in mind that we are considered a Standing Committee of the ETUC. A decision had to be taken as to whether or not to maintain the Executive Committee meeting. Out of respect for all the members of the Committee, and because we do not want to be intimidated by this unacceptable decision of the Commission a few days before the EXCO meeting, the decision was taken by the General Secretary to maintain it. At the same time, the future new General Secretary of the ETUC, Esther LYNCH, was asked to take a position: the ETUC has done its utmost with the Commission. Knowing, however, that the costs of interpretation and room hire would still be covered by the Commission, as they were not on the same budget line, the Secretary General asked the large organisations to cover their own costs, if there were no other solutions, with FERPA then covering the costs of the small organisations. The ETUC had taken action for a month against inflation and for higher wages and had organised a small demonstration in Strasbourg on 5 November in which FERPA organisations participated. But the French trade union organisations, when asked, could not find a retired person in difficulty to intervene at this Strasbourg rally, as Esther requested, even though Hubert was present. However, apart from that, at no time in the various trade union interventions that took place at this event, including that of the ETUC, were the problems that retired people were facing in the current period mentioned. We denounced the fact that an important part of the European population is being ignored. In order to combat all the negative consequences of the war in Ukraine, we need to increase wages, but also pensions. We are former workers. Esther LYNCH met with FERPA and said that the FERPA Declaration of 1 October was part of the ETUC's action plan. She also said that we need our confederations to support the ETUC. The General Secretary then said that women were still victims of low wages, during their working life, but also at the time of retirement, they had the lowest pensions. Following the sending of our Declaration of 1 October to the heads of the European Institutions and to the Secretary General of the UN, he also informed the Committee that the FERPA Secretariat had met for the second time with the cabinet of Mr. MICHEL, the President of the European Council, where it was said that these issues should be dealt with at the Tripartite Social Summit and that the President of the Commission had written to say that she agreed with our demands. In a fortnight's time, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) will hold its World Congress in Melbourne and the current General Secretary of the ETUC, who is a candidate for the post of General Secretary of this organisation, will be elected at this Congress. He will therefore resign from all his responsibilities within the ETUC. He also stated that he himself would be going to Melbourne and that his organisation, the UIL-UILP, would cover all his expenses. As for the ETUC's move, the headquarters would be moved nearby, to City 2, but the earliest the ETUC would be able to move there would be by June. But as the current premises will have to be vacated by 19 December, in the meantime the ETUC will be housed temporarily in the building opposite our current building, on the other side of the Boulevard. But it seems that, during this transitional period, we will have great difficulty in working. Like the ETUC, we also have a Congress to prepare. He also recalled that when he was elected, his priority was to reorganise FERPA.

However, in recent months he has participated in the Congresses of the FNP, the UIL, in Italy and the UCR-FO, in France in Marseille. He also participated in the anniversary of the Slovenian union SUS and in a Round Table organised in Zagreb by the union SUH, and also confronted us with the Manifesto adopted unanimously and which is our line of conduct. Following this intervention, the President opened the debate.

Most of the speeches first of all returned to the European context marked by the war and its consequences on the populations, in Ukraine, but also in Europe and in particular on the elderly and the most vulnerable: inflation, increase in foodstuffs, energy, etc. For many, the cost of energy is the central problem for retired people who stay at home and who must therefore heat more. Several interventions also focused on the Manifesto, which is in the interests of older people and which must remain our reference instrument and our indispensable roadmap for the coming years. Several recalled that they were promoting it. Others referred to the payment of our meetings by the Commission: this is a recognition of the role that FERPA plays for retired and elderly people. Furthermore, it is certainly necessary to act on pensions, on their indexation, on low pensions and minimum pensions, on the refusal to raise the retirement age, all these points which remain our major concerns, but it is also necessary to act on everything that has to do with the elderly and the services around the elderly. We must put the elderly and their specificity and the role they play in society at the centre of our concerns. A new value must be placed on them and on the solidarity between the generations, which is of strategic importance. It was also pointed out that inflation did not start with the war in Ukraine. It started with the pandemic and rebounded afterwards. The "super-profits" are not only oil companies, laboratories have also profited well from the pandemic. And many expect a future that will be complex with the Stability Pact and the return to rigid policies that put the economy first at the expense of the human and social. We have not succeeded in taxing speculative profits and in general we have not obtained a reform of the tax system in general. We must therefore continue to work on this issue. Some people are not surprised by the Commission's attitude to the funding of our meetings. However, if you have money, you can do things. So we need financial support. Our struggle must be recognised within the ETUC. However, in Strasbourg, nobody, including the ETUC, mentioned the elderly, even though several parliamentarians insisted on the importance of mobilising in an intergenerational movement. But, as was stressed several times, our recognition within the ETUC, and consequently, obtaining the right to vote, depends first of all on our involvement and recognition within our own trade union confederations. Finally, some interventions stressed the need for FERPA to communicate more effectively, for example by publishing a newsletter every two or three months.

Following these interventions, the President gave the floor back to the Secretary General for his response.

First of all, he recalled that our website is an important communication tool. We must do everything we can to highlight the importance of our problems, whether at the level of the European institutions or in the Member States, but also within our national organisations. Many people do not vote for us, even though we represent over 10 million members in 42 organisations. We are not recognised for what we represent. We want to participate in the debate. Dick is going to participate in the next meeting of the ETUC Constitutional Amendment Group on behalf of FERPA. It is not about begging for our rights, but about explaining our problems. We want a Europe of solidarity and a union of solidarity. We need to set a common goal, access to the Manifesto.

The following organisations took part in the debate: Union of Greek Pensioners, FGTB/ABVV, UNIA, SUS; CSC/ACV; ÖGB; UCR-FO; SPI-CGIL; USO; UNIR-CFE CGC; FNP-CISL; UIL-UILP; UCR-CFDT; UCR-CGT; OGBL

The President then gave the floor to Didier HOTTE, from UCR-FO, to present the motion. In the short debate that followed, a small discussion took place concerning an intervention that requested the deletion of the reference to "sanctions" in the text. In the end, this reference was maintained. Others wished to broaden the discussion to include crises, climate change, food-related issues One organisation also questioned the publicity that would be given to this motion. Finally, the following text was adopted unanimously, minus one abstention (UCR-CFDT):

The Executive Committee of FERPA, meeting in Brussels on 3 and 4 November 2022, notes the rise in the prices of energy, food and other expenses and that inflation is rising much faster than pensions and salaries in all European countries, hitting pensioners, workers and their families hard. Crises, the conflict in Ukraine, sanctions, disruption of supply chains and the continuing consequences of Covid are driving up the cost of living, creating increased poverty, particularly among the elderly. The FERPA Executive Committee calls on the European Institutions to pay more attention to the consequences of this serious situation on pensioners already weakened by the pandemic. Access to health care and energy cannot be guaranteed to the elderly if no measures are taken on the amount of pensions and their immediate revalorization equal to at least the increase of inflation and the cost of living. FERPA fully supports the mobilisation action set up by the ETUC in order to obtain anti-crisis support measures for retired and working families.

The General Secretary welcomed this result which enabled us to overcome the language difficulties. This motion should be circulated at national level through the organisations.

The following organisations intervened in the debate: UCR-CFDT; FNP-CGIL; FGTB/ABVV; ÖGB; UNIA

The President then gave the floor to the General Secretary to introduce the item dealing with the preparation of the Congress, which will be held in Vienna from 4 to 6 April 2023.

The Secretary General said that he wanted to arrive at the Congress with 90% of the work already produced. Organisations had until 2 December to propose, as a unit, if possible and by country, their amendments to the proposed Draft Resolution. This draft will be reviewed at the Executive Committee meeting on 14-15 February. If there are any difficulties, these will be decided at Congress. The Draft Resolution reinforces the approach of the Manifesto. Concerning the budget, it states that the travel expenses of the titular delegates will be covered by FERPA, excluding their personal expenses.

After a few words about Vienna, Werner gave a PowerPoint presentation of the practical information about the Congress, which would take place in the ÖGB building, which had been built 15 years earlier. The ÖGB headquarters is a 2-3 minute walk from the underground station that leads to the hotel. It is a direct line (travel time 5 minutes - two stations). The hotel itself is a 4-5 minute walk from the underground station. In addition, there is a direct bus line from the airport to the ÖGB headquarters.

The General Secretary then presented the Congress logo and the Congress budget which were adopted. He then indicated that, with regard to the candidacy for the post of General Secretary, only one proposal had been submitted by the Italian and Hungarian unions: his own. He would therefore be the next and only General Secretary.

The General Secretary then presented the main lines of the Preliminary Draft Resolution and detailed certain points of the document: young people; gender equality, etc.

He reminded the meeting that amendments must be sent in by 2 December at the latest, so that the Draft Resolution could be adopted at the Executive Committee meeting in February. With all this information, the President opened the debate.

Dick DE GRAFF said first of all that he did not disagree in substance with much of what was written in the draft. However, he noted that it was difficult to manage this document and he therefore wanted it to be presented in the traditional way that other documents of this type are presented. That is why he has created a numbered framework of 7 chapters, of which he has 20 copies in English. He would like the opportunity to present his work. He proposed that a working group on the Draft Resolution should also be set up. Others stressed that there was a lot of rewriting to be done, particularly to have shorter, more readable sentences. Some also questioned the interpretation of certain formulations which were ambiguous and/or confusing. Jessica then intervened on one or other specific point, indicating that these were translation problems. One speaker also intervened to say that everyone comes with their own experience and the deliberations of their organisation, and made some comments about salaries (when they are very low) and the extremely low pensions in some countries. She added that her organisation was very wary of the decisions of the European Union, taking as an example the European Socle of Social Rights which was adopted in 2017 and which has still not been implemented. Finally, another speaker insisted that the purpose of setting up an Adhoc Commission was not to divide us but to bring us closer together and asked when it would be set up.

In his reply, the Secretary General explained first of all that the holding of an Ad Hoc Committee would depend on the volume of amendments received. Furthermore, there was not enough money to do everything, so we had to face the reality of the cost. Perhaps an online Commission will be held. The January Management Committee will decide what to do. As for Dick's proposal, he could make it, but within the framework of the tabling of amendments, because it was indeed the text presented by the Secretary General that the amendments should concern. Finally, he pointed out that the General Secretary of the ETUC had never been invited to our Congresses: this was our moment, for us.

The following organisations took part in the debate: ÖGB; FNV; Interreformados CGTP-IN; FNO-CISL; UCR-CFDT; SPI-CGIL

The next item on the agenda concerned the Women's Committee, and the President gave the floor to Ana MARTINEZ LOPEZ (FEJP-CC. OO).

Ana started by thanking Jessica who had helped her a lot in her work.

She reminded the meeting that women make up a large part of the population, but that their salaries are still lower than those of men. Women must be valued. She went on to say that she would read the report that the President of the Women's Committee had sent her and she said that if there were any questions, they should be sent directly to Mireille, who would reply by e-mail. With these clarifications, Ana then read out Mireille's report. Without dwelling on the events that had disrupted the Committee's meetings, and after making a number of observations (the impoverishment of the elderly, the economic crisis, the pandemic, etc.), she acknowledged that the Committee had encountered difficulties in developing specific proposals for women. And she wondered: how can we bring out the condition of women pensioners in our Women's Committee? While indicating that we do not need statements, but

that we need actions, she said she was aware that it was not always easy to put in place actions and that it was difficult to work together to establish a work plan. She felt that revising the statutes regarding the Women's Committee would not be enough. There must be a political will on the part of all the organisations. She ended with a plea for peace, mentioning the unfailing struggle of Iranian women.

After this intervention by Ana, made on behalf of the Committee Chair, the Chair opened the debate. Several interventions referred to 25 November, indicating that peace was indeed important for women. We must work on a common response to violence against women and respond with great courage. We must go beyond the stage of declarations that have no effect and replace them with political responses with the ETUC, FERPA and all the institutions. We must not only write policy, but make policy for women. It was also noted that 70% of older women live alone, which worsens their economic and social situation. There are therefore many issues to work on. Violence against older women is often ignored. Women over 75 are excluded from the statistics on femicide. Several interventions referred to the difficulties of the work of the Women's Committee. It needs to be revitalised and the working group that has never been set up needs to be started in order to achieve convincing results by strengthening intergenerational solidarity. It was also pointed out that in some countries, many women work part-time. They should be encouraged to work full time in order to benefit from a better retirement pension. We must also be careful about postponing the retirement age, which will have a negative impact on women's pensions. There are discriminations that influence thinking. In some countries, motherhood is a real nightmare. The pandemic has made women very vulnerable, because they are very involved in health services. If there is no work, there are no rights. As women have a longer theoretical life expectancy than men, they are also more exposed to the risk of dependency.

In her reply, Ana asked all those who had spoken to contact Mireille directly. She recalled that when she was President of the FERPA Women's Committee, she had always participated in the ETUC Women's Committee meetings and had always advocated for our rights and visibility. Everyone agrees that the Women's Committee is a very important Committee, but it is easy to...forget!

The Secretary General intervened in turn to recall that he had always supported the work of the FERPA Women's Committee. He noted that there was no recognition of the care given to children. He insisted that for the next 4 years, the Women's Committee will have to work hard. He concluded by mentioning the 25th of November, the Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

As last year, due to the lack of a proposal from the President of the FRPA Women's Committee, the Secretariat will prepare and send a visual for this day.

The following organisations took part in the debate: UNIR-CFE CGC; SPI-CGIL; FNP-CISL; SUS; FNV; UNIA: UILP-UIL

The President welcomed Esther LYNCH, Deputy General Secretary of ETUC for her intervention, by addressing a few words to her which were completed by the General Secretary of FERPA.

Esther started her intervention with a smile, thanking for the welcome and saying that she felt like a member of the Executive Committee. She invited FERPA to seize the opportunities for joint actions that exist.

There will still be attempts to raise the retirement age and this must be fought against. COVID has not gone away. Elderly people in old people's homes have experienced scandalous situations. 64 million people work in these institutions. A strong statement between FERPA and the unions of these workers would be fantastic. We are witnessing a commodification of these institutions. Where are the opportunities and possibilities for FERPA to support the elderly? Joint work needs to be undertaken to improve understanding of pensions and to raise awareness of the fact that it is a deferred wage. It is difficult to discuss this with young people, but it is necessary to improve the Collective Agreements that have to address pensions. Another support that FERPA could give is on public services. There should be more joint campaigns. What are the possibilities of synergies? Training modules could be developed for negotiating pensions: what about sustainability and how to achieve it? Regarding women's equality and the issue of older women, there is not really much discussion on this. She will ask the ETUC Women's Committee to discuss this in December, or what discrimination one suffers when one gets older.

Before opening the debate, the President raised the issue of the right to vote.

Several speakers thanked Esther for her speech and for having focused her intervention on trade union action and work with FERPA. The interventions insisted on the fact that it was necessary to use forces at the national level, but also at the European level, to be able to make things happen. We need to work together, especially in the area of health care and home help. In this respect, retired people are also...employers. There is a convergence to denounce the undignified treatment to which the elderly are or have been subjected in certain institutions. The problems that concern retired people are not only financial, they are also related to the family, the staff, but also to new technologies, such as banking services. Problems concerning retired people cannot be solved only between retired people. The health sector is important for retirees and future retirees. The importance of the pharmaceutical industry and medicines are strategic sectors that must be taken into account by the European Union. These problems must be addressed at the European level. Concerning intergenerational relations, the ETUC must do something to give young people a better future. If this is not done, there is a risk of conflict between the generations. Inclusion policies must be translated into concrete terms and ageing issues must become an everyday issue in ETUC policies, as illustrated by the issue of FERPA's voting rights.

FERPA needs the ETUC but the ETUC also needs FERPA. In this respect, it is important that the pensioners' unions are part of the national confederations, not only when it comes to pensions, but it is important to ask the unions to integrate them, in order to better take into account the interests of the elderly. The cost of ageing is of interest to the whole of Europe, which is the oldest continent. But retired people are not only frail people, but a large part of them are resources: they allow others to work. They are a driving force for jobs, especially in the world of innovation, they are a source of innovation, by allowing the development of new technologies. Three more specific questions were also raised. The first relates to the ESC Resolution entitled "Ageing with dignity"? What is the follow-up? The second question relates to the Commission's Green Paper on Ageing, to which FERPA has responded. What proposals are being implemented, bearing in mind that the birth rate is not the answer. And the third one concerns the calculation of the votes at the Congress, which until now has taken into account abstentions treated as negative votes. Finally, it was pointed out that the representative of the Fundamental Rights Agency, which sits in Vienna, is Irish, as is the Deputy General Secretary: rights must be advanced.

The Secretary General of FERPA intervened to submit a reflection. He told Esther that the audience she had before her represented what had happened over the last 50 years in Europe. The Manifesto that FERPA has drafted deals with all issues concerning older people. But how can the General Secretary speak on all these issues in the ETUC Executive Committee without being too "boring", when he has no right to vote? Why not link the fight for higher wages to the issue of higher pensions? Why not link pensions and wages? These points are important, because they show that FERPA is present. He concluded by thanking the Deputy Secretary General for her support.

In her response, Esther returned to the issue of the treatment of abstentions in voting. The ETUC Secretariat is trying to change the way things are considered: anything that is not in favour is considered a vote against. She is well aware of the problem, the 2/3 positive vote procedure is starting to hold us back, she says. The goal is to get a broad enough consensus. It is important for FERPA, but also for workers, to encourage the presence of pensioners' unions in the federations at national level. We need to discuss strategy together. What are the consequences at national level of the recognition of FERPA: this fear must be addressed. Concerning the cost of living, it is not true to say that ETUC does not listen to FERPA. It has forwarded the FERPA Declaration of 1 October to the Parliament. We have to see how the ETUC can support this position in November. Linking wage increases and pension increases in the ETUC Declaration is too problematic and risks blocking a document on which all the members had agreed. This point was therefore not mentioned because it would have generated too many disagreements (minimum wage, interest rates, etc.). She was pleased that FERPA had a higher profile, more than young people, more than women. She agreed with the intervention concerning the Fundamental Rights Agency: discrimination must be fought against. The question of the viability of pensions will not go away. We need to equip our members economically. The dignity of wages is the dignity of people. We also need to work on the minimum wage, as this has an impact on pensions. We must work together on the adequacy of pensions.

She assured FERPA that in the new ETUC building, as in the intermediate building, it would have its place. She concluded by insisting on the fact that we need to build a sufficiently solid and strong movement to be able to win our battles. But we must not create illusions in order to be able to meet the challenges.

The General Secretary and the President thanked the Deputy General Secretary in turn for her words and her availability.

The following organisations took part in the debate: FNV; UNSA; FGTB/ABVV; ÖGB; USO; UCR-CFDT; UJP-UGT; FNP-CISL; OGBL; SPI-CGIL; UNIA; UILP-UIL

The President then gave the floor to Danilo TOCCANE, President of the Financial Commission, for his report.

He indicated that the Commission (Cecilia De LAURENZI, Dorde LAJSIC and himself) had met on 28 September 2022. He asked that Jessica be present since, in the absence of the Treasurer, she had contributed to the accounts in liaison with the ETUC's accounting department, for which he thanked her. He also asked Henri to be present to take the minutes of the meeting. He recalled that the Executive Committee meetings had been held in Visio and had approved the budgets for 2019, 2020 and 2021 with the "reserve" formula pending verification by the FERPA Finance Commission which had not been able to meet because of COVID.

Audits by the ETUC auditors revealed that for various reasons eleven FERPA organisations had not been up to date with the payment of their membership fees for a long time, despite repeated reminders, which amounted to 18,000 euros. The Financial Committee decided to send a final request for clarification and financial settlement setting 20 October as the date for regularisation, reminding them that otherwise the statutory rules would apply to their participation in the Congress. The Committee took the liberty of suggesting an adjustment of the previously established membership fees in order to cope with the increase in overheads and the activity that is expected to be very demanding in the near future. The Committee verified that FERPA's budgets were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic with a sharp contraction in expenditure on organisational activities which resulted in a balanced budget or even a small surplus. The Committee verified that the accounting documents and vouchers for expenses incurred are filed at the ETUC and duly archived. It also took note of the reports of the ESC auditors indicating that everything was in order. The Commission therefore considered that the reservations expressed at the time of the votes on the previous budgets were no longer relevant and that they could therefore be considered valid and approved. The Secretary General thanked the Finance Committee for their work.

There being no particular comments on this report, the President thanked the President of the Finance Committee and gave the floor to the Secretary General to present the provisional budget for 2023.

The General Secretary first of all drew the attention of the members of the Executive Committee to the fact that the provisional budget presented today, which showed a slight surplus, should not encourage the new team that would emerge from the Congress to commit itself to new expenditure. He also said that the first Executive Committee meeting after the Congress would be dedicated to dealing with these financial issues.

Today, there is a financial mechanism of solidarity by covering their costs, on a rotating basis, for the organisations of FERPA that are not covered by the Commission (San Marino, Switzerland, Turkey and the TUC). There are also six organisations that are members of FERPA with a reduced membership fee. He then explained the different items and their evolution. For example, in the Executive Committee's expenses, he proposed to remove the lunchtime snack. As an example, he said that yesterday half the food had been thrown away. He said that all the expenses for the Congress had been taken into account. He also indicated that as Jessica was translating the documents into English, the translation item had been significantly reduced. Concerning operating costs, and in particular rental costs, he gave the floor to Jessica who explained that from 12 to 19 December, the ETUC would be moving. It was hoped that in the new building, the rental charges would be the same. The savings made could be used for the renovation of the new offices. Finally, he added that the provisional budget was the result of joint work between the ETUC's accounting department, Jessica and himself.

Following all this information, the President opened the debate.

All the speakers emphasised the clear evolution of the presentation of the budget and thanked for the work done. It was also pointed out that if the Women's Committee was to function properly, it needed to have a substantial budget.

Others wondered about the reduction in the Executive Committee's budget: did this mean an increase in the organisations' share of the costs? With regard to the Congress, an expenditure of 45,000 euros was foreseen, whereas it was indicated that the expenditure would be 65,000 euros. Questions were also raised about the existence of the line Steering Committee - FERPA Initiative (ICE). A remark was made concerning the suppression of the snack during the Executive Committee meetings, as it is a moment of convivial exchange between the members. And once the amount of reserves is communicated, this expense will nevertheless last us for 100 years! Several organisations would have liked to have the 2022 budget to be able to make comparisons. Jessica reminded the meeting that the 2022 accounts were not yet closed. She took the opportunity, while pointing out that the provisional budget was not an exact science, to thank the ETUC's accounts department, the General Secretary and Henri. Several interventions concerned the amount of FERPA's reserves on which members would like to be informed. It was also pointed out that the use of the reserves is a political choice. Others wondered about the organisations that had not paid, whose debt amounted, as the Chairman of the Finance Committee had said, to 18,000 euros, hoping that they would do so very soon: was it a problem of means? Finally, others said that we must act on the basis of the resources at our disposal.

Following this debate, the President gave the floor back to the Secretary General for his response.

Concerning the Women's Committee, he agreed with the statement that had been made. It would be necessary to see with the Steering Committee and the Executive Committee, which would deal with financial matters, how to improve this budget. With regard to the amount of the reserves, the Secretary General indicated that it amounted to 550,000 euros. He said that the reserves are something extra-ordinary and should be used to meet unforeseen expenses. It is a guarantee for FERPA. As for the 18,000 euros, this is effectively the debt that remains. 65,000 budgeted for the Congress, it is a margin to deal with unforeseen events. Concerning the snack bar, we must be clear, it is a cost and half of what we ordered was thrown away...

The President then proceeded to vote on the provisional budget, which was adopted unanimously.

The following organisations intervened in the debate: UCR-FO; UCR-CFDT; UNSA; FNP-CISL; UNIA.

The President gave the floor to Dick DE GRAAF, Chairman of the Working Group on Statutes, to report on the work done by the members of the Group.

He said that this was a report on what had been done and what had been received at the meeting held on 17 October. He began by recalling the composition of the Group: Angela BRIALES GONZALEZ, Silvana CAPUCCIO (who had replaced Ivan PEDRETTI); Dick DE GRAFF (Chair) Werner THUM, Henri LOURDELLE and Jessica MONTIEL RAMIREZ. It received proposals from UNIA (Switzerland), UCR-CFDT and UCR-FO (France), UJP-UGT (Spain), SPI-CGIL (Italy) and PA.SY.DY (Cyprus). The latter organisation had sent its proposals well before the end of June 2022. In this respect, he specified that, as this date had passed, no further proposals for changes could be accepted. He also indicated the next steps: the Working Group would meet again after this Executive Committee meeting and before the next one. Then a new text would be presented to the next Executive Committee with a comparison between the old text and the new one. He then presented the various proposals received and the Commission's proposals. UNIA's proposal was for a gender-sensitive

wording, which was accepted by the Group, as were UCR-CFDT's proposals for restructuring and improving the text. However, some minor changes were not accepted, such as the proposed deletion of the reference in the statutes to human rights. Of the two proposals from Spain, one which consisted in introducing a new structure, namely a "FERPA Council", was not retained. The other proposal to have the Executive Committee elected by the Congress is still under debate. Two of the UCR-FO and UJP-UGT proposals were retained, one concerning the addition to article ll. 5 of a reference to home care and the other on the constitution of the Coordination Group of the Women's Committee just after the Congress, taking into account the regional balance. However, two other proposals concerning the election of the Women's Committee by the Congresses and the guarantee of a certain number of places in the care centres were not retained. The SPI-CGIL presented an amendment providing for a better balance between the functions of the Treasurer and the Financial Committee was accepted. But its consequence, which would be the abolition of the Finance Committee, remains under debate. On the other hand, two other amendments remain under discussion, one of which concerns a new structure for the Steering Committee and the other to formalise the rotation within this same Committee. Finally, with regard to the proposals from Cyprus, one was retained concerning the voting procedure in the event that there are more than two candidates for a post. One was considered superfluous, concerning the election of the Executive Committee immediately at the end of the Congress, as this is already foreseen. Two remained under discussion, one proposal for a presentation of the qualities of the candidate for the post of General Secretary and the other concerning a new structure for the Steering Committee.

The Secretary General then asked to intervene on the composition of the Steering Committee, indicating that 5 of the 12 posts were already reserved and that the current composition already took account of gender and regional balance.

Following this presentation the President opened the debate.

Three interventions took place. All thanked Dick and congratulated him on the quality of the work done. One intervention stressed that the writing could always be improved, but it was not a question of rewriting everything. Another said that, as far as the rules of procedure were concerned, once the Statutes had been approved, it would be a good idea to set up a small committee to draw up the internal rules of procedure. And concerning all the voting rules, it would be wiser to put them in the Rules of Procedure, as it is easier to modify. Finally, it was recalled that French is the original language of the Statutes, and the proposed linguistic changes on gender were copied from the ETUC Statutes. But perhaps consultation is needed, as not all countries have the same method, especially for marking gender.

In his reply, Dick thanked for these contributions. He recalled that the rule of procedure that had been adopted was to present technical proposals for changes to the Statutes. He also agreed that the Rules of Procedure were easier to amend, because for the Statutes there were rules of principle to follow. He would check which parts of the Statutes were more technical and could be transferred to the Rules. As for the language issues, he felt that this was too great a challenge for him and proposed to stick to the official language of the ETUC.

The following organisations intervened in the debate: FNP-CISL; UCR-CFDT; UNIA

The President, in the context of other business, gave the floor to Jessica to give an update on the situation concerning the move.

She reminded the meeting that in practice, during the week of 12 to 19 December, the offices would be closed to pack for the move, so we would no longer be available from 12 December. FERPA will follow what the ETUC will put in place. From 9 January, the ETUC and ourselves will be temporarily relocated to the Silver Square, i.e. just opposite the current building, on the other side of the Boulevard. This will last until June, but probably more like September, as they are still in the process of refurbishing the City Centre. During this interim period, there will be no assigned offices, but we will be in a large open space, so there will be no partitions. As for the current meeting rooms, they are available until March, so we can hold the next Steering Committee and the next Executive Committee.

Dick intervened to say that Esther had said that talking about salaries and pensions at the same time could have national repercussions: but what are they afraid of?

Luc intervened to point out that even in his organisation, pensioners were not represented in the national office.

The General Secretary intervened, reminding us that Dick would be on the ETUC Committee responsible for amending the statutes and that at the mid-term conference in Lisbon the failure to take account of abstentions had not been accepted. It is our organisations that need to be convinced.

He concluded the meeting by saying that he would respect the Group's work on the statutes. He was happy with the two days of work. We have clear ideas. We know how to work until the next Congress. Thanks to Henri and Jessica, in the conditions in which we work. He reminded the meeting of the dates of the next meetings: Steering Committee 26 January 2023: Steering Committee, 13 February 2023: 14 and 15 February: Executive Committee.

The President closed the meeting by thanking everyone, including the interpreters.

Henri