



Final declaration

FERPA'S MID-TERM GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Paris, 13-15 May 2025



Since the FERPA Congress in Vienna in April 2023, the political and economic context in the world and in Europe has seen with concern the advances of far-right populisms and their policies to abolish the welfare state, raising new concerns about social justice and the state of freedoms and human rights.

The cornerstones of the European Union are shaking: peace, democracy, citizenship rooted in the recognition of universal rights, freedom, equality, solidarity and inclusion.

Wars, forced and desperate migrations, armed conflicts and terrorist attacks seem to have no end in sight, in the absence of clear leadership, which Europe has lost, and of political will and management capacity on the part of international institutions, which is worrying, in a global framework of rearmament and increasing militarisation. Not to mention the increasingly dramatic and uncontrollable environmental and climatic crisis, as recently demonstrated by the tragedy of the floods in Spain and Italy, in the heart of Europe. Not to mention the alarming increase in pollution, a scourge that particularly affects the elderly and frail. In the background, another crisis is raging, one that is devastating because it can wipe out the very possibility of a future: the ecological crisis. Heatwaves (2024 is the hottest year on record), storms, droughts, floods, pollution and the loss of biodiversity are affecting economic and everyday life throughout Europe. This crisis is not without consequences for the health of the elderly and frail.

FERPA recalls its resolution¹ “For a just and lasting peace”: no social progress without peace, no peace without democracy.

The European elections have reshaped the political balance on a continent in the throes of a recurring political and economic crisis. The shift to the right of the European political axis has led, among many new issues, to the elimination of the positions of the specific EU Commissioner for Social Affairs and the EU Commissioner for Equality, institutional functions fundamental to the work of all European trade unions. The ETUC and FERPA therefore call for the reinstatement of these important positions.

Along this, there is also the demographic transition, which clearly shows that Europe's population is ageing very rapidly.

By 2050, the average number of people aged over 65 will reach around 30% of the European population, and the proportion of women will increase.

In almost all European countries, women make up the majority of the elderly population. On average, they live longer than men and, in the current context, are the most exposed to poverty and social exclusion, due to loss of autonomy, loneliness and lower pensions than men.

1. Adopted by the Ferpa Executive Committee, 21-22 February 2024

This context reinforces the reasons for FERPA's proactive and lobbying activity in favour of the rights of older people and pensioners, in line with the ETUC's policy set out in its resolution on "Ageing with dignity".²

Their demands and proposals, far from being narrowly focused on one group and centred on the older generation, take into account the general interest of the whole population, its most disadvantaged segment and the future of generations to come.

The Mid Term General Assembly Meeting therefore reiterates its request that

- ➔ A Europe that acts in a more social and inclusive way and guarantees: protection for all residents, without exclusion; universal, high-quality and sustainable public health systems, with the emphasis on disease prevention and increasing the number of geriatric doctors; indexation of pensions and salaries to the rise in inflation; and a minimum pension, which meets all the needs of a decent life, in all countries above the poverty line.
- ➔ The renunciation of the European Union's political choice of austerity policies that lead to cuts in health and pensions and only generate poverty, particularly for the elderly.
- ➔ The implementation of the European Social Charter³, the Protocol on Social Progress, the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the proposals contained in the final report of the Conference on the Future of Europe.⁴
- ➔ For each Member State, social policies to build a protective State that sees ageing as an opportunity rather than a burden.
- ➔ A Europe that fights against all forms of discrimination based on gender, skin colour, religion, country of origin, disability, sexual orientation and above all age, while avoiding using immigration as a tool to set society on fire, as the far right does.
- ➔ The right to be consulted by the European institutions on decisions affecting the lives of retired and elderly people.

The increase in the elderly population in Europe reinforces the need and the right for FERPA to represent the demands of pensioners and elderly people to the European institutions.

2. Adopted by the ETUC Executive Committee, 5-6 October 2021

3. The European Social Charter - Social rights

4. Conference on the Future of Europe | REPORT ON THE FINAL RESULTS

The Mid Term General Assembly reaffirms the validity of the FERPA Manifesto⁵ as an instrument of support for the demands concerning :

- ➔ Defending and improving public and universal social protection and combating poverty;
- ➔ The right (acquired through years of contributions) to decent, index-linked pensions.

It reiterates

- ➔ its clear opposition to any measure to raise the retirement age and/or freeze increases;
- ➔ the right to adequate and decent housing, by eliminating architectural barriers that restrict the mobility of the elderly;
- ➔ the right to affordable, means-tested energy for pensioners and all citizens;
- ➔ the full participation of older people in social, political and cultural life;
- ➔ work to put an end to elder abuse, which is a violation of human rights and can take the form of physical, sexual, psychological or emotional abuse, or financial or material abuse.

FERPA strongly protests and condemns the European Commission's recent action of withdrawing, after 17 years of negotiations, the proposal for the Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive, which aimed to extend antidiscrimination protections beyond employment to cover the age, disability, sexual orientation, and religion/belief.

FERPA will continue to urge the European institutions to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is destined to become an integral part of the European Treaties.

On the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons on 1 October, FERPA will reaffirm the role and place of retired people in Europe and the need to ensure a decent standard of living for them and to protect the freedom to retire in dignity.

The Mid Term General Assembly reiterates the need for tax policies in all European countries to move towards greater fairness and uniformity, particularly with regard to the taxation of super-profits. It calls for an effective fight against tax havens, particularly in Europe, and tax optimisation policies.

5. Unanimously adopted by the Mid Term General Assembly Ferpa 21-22 October 2021

With regard to intergenerational solidarity, FERPA confirms the validity of the Agreement signed in 2016 with the ETUC Youth Committee, and reaffirms its willingness to update it, in order to identify together concrete and effective actions facilitating the entry of young people into the world of work, to achieve levels of full employment and fair wages.

Full employment and fair wages for young people will make it possible to rebalance the ratio between pensioners and the working population in order to ensure the stability of the social security systems today and tomorrow, by definitively breaking the negative stigma of intergenerational relations.

FERPA calls for regulated migration policies based on respect for fundamental freedoms, individual rights and labour rights, and above all to promote joint action to improve the living conditions of workers and pensioners throughout Europe, for a Europe without discrimination, capable of guaranteeing the rights and dignity of everyone.

FERPA is fighting digital discrimination against older people, and women in particular. While they offer immense possibilities, new technologies, through the abusive trend towards dematerialisation of documents and procedures, accentuate the digital divide and expose older people to the risk of exclusion and loneliness. It is therefore necessary to generate inclusive transformation policies by ensuring funding, ongoing training and assistance for digital services and their development, and to guarantee alternative access to a paper document for administrative procedures, whenever the retired person so wishes.

FERPA fights against all forms of ageism, which affects retired people and makes them second-class citizens, which is unacceptable.

For all these reasons, perhaps the time has come to demand greater political visibility and a specific institutional agenda for older people, the time has come to open the debate to define standards on the rights of older people, including an international Treaty in the form of a Convention, which will meet our needs and serve to protect our demands, which will break definitively with ageism and generate a positive intergenerational dialogue.

As regards relations with the ETUC, FERPA regrets the absence of voting rights in ETUC bodies. FERPA hopes that the next ETUC mid-term conference in May 2025 will confirm the FERPA proposal on voting rights already approved by the ETUC Commission on Statutory Amendments. FERPA pledges that member organisations will continue to lobby their national confederations to support the approval of this right.