

HL

July 2025

Minutes of the FERPA Mid-Term General Meeting
(CESE, Paris, 13-15 May 2025)

Participants: UJP-UGT; PA.SY.DY. SPI-CGIL ; UILP-UIL ; GWU ; UCR-CGT ; UCR-CFDT ; APTUS-CATUS ; ACV/CSC ; FNPS-CDLS ; FNV ; FGTV/ABVV ; USO ; FNP-CISL ; OGB-L ; UNIA ; UCR-FO ; UNIR CFE CGC ; SPS NEZAVISNOST; MASZSZ; ÖGB; SUH; UNIR Retraités; Interreformados da CGTP-IN; FEJP-CCOO ; UNSA Retraités; UNAR-CFTC; SZEF; SUS; SEK; FUPS-CSDL

The **President of FERPA, Hubert SCHWIND**, opened the General Meeting, which was taking place on the premises of the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council in Paris. He welcomed the participants and introduced the guests who would be speaking in this first part of the meeting.

The President then gave the floor to **FERPA Secretary General Agostino SICILIANO**. He began by outlining the international context in which this meeting was taking place: Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the conflict in the Middle East, the election of TRUMP, and the many areas of divergence between the USA and the EU... in other words, the questioning of peace, the ideal on which the EU is founded. He also added what FERPA had written in its Resolution on Peace: "There can be no social progress without peace, and no lasting peace without democracy, justice and respect for rights". And on the subject of the White Paper on European defence, now known as Readiness 2030, he recalled that for the ETUC and FERPA, common defence cannot and must not be built at the expense of social protection. In addition to the wars already underway, he adds, there is the trade war that the new US administration is waging with tariffs against the European Union, China and other countries, in a particularly alarming and chaotic manner. Tariffs and trade wars are dangerous because they affect not only companies, but also millions of workers and pensioners. They lead to higher prices and inflation, and thus to a further decline in the purchasing power of wages and pensions. The European Union, with its 500 million inhabitants and representing one of the largest trading markets in the world, should seize this opportunity to strengthen its political identity and finally create the conditions necessary for a stronger, more united, secure, inclusive and social Europe. He concluded his speech by wishing the participants good work and a pleasant stay in Paris, and by emphasising that FERPA is part of a trade union movement that has always been a driving force for peace, justice and social cohesion. It will continue to help ensure that these ideals live on and are reflected in national and European policies.

The **FERPA President** then gave the floor to **Ms Martine VIGNEAU, Vice-President** of the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council. She welcomed the participants on behalf of the President of the EESC, Mr BEAUDET. She focused her speech on the worrying situation of retired people throughout Europe, characterised by falling healthcare budgets and the freezing or even reduction of pensions. There are major disparities in the situation of the elderly in Europe. While 16.8% of elderly people in Europe live below the poverty line, the average rate is 35% in Estonia and Lithuania, rising to 44.6% in Latvia. The situation of older women is even more worrying. In France, for example, while 9.1% of elderly men live below the poverty line, 12.5% of elderly women do so. She notes that the European Parliament has identified a number of factors that explain this dramatic situation, such as the pay gap between

men and women, career breaks due to maternity or caring for relatives, and longer life expectancy. These financial difficulties are compounded by increased social isolation, limiting access to essential care. While emphasising the commitment and priorities defended by FERPA, as set out in its Manifesto, she ended her speech by stressing that the precarious situation of retired women is a major issue for our societies.

Véronique LEVIEUX, Deputy Mayor of Paris, in charge of senior citizens and intergenerational solidarity, then took the floor. She presented the approach adopted by the City Council in these areas, pointing out first of all that a wide variety of people are involved when we talk about senior citizens. For example, many of them are isolated, which means that they do not have access to their rights. The work of public authorities and associations is vital and essential to help them. In Paris, all the services working on these issues are grouped together in the Direction des Solidarités for greater efficiency. These are public services that develop services and assistance for the people concerned.

The **Chairman, Hubert Schwind**, then gave the floor to **Didier Hotte of UCR-FO**, who spoke on behalf of the General Secretaries of the French pensioners' organisations affiliated to FERPA. He began by welcoming the participants and wishing that, in addition to their work, the members would have the opportunity to appreciate and visit Paris (which, only a few months ago, was hosting the Olympic Games) and its monuments. Returning to the work awaiting FERPA activists over the next 3 days, which will focus on pensions and the situation of retired people in Europe, and on the concerns that everyone shares on this subject, He began by pointing out that these concerns are no less acute in France, which, like many other countries, is under threat from the rise of conservatism and the extreme right. The French government has passed a law to raise the retirement age, without any vote or discussion in Parliament, despite the opposition of all the trade unions, all the employees and the vast majority of the population. In the year 2025, we are preparing to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the creation of Social Security in our country, and at the same time we are witnessing attempts, particularly by employers, but also by certain political forces on the Right and beyond, to call into question the entire social system in this country. There is no doubt, he added, that the international situation has been worrying since the American presidential elections. FERPA condemns all the wars underway in Ukraine, Gaza and everywhere else, as reaffirmed in the FERPA Resolutions, because it is always the people who suffer. But FERPA also condemns this internal war being waged against social systems throughout Europe: there can be no social peace without social justice. European governments are currently discussing the Europe of defence, and this is not without risk for future investments or social spending in the Member States. The speaker insisted that this must not lead to budget cuts in all public services: health insurance, hospitals, transport, retirement homes and, of course, pensions for retired people. Added to all this is the propaganda aimed at pitting young people against old people, employees against pensioners, known as ageism. The speaker concluded by wishing everyone a successful Mid-Term General Meeting.

The floor was given back to the **General Secretary of FERPA**, who read out two messages of solidarity, one from Greek colleagues and the other from the General Secretary of SPI-CGIL, who were unable to attend the meeting.

The **General Secretary of FERPA** then opened the **celebration of FERPA's 30th anniversary** with the **showing of a video** recounting the past 30 years.

He then introduced the event by recalling the key moments in **FERPA's history**, from its origins to the present day.

The **General Secretary of the ETUC, Esther LYNCH**, then addressed a video **message** to the members of the Assembly, emphasising first of all that FERPA was made up of those who had built the European trade union movement and that it was now a respected part of it. The ETUC and all workers benefit from the decades of work, militancy and dedication that have laid the foundations for social progress and trade union strength throughout Europe. As General Secretary of the ETUC, she reaffirmed her unwavering commitment to defending the rights and dignity of retired workers. Citing just a few examples, she emphasised that the collaboration between the ETUC and FERPA is already bearing fruit: a joint declaration was issued on the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons on 1st October, several Resolutions have been adopted by the ETUC which clearly include and underline the need to defend and improve the living conditions, rights and pensions of retired people throughout Europe and, in particular, last year, the adoption of the Resolution for a fair and inclusive pensions policy, in which the ETUC and FERPA jointly call for, among other things, adequate pension schemes and other instruments to ensure that all older people have the right to resources that will ensure them a dignified life, as well as the full indexation and re-evaluation of pensions to bring them into line with salaries and increases in the cost of living, as well as with age-related needs. It also reiterates its full support for FERPA's right to vote on the ETUC Executive Committee, which will be debated the following week in Belgrade at the ETUC Mid-term Conference. She wants FERPA to be an integral part of the ETUC. She stressed that FERPA's work was crucial at a time when the European Union was at a crossroads, with rising inequalities and a major risk of a return to austerity. The ETUC General Secretary concluded by reaffirming that the ETUC stood by FERPA and supported its demands, and she concluded by saying that "together we will work to ensure that European policies respect and reflect the needs of older people, now and in the future".

The **Chairman, Hubert SCHWIND**, then gave the floor to the **3 Secretaries General** who had successively headed FERPA, following **Georges DEBUNNE**, the founder of FERPA.

Luigina DE SANTIS (SPI-CGIL), FERPA's **first General Secretary**, after Georges DEBUNNE, from May 1999 to May 2007, spoke first,

After recalling the FERPA Presidents with whom she had worked (.Josette NEUNEZ, CSC and Jacques SENSE, UCR-CFDT), as well as the General Secretaries and Confederal Secretaries of the ETUC with whom she had also worked, she thanked Henri LOURDELLE, then ETUC Adviser on Social Protection, for the quality of the collaboration she had developed with him and Jessica MONTIEL, her "faithful collaborator". Luigina went on to talk about the origins of what was to become FERPA, i.e. the organisation representing pensioners and the elderly in their dealings with the European institutions. She also recalled the initiatives that had been taken at the time to broaden FERPA's base, notably by the Nordic trade unions which, although they did not have their own pensioners' trade union structures but rather local, regional and national "associations", had joined forces with FERPA through the PRO Association (400,000

members) or the national coordination of British pensioners (the National Parliament). She also mentioned the relationships forged at European level with various NGOs (EAPN, the European Anti-Poverty Network and the European Disability Forum). During her term of office, FERPA's activities also included developing relations and contacts of a more "political" nature, for example with the European Parliament (meeting with the President, Ms FONTAINE) or with the Commission (meeting with Commissioner Ms DIAMANTOPOLOU). She also mentioned the numerous and significant participations of FERPA delegations in events organised by the ETUC or at national level. She also recalled FERPA's participation in the Second United Nations World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in April 2002, and the major demonstration of European pensioners that FERPA organised on 7 April in Madrid, together with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), in support of the rights of older people and pensioners and for the defence and development of social protection systems. She ended her speech by mentioning the initiatives she had developed to obtain recognition of FERPA's right to vote on the ETUC Executive Committee (although this right to vote was acquired at Congress), initiatives that had met with hostility from certain confederations, which considered that the trade union's "job" was to negotiate collective agreements, whereas the "specificity of the EU was not collective agreements, but the "social dimension" which the Union has developed over the decades and which represents one of the most important and original productive factors...with the development of a more "inclusive" strategy... including retired people". But fortunately, the baton was taken up by his successors, including Bruno COSTANTINI who succeeded him in May 2007.

The floor was then given to **Bruno Costantini (CISL), Secretary General of FERPA from 2007 to 2015.**

After thanking FERPA for its invitation, which had been a source of great emotion for him, Bruno began by stressing the unique nature of FERPA's trade unionism, which is one of a kind. Older and retired people are often considered and judged to be outside working life, sometimes even within trade union confederations. We all remember the great battles and discussions we had to wage to obtain fair recognition and an active role in trade union life". He then paid tribute to those who had paved the way for the representation of older and retired people in the international trade union world. He also emphasised the great responsibility that now falls to all those who have taken up the baton and continue the commitment to defend the rights and gains achieved over the years. While he notes that, after 10 years, many well-known activists have disappeared, he is delighted to see so many new faces that FERPA is still going strong. Despite the difficulties and the battles waged during the difficult years, which have not always enabled FERPA to achieve all the objectives it had set itself, it has always, he points out, followed its clear path and remained firm in its resolve. This is why, in closing, he expressed his satisfaction that the work accomplished in the past has been followed up positively and that the elderly and retired throughout Europe can still count on a strong and determined voice that will continue to defend them.

It was then the turn of **Carla CANTONE (SPI-CGIL), Secretary General of FERPA from 2015 to 2018, to give her testimony.**

She begins by sharing her emotion at seeing so many familiar faces, including Jessica, who was "a very helpful assistant", to quote her, and Henri, who "helped her a great deal". She reminds us that if she only stayed at the head of FERPA for 3 years and a few months, it was

not for political reasons, but out of a strictly personal choice, to be able to stay at the side of her partner who had serious health problems, which led her to resign from all the union posts she had held at FERPA. Carla emphasises that, despite their brevity, they were three intense and important years, because involvement in FERPA is an extraordinary and fascinating job, because you have to defend the most vulnerable people, the elderly who have worked all their lives. There are many millions of elderly people who need protection, an adequate pension, an efficient healthcare system, and in particular who need healthcare in public systems where everyone can be treated regardless of income. Because as we age, retirement, health and even home care are essential. However, the condition of the elderly is a mirror of the social models of our countries, and therefore of Europe. She said that she was aware that the problem of young people and their future is often a tragedy due to the lack of jobs, and that this is happening everywhere, which is why it is necessary to unite the needs, demands and struggles of young and old, workers and pensioners, which is, for Carla, the most important challenge facing the new and old generations. She also mentioned that during the short time she was head of FERPA, she had proposed a European statute for the elderly and retired. She concluded by calling for respect for the elderly, which for them means a public pension that provides an income enabling them to live with dignity, and assistance for those who are dependent. She added: "In every country, there must be a welfare state worthy of our idea of freedom, solidarity, dignity and democracy. There is no freedom and democracy if you are forced to live in poverty.

Following these testimonies¹ members who so wish are also invited to give their testimonies. The morning of 14 May will begin at 9.00am to 11.00am with a **Round Table**, organised by **the President of the Women's Committee, Silvana CAPPuccio (SPI-CGIL)**, on the theme of **"Gender inequalities in the process of demographic transition in the European Union"**.

The Round Table will be chaired by Marlène BOISSON, National Secretary of UCR-CFDT. The Chair of the FERPA Women's Committee gave a brief introduction to the Round Table, introducing the speakers from the trade union, academic and political-institutional worlds:

- Hélène BIDARD, Deputy Mayor of Paris, responsible for gender equality, youth and popular education
- Maria Belen Cardona Rubert, University of Valencia
- Zita GURMAL, President of PES Women
- Ana MARTINEZ LOPEZ, Deputy Secretary General of FERPA
- Michèle DEHAEN, FGTB Early Retirees and Pensioners Committee (PP&P)
- Joëlle MOURTON, National Secretary of UNSA Retraités

While old age is a perfectly natural process, age is the great silent revolution of modern society and the great current and future challenge for public policy. All the speakers agreed that the situation of older people in Europe gives cause for concern. Everywhere there is a decline in the budgets devoted to health care and a freeze, if not a decline, in pensions. There are major disparities between older people in Europe. Although they have a longer life expectancy, this longevity poses major challenges to the lives of individuals and to the organisation of society... We need to recognise informal care, we need to recognise this work: women are the solution to every problem. Europe is the region of the world with the oldest population and, by 2050, the number of elderly people is expected to reach 236 million, or 34% of the total population. Ageing and poverty often go hand in hand, but they also have a largely female face. There is a sexualisation of the value of women, as opposed to the social attractiveness of men, which

depends on variables less related to appearance. All this leads to invisibility, concealment, pejorative treatment and an inverse impact on older women. Women are the hardest hit by inequality and poverty. They suffer increased social isolation and limited access to essential care. Precariousness is a major issue for our societies. We need to take action on age discrimination, because it can lead to social discrimination. We need to be able to live with dignity and not be socially isolated. We need to demand better living together.

The **debate** that followed offered an anthology of convergent reactions. After noting that "we age as soon as we are born", many expressed their agreement with what had just been said, namely that women should be at the centre of European policies. Some pointed out that initial training should be upgraded in jobs where women are in the majority. Even if women are the majority of care providers, this care activity must be considered by both men and women. Likewise, attention must be paid to the care provided in families, which must be considered as real jobs. Defending older women is closely linked to our social model: women's battles are battles for everyone. If you don't fight, you don't count. You have to know the history, remember the struggle and, above all, have hope in the results of the struggle.

At the end of the debate and the Round Table, the **President of the Women's Committee** concluded by expressing her gratitude to both the speakers and the colleagues who had spoken. She reiterated that the Women's Committee does not wish to be a "neutral" committee. We must demand that the institutions have the courage they lack today.

The **President of FERPA, Hubert SCHWIND**, then gave the floor to **Agostino SICILIANO, Secretary General of FERPA**, to present his **Activity Report** for the past period.

Without forgetting the international context in which we find ourselves today, as he reminded us at the opening of this Mid-term General Meeting, the General Secretary focused on FERPA's activities over the past two years. He began by pointing out that the Resolution of the Vienna Congress and the Manifesto remain the benchmark for our demands. The ETUC has shown itself to be more attentive to the demands of pensioners and the elderly. We share common values and principles with the ETUC. He also recalled his speeches at the ETUC Congress in Berlin, at the various Executive Committees and Management Committees, and at the ETUC demonstrations in Paris, Brussels, etc., in which FERPA had taken part. He also mentioned the joint ETUC/FERPA Declaration of 1st October on the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons, as well as the Resolution on pensions adopted unanimously by the ETUC Executive Committee. He also mentioned all the trips he had made in response to invitations from member organisations. He also mentioned the move of the ETUC to its definitive premises and the opportunity for FERPA to have its premises at the heart of the ETUC offices, even if, unfortunately, in the new building there are no rooms large enough to hold meetings. Referring to FERPA's right to vote on the ETUC Executive Committee, he urged members to make representations to their confederal bodies to ensure that FERPA's demand was met. He also mentioned FERPA's difficult financial situation, a subject that would be dealt with later, and hoped that a definitive solution could be found at the Executive Committee meeting in November. He reiterated that increasing life expectancy should be seen not just as a cost or a problem, but as an opportunity for the elderly and retired, and as a possibility for investment. FERPA's role is to open people's eyes to a reality that nobody wants to see in Europe, namely that the elderly represent 1/5th of the population. He concluded by thanking the UILP for the

FERPA website, and he also thanked all the members for everything that had been done and would be done in the future.

The **President** thanked the General Secretary for his presentation and opened the **debate**. A number of delegates thanked the General Secretary for his speech, although some called for a more concrete approach, focusing on pensions or health, for example. It was feared that we would arrive at the next Congress without having obtained the European minimum pension. Too often we only talk about working people: pensioners carry little weight. But working people must take an interest in pensioners, because pensioners are part of society. We are increasingly living in a "digital" society. So we need to help retired people who don't have the responsibility (by organising "digital literacy" courses, for example). We also need to engage with young people, because there is a risk of losing them. Virtually all the speeches referred to the international situation (wars, but also Trump's return to the White House), and all denounced the risk that the war economy and European rearmament would be to the detriment of the social situation and social protection. Peace is part of the EU's DNA and the reason for its construction. In their speeches, the members called for a strong reaction from FERPA in this direction and to oppose the Extreme Right and its rise. We need an anti-fascist network. Moreover, everywhere, whether at the level of the Commission with its "Omnibus packages" or at the level of the Member States, we are witnessing attempts at "simplification" which, with the complicity of the employers, mask the desire to call into question the advances and social benefits of employees and pensioners. The EU cannot be strengthened on the basis of a Eurocentric vision. The context is more complex: the EU no longer welcomes people who end up in poverty. The EU is mute, incapable of doing anything about these problems. It is not possible for us to say nothing and do nothing.

The floor was given back to the **General Secretary** to draw the **conclusions** of the debate. He began by thanking the members for their work over the past two years. The areas of work mentioned (health, housing, social protection, etc.) can be found in the Manifesto drafted and formatted by Henri, thanks to the collective work of the whole FERPA and adopted unanimously by its members... We need to strengthen ourselves collectively. We need to involve our federations and all the central trade unions. It's all part of a big collective effort. We need to invest. We need to move forward thanks to the Manifesto and our Resolutions. We have to try to be stronger. We're on the right track, and we need to strengthen our role.

The following organisations took part in the debate: : UIL-UILP, UCR-CGT, UNIA, UCR-FO, UCR-CFDT, FNP-CISL, USO, UNSA-Retraitées, ACV/CSC , OGB-L, FEJP-CCOO, SUS, UNIR CFE CGC, SPI-CGIL, FGTB/ABVV, FNPS-CDLS

The next item was a **political report on the present and future of FERPA's finances**, presented by **FERPA Treasurer Dick DE GRAAF**.

It was made clear that this debate, in view of the information presented and the discussion that would follow, was not intended to lead to a decision to be taken by the Mid-Mandate General Meeting, which did not have the statutory responsibility to do so, but to prepare the decisions that would have to be taken at the Executive Committee meeting in November.

The Treasurer said that in presenting the report on FERPA's situation, he wished to be as transparent as possible. However, he could not present the balance sheet for 2024, as the ETUC did not finalise the accounts for the previous year until June, when they were submitted to the

auditors. On the expenditure side, salaries accounted for 60%, other staff costs 14%, meeting expenses 20% and office expenses 6%. In terms of income, subscriptions accounted for 92.5%, the ETUC contribution for 6.5% and interest on investments for 2%. However, a number of points need to be made:

- The calculation of the membership fee has not been re-evaluated since 2011 (for the ETUC, the fee is indexed each year to inflation and based on the number of members calculated on the average of the previous three years.
- In the case of FERPA, however, a system of additional lump-sum contributions has been introduced for organisations deemed to have "greater financial strength", with a reduced contribution for members deemed to have "lesser financial strength".
- A lump sum is also awarded to smaller organisations for attendance at "face-to-face" meetings.
- Since its creation, FERPA has received an annual grant of 12,500 euros from the ETUC as a sign of support, the amount of which has not changed.
- Lastly, although FERPA has reserves, these cannot be used to balance the annual budget. They exist to be able to deal with major unforeseen difficulties or in the event of the dissolution of FERPA.

Because of the fall in the number of contributors and inflation, FERPA's income does not cover its expenditure. The Treasurer outlined a number of possible solutions, which will be discussed in November. However, a decision would have to be taken at that time to ensure that FERPA had the resources it needed to carry out its missions.

Following this presentation, the **General Secretary** added two brief clarifications:

- this information was based on that given previously, so that the organisations could discuss it within their structures/confederations and thus have a calm debate in November
- The question was whether everyone had the will to ensure that FERPA lived on.

The **President** then opened the **debate**.

The speakers thanked Dick for his presentation and asked for the documents to be made available sufficiently in advance, at least one month in advance. Several speakers said that we needed to define a pathway that was acceptable to everyone. Some asked for the ETUC's contribution structures, or even those of other organisations. A number of people said they were ready to act, but we have to be realistic in the face of increasing difficulties. We will have to talk about this within our organisations. This debate on finances is in fact a major debate on democracy: we need resources that come from our members. We need to know today what the membership fee should be, organisation by organisation. The solidarity contribution could be kept in these terms.

In his **reply**, the **Treasurer** confirmed that he would send the documents (FERPA) on time and at least one month in advance.

The **General Secretary** added a few comments. First of all, he insisted that a decision would have to be taken in November. We would also have to think about the number of members. Returning to the question of indexation, he wondered why the subscription had been frozen at that time. He concluded this theme by reminding everyone that everything must be a matter of political will.

The following organisations took part in the debate: : PA.SY.DY, UNIA, ACV/CSC , FNP-CISL, SPI-CGIL

President Hubert SCHWIND then gave the floor to **Silvana CAPPUCCIO**, member of the working group on the Resolution, to introduce the **debate** on the Resolution of the Mid-term General Meeting.

In her introductory remarks, Silvana began by emphasising that the text was the fruit of a collective effort: She also mentioned the changes in the context since 2023 (war scenarios more or less close, political revolution on a global scale, the rise of the Right and populism in Europe, the inability of the EU to manage migration other than in terms of border design and a mercantile attitude, the environmental crisis and its implications for people's lives and nature. There is also an increased need for FERPA's demands and its trade union profile. In short, this document submitted to the GA is consistent with the documents adopted by FERPA in previous years...

During the **debate**, several organisations praised the quality of the work that had been done. They then turned to several points in the Resolution, such as, for example, "contributions" instead of "contributions" or the adjectives "decent" / "dignified". Silvana pointed out that contributions were of course welcome, but that the text had already been the subject of discussion and mediation and that it was a summary document and that nothing prevented any aspect from being reviewed in the future. We need to stick to terminology that is not offensive to anyone. Some also raised the issue of the precision of the term "indexation" when referring to pensions. Henri pointed out that this debate had already taken place during the discussion of the Manifesto and that it had then been settled as it is written in the text. But the point that, in a way, crystallises the debates concerns the term "groups" that accompanies the word "terrorists", used at the beginning of the second sentence of the 3rd paragraph and which appears ambiguous. Many would like to see the word "attacks" used instead. Silvana indicated that no one was going to change the text without the approval of the whole assembly, but as some organisations had requested it, the amendment was put to the vote. The amendment was broadly **adopted** (49 in favour, 9 against and 2 abstentions).

In **concluding** the debate, Silvana expressed her satisfaction at the discussion that had taken place, and again thanked all those who had contributed to the quality of the final version, pointing out that the text covered the next two years.

The resolution, which was put to the vote, **was adopted almost unanimously** (minus two abstentions).

The following organisations took part in the debate: FGTEB/ABVV, UIL-UILP, FNV, UCR-FO, UCR-CFDT, UNAR-CFTC, ACV/CSC, OGB-L, Interreformados da CGTP-IN, SUH, UNIR CFE CGC, SUS

The **Chairman** then gave the floor to the **Secretary General of FERPA** to draw the **conclusions** of this Mid-Term General Meeting of FERPA.

First of all, he noted that there had been some important speeches and eminent speakers. There was also a lot of sharing of experiences. We learned a lot at the Round Table organised by the Women's Committee, and there is still a lot to learn. Thanks to Dick's reflection on the financial aspects of FERPA, the organisation will be able to continue and grow. He also mentioned the ETUC's Mid-Term Conference, which would take place next week and where other issues would be discussed, including FERPA's right to vote on the ETUC's Executive Committee. He congratulated the French organisations on last night's perfect evening, and highlighted the prestigious setting of the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council in which the debates had taken place. He concluded by thanking Julianne and all his ETUC colleagues for their help, as well as the interpreters. He also thanked Silvana, Dick, Anna, Henri, Jessica and

the graphic designer. He concluded by saying "You are the actors, we are working on the mandates you have given us".

In his turn, the **President of FERPA, Hubert SCHWIND**, thanked the organisations present for having brought this General Meeting to life and concluded with these words: "We are going back to the fight with two tools: the Manifesto and the Declaration!"

Henri

ⁱ All these speeches, as well as those of FERPA's Secretary General, can be found on FERPA's website.