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17 December 2025

Minutes of the FERPA Executive Committee online meeting of 27 and 28 November 2025

FERPA President Hubert SCHWIND opened the meeting by welcoming the members and submitting the meeting agenda and the minutes of the last Executive Committee meeting for approval. Both documents were adopted unanimously and, as there were no questions, he gave the floor to the **Secretary General, Agostino SICILIANO**, for his **announcements**.

The Secretary General began by emphasising the importance of the meeting in view of the significant issues to be discussed. He reminded those present that the meeting had been postponed in solidarity with the Belgian trade unions, which had called a general strike on 26 November. He then reviewed the many things that had been done since the last Executive Committee meeting in February.

First, there was the FERPA Mid-Term General Assembly in Paris on 12-14 May. It was an interesting event with a lot of content to cover. He thanked the French organisations for their warm welcome and the quality of the organisation. This was followed by the ETUC Mid-Term Conference, held in Belgrade from 19 to 24 May. Here too, the debates were interesting, particularly the one on the defence of public services, which are the guarantors of democracy.

The **General Secretary** spoke to remind everyone that the ETUC Resolutions concerning us must be translated into reality. The important moment for us was the vote on FERPA's right to vote on the ETUC Executive Committee. He recalled all the work done by our Federation. The Conference voted overwhelmingly in favour (zero votes against and only six abstentions), even though the final decision will be taken at the next ETUC Congress. The General Secretary thanked the members for their commitment to their confederations after 30 years of struggle. In June, he attended the FNP-CISL Congress, where he reiterated the importance of working at European level in order to have an impact at national level. He also took part in the ETUC Steering Committee and, together with the President, in the Executive Committees to discuss our problems and reiterate our call for a European minimum pension. At its meeting on 19 and 20 November, the ETUC discussed how to revive the trade union movement in Europe and announced a major demonstration in Brussels next year. It also announced that its next Congress would be held from 4 to 6 May 2027 (over three days instead of four as in previous years) in Stockholm. During this meeting, the vote on the ETUC budget was postponed until March 2026, as no agreement was reached: the ETUC is experiencing the same financial problems as we are and has set up a Financial Committee to consider solutions before next March. There was also a resolution on wage transparency, which revealed that women's pensions are on average 29% lower than men's. An action plan has been proposed that must start from the grassroots level, an approach that could inspire FERPA. We will do what is necessary to participate so that our issues are addressed.

In his subsequent communications, the Secretary General also referred to the recent decision by the Court of Justice of the European Union which, on 11 November, upheld the Directive on the minimum wage and thus ruled against Denmark, which had challenged it. The Secretary General added: "After the European minimum wage... the European minimum pension!" On 14 October, FERPA took part in the Commission's consultation on "The European Strategy for Combating Poverty", pointing out that the minimum pension should be above the poverty threshold. Previously, on 10 September 2025, Commission President Ursula Von der LEYEN delivered her annual State of the Union address to the European Parliament and set out her priorities. Among these was the issue of housing. A special committee on housing was set up. However, the preliminary report that was released made no mention of pensioners. FERPA therefore decided to send a letter – which members have received – to the Chair of this Special Committee, and on 10 December a meeting will be held at the European Parliament to explain our problems to her. Finally, the Secretary General has provided the schedule of meetings planned for 2026:

- 5 February, from 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m., Steering Committee online
- 17 March, Steering Committee in person (2pm – 5pm)
- 18 and 19 March, Executive Committee in person, to launch our pre-congress phase
- 25-26 November, Executive Committee (for November, TBC if we can do it in person)

The **President**, while reminding everyone that good salaries lead to good pensions, then opened **the floor for discussion**.

Several organisations thanked the French organisations for hosting and organising the FERPA Mid-Term General Assembly. Thanks were also extended to the Women's Committee and its Chair. They also thanked the Secretary General for his insightful communications and for the work he does, as well as Henri and Jessica. They also welcomed the victory in rejecting Denmark's appeal to the CJEU. Several organisations insist that social rights and their implementation, such as peace and the minimum pension, are important demands. Some even say that the minimum pension, which must be above the poverty line, should be an important item on the agenda of our next Congress. And on the subject of pensions, the question is raised as to what has become of the project proposed at the time: "Don't touch our pensions"? A major campaign on a European minimum pension should therefore be launched, work should be done on it and a proposal should be presented to the 2027 Congress. Others return to the subject of public services and consider it to be a unifying theme. Several others believe that it is essential to revisit the issue of housing for older people, which is often poorly insulated, with insulation therefore being a priority, as well as its link to the energy transition. Still on the subject of housing, there is a need for housing that combats the isolation of older people and, when necessary, older people must be able to be rehoused in accommodation that is suitable for them. The problem is not only a lack of housing, but above all a lack of quality housing that allows people to remain in their own homes, which requires care, meals, etc., but how can this be financed?

It is important to be aware that today, the only budget that is increasing is the defence budget. This "march towards war" is worrying because it is being achieved by "cutting" the social budget, which is largely to the detriment of the elderly. We must anticipate the ageing of the elderly population for the future. On all these issues, FERPA should formulate concrete

proposals and discuss certain actions to be implemented, especially on pensions. Shouldn't these issues, or at least some of them, be discussed with the ETUC Youth Committee and Women's Committee? Finally, many organisations are in favour of a large demonstration in Brussels, as we are all concerned by the erosion of social models.

In his **response**, the Secretary-General first thanked the organisations for their various contributions. He then explained that we are working "drop by drop" by being present and persistent in order to be heard. Even if we are being listened to a little more, this is the world in which we must operate, representing 42 organisations and 10 million members. While we are aware of our limitations, how can we ensure that we are heard? Everything we want is in our Manifesto, including pensions, but we need to find a way to make ourselves heard. There is no point in drafting a new document or conducting studies; we need to find ways to make an impact. We must also do what is necessary within our confederations to ensure that we are not the only ones talking about minimum pensions at the ETUC. We must look to the future and everyone must be convinced of the problem. We must move forward on the minimum pension and, together with the ETUC, find a way to be more visible. We must move forward with a goal in mind so that we can work with the ETUC and, together with it, fight the same fight as for the minimum wage. Should we consider setting up a working group with the ETUC? On housing, we just need to repeat to the ETUC everything that has been said. We need the ETUC behind us and we need to convince others, including the ETUC. Finally, like the ETUC, we are against war and for peace, but military spending cannot be at the expense of welfare.

Several organisations requested the **floor** again. First, they expressed their agreement with the Secretary General's comments on the need for political action with national confederations, stating that it is necessary to work with them and not merely act as a supporting force. Most of the reactions/questions focused on the possibility of setting up a working group to formulate concrete proposals. While the speakers agreed in principle, they asked the Secretary General for further details, given that the files had already been distributed among the members of the Executive Committee and that we were not starting from scratch: how would it be set up? What would be its roadmap and mission statement to clarify what we want?

The **Secretary General** replied that the minimum pension must be linked to the budgetary rules of each country. We need people who are active on this issue, even people from outside the organisation, and we need the resources to do the work.

On the sidelines of this debate, the FGTB representative requested that the corrections she had sent be included in the minutes of the Mid-Term General Assembly. Henri replied that this would be done and that they would be included in the minutes on the FERPA website, so that everyone would have access to them.

The following organisations took part in the debates: FGTB/ABVV, FNP-CISL, UCR-CGT, UNIR-CFE-CGC, UNSA-Retraités, UNIA, USO, UILP-UIL, CSC/ACV, FEJP-CC.OO, UCR-CFDT, FNV, UCR-FO, OGB-L, SPI-CGIL, and SZEJ

The meeting then continued with **the FERPA Women's Committee meeting**.

Silvana, Chair of the FERPA Women's Committee, opened the meeting by first thanking the members for their positive assessment of this morning's Mid-Term General Assembly,

emphasising that the credit and thanks go to all the members of the Committee, each of whom made their own contribution. It is a collective success.

She then gave an update on her participation in the ETUC Women's Committee, thanking Ana for standing in for her when she was unable to attend the meetings. She emphasised that she had vigorously defended the rights of older women.

This ETUC Committee discussed the Commission's document on the "Strategy for Gender Equality" and the accompanying "Roadmap for Women's Rights", which was adopted on 7 March 2025. Silvana pointed out that these are mainly political statements and that there are no binding provisions, which is their weakness. Nevertheless, in response to the Commission, the ETUC made specific proposals to address the shortcomings of the European proposal. These proposals focus in particular on the gender pay gap, which results in women's pensions being 30% lower than men's. They also address the development of quality jobs and workplaces free from gender-based violence. We must ensure that new rights are recognised with a clear timetable for implementation. All of this requires our attention. The ETUC must also call for the introduction of binding measures against gender-based violence. Furthermore, we must not ignore the fact that austerity policies constitute 'economic' violence against women, who, in particular, live longer. The FERPA Women's Committee endorses all these considerations. Furthermore, it calls for the correction of rearmament policies in favour of peace and the improvement of social policies. On 8 March 2026, there will be a women's mobilisation in this regard, initiated by the ETUC. Finally, the Chair reported on an email exchange with Hungarian colleagues who want the Women's Committee and FERPA to tackle the feminisation of poverty, particularly among older women...

In the ensuing **debate**, all speakers welcomed the Committee Chair's communication and supported the Hungarian proposal. The Hungarian colleague spoke first to clarify that their proposal was intended to help older women. Discrimination puts women in a difficult position, as shown by the gap between women's and men's pensions, to their detriment, and to point out that this is unfortunately not specific to Hungary. Several speakers, based on their national examples, pointed out that older women, because they live longer, experience "social" isolation. Violence against older women also stems from their financial dependence. Women are more exposed to all forms of violence, including, as already mentioned, economic violence. Poor pensioners are mainly found among older women. The European Commission must take this gender equality issue into account and Member States must provide adequate funding for social services. It was also pointed out that it is difficult to ascertain the exact situation of older women, as statistics only cover those aged 74 or above, if not 70 or above. Emphasis was also placed on the far right, which is calling into question all the gains made by women and would like to send them back... home! Finally, the importance of rereading our Manifesto was reiterated.

Chair Silvana summarised the discussion with several remarks, beginning with an observation. The Women's Committee does not have the means to meet very often, or else it would be at the expense of their organisations, but whenever this opportunity for exchange exists, it is always very fruitful. She therefore sincerely thanked her colleagues. The points raised in the discussion are numerous and interrelated, she said, such as the issue of care, the pension gap, problems of decent housing, violence and, on this point, emphasis should also be

placed on psychological violence. She insists that we are witnessing a "devaluation" (in the etymological sense of the term, i.e. a "loss of value") of the status of women, who remain first and foremost women. We must therefore commit ourselves and do what is necessary to find answers. Until the next Executive Committee meeting, is it possible to take action, but using the resources of our organisations? To conclude this Committee meeting, Silvana returned to the Hungarian proposal, pointing out that there is no text at this stage. As things stand, it is an exchange of emails: we would like it to be a working theme at EU level. She felt it was normal to inform the Committee first. It will then be up to the FERPA Secretary General to decide how to proceed.

The Chair **closed** the meeting by thanking the Committee for its rich and valuable work and emphasised the need to remain united and in contact with each other.

The **President of FERPA, Hubert SCHWIND**, then gave the floor to **the Secretary General of FERPA, Agostino SICILIANO**, to present the next item entitled: **FERPA's organisational, economic and sustainability prospects**.

The General Secretary began his speech by saying that this was an important day for FERPA. We need to move forward, to discuss FERPA's economic resources and organisation. After 30 years of existence, it is time to take stock and remember our history. Economic and organisational issues are linked in defining the kind of FERPA we want. In terms of organisation, this means an organisation that is more assertive. We have tried to explain our demands to the ETUC, but there is still a lot to be done, even though we have already achieved some results. From an economic point of view, we have a Treasurer who is managing the situation well. But how can we improve all this further? To move forward, we need to look at the economic aspect. As for the budget, one question remains: how is it that we have kept the same membership fee since 2011? It is truly anachronistic. There is a big difference between 2011 and 2025, and in between we had COVID, with its consequences, notably online meetings. For the future, we will need to increase revenue.

We will set up a working group to carry out all the necessary assessments for 2026 and the 2027 Congress. The ETUC budget faces the same difficulties as we do. As Esther LYNCH, the General Secretary, has said, if savings have to be made, she will do so without hiring new staff, and a Financial Committee will be set up to determine what to do in the future without affecting staff numbers. The General Secretary of FERPA, concluded his speech by asking the question: "Does FERPA still reflect the spirit in which it was created?"

The President opened **the debate**.

Several organisations agree that resources need to be increased, including membership fees, but also by attracting new members. Work also needs to be done with the ETUC to increase the subsidy. However, some organisations are not in favour of members paying for their own travel, as this will lead to exclusions. It is also pointed out that increasing membership fees alone will not solve the problem: the structure needs to be reorganised. There is agreement on setting up a Financial Committee, but it must be temporary, set up quickly and be small (e.g. one French organisation, one Italian organisation, etc.), all to ensure the financial independence of FERPA. We also need to restore some fairness to the system, which is currently very unequal. We do not have the means to take industrial action; our budget is mainly a 'meeting budget'. We need

a FERPA budget with prospects. If we want to do more and better, there is no other way than to increase membership fees, but this increase must be gradual, as in the case of the ETUC, which spreads its increases over four years, because we cannot change the system overnight. We must avoid "sudden changes". Should we set up an equalisation fund? But how can we prevent the costs of what we want to do from being blocked by resources? In fact, the financial issue is not separate from the organisational issue. And as has been said, we must move forward together.

In his **response**, the General Secretary thanked the organisations for their comments and for accepting the select group on finances, in order to arrive at the Congress with a bright outlook... What we need to do is find our own solution to carry out what we want to do and have a prospect of self-financing. Where can the resources come from? Can the ETUC help us to develop, as we are former workers? We need projects that do not change our nature. We need to achieve what is in the Manifesto and has not been implemented. At each Congress, we have shown solidarity, but to be in solidarity, we need to be self-sufficient.

The following organisations took part in the debate : PA.SY.DY, UCR-CGT, FNP-CISL, UCR-FO, USO, SPI-CGIL, UCR-CFDT, CSC/ACV, CC.OO, FNV, FGTB/ABVV, UGT-E, UILP-UIL, SZEFG

The **Chair** then gave the floor to **FERPA Treasurer Dick DE GRAAF** for the presentation and discussion of the 2026 provisional budget.

Dick began with a few introductory remarks and a reminder of the documents that had been sent out. As he had promised to be as transparent as possible, he had also sent out the audit report and the table of membership fees paid by members. He explained that the ETUC had established three membership fee groups based on each country's GDP. Group 1 pays 100% of the contribution, Group II pays 40% and Group III pays 25%. , increases are calculated as a four-year average. What does this mean for FERPA? Will organisations in higher-income countries have to pay more? And how should inflation be taken into account? The Treasurer then discussed the tables for the 2024, 2025 and 2026 budgets. He first pointed out that the 2024 budget ended with a deficit of €24,000, which represents roughly 10% of the total budget. In 2026, the lump sum was increased by 60%. As for the 2026 budget, it still shows reductions (translations, online meetings, etc.). He proposed continuing to pay the lump sum at the same level as in 2025. The organisational structure also needed to be discussed, which would be the task of the Financial Committee, in which he would be happy to participate, he said. He also indicated that he had already included the membership of the ^{third} organisation from San Marino, the USL, in the income and asked for the table to be accepted as it stood.

Following the Treasurer's introduction, the **President** opened the **debate**.

The organisations first thanked Dick for his presentation and the documents sent, while acknowledging that the increase in membership fees remains problematic for some. However, they agreed, subject in some cases to the approval of their treasurers, to the lump sum, provided that it remains transitional. It was emphasised that discussions with the ETUC must be initiated

with our confederations. Is a European Federation of Retired Persons useful? The number of FERPA members should be increased, particularly among confederations whose retired members are not or are no longer members of FERPA, as is the case with German organisations. In this regard, the evolution of relations between FERPA and German trade unions is recalled, and the ÖGB colleague points out that German pensioners do not have specific structures and remain in their original trade unions. She indicates that her organisation has a joint project with Bavarian pensioners and that she will help them to build structures. However, this depends mainly on the union leaderships. She will look into this further. With regard to the place of pensioners in German trade unions, others confirmed that they are tolerated to a limited extent, depending on the region. On the other hand, they are grouped together in associations that can be important, such as for housing. The question also arises for our Scandinavian colleagues, who are also not members of FERPA. These organisations could be invited to our meetings as observers, for example, so that they can see what we actually do, with a summary of what we have done in the past and what we have achieved. With regard to the Finance Committee that was mentioned, we would need to agree on the terms of reference.

In his **response**, the Treasurer thanked colleagues for their compliments and emphasised that the members of the Secretariat had participated in this work. He also indicated that he had been in contact with the Lithuanians and that they intended to establish a pensioners' union. Regarding his budget proposals, there were only two comments against the lump sum and one reservation.

The **President** proceeded to **put** the 2026 provisional budget **to the vote**, which was adopted **unanimously**. He then moved on to the **composition** of the Financial Committee, with the Secretary General specifying that it would be a "working group" that would have to submit its conclusions by June 2026. Some organisations emphasised that the "financial committee" must have a clearly defined mandate.

It is proposed that it be composed of four members, in addition to FERPA Treasurer Dick De Graaf and FERPA Secretariat members Henri Lourdelle and Jessica Montiel, Benoît Prince (UCR-CFDT France), Ana Maria Foresi (FNP-CISL Italy), Maria Luisa Alvarez Durante (UGT-UJP Spain) and Metka Rokсандic (SUS Slovenia). The composition of the Working Group is **adopted** unanimously.

The **Secretary General** intervened again to clarify that this would not be solely a "financial" group, but rather a "**finance and organisation** working group". In other words, it would have to deal with all the issues raised at this Executive Committee meeting: what we want to do to strengthen FERPA and what we need to do so. And, as it will be a "working group", we will not refer to a Chair but to a "Coordinator". The **Treasurer** intervened to clarify that, although this is not just a "financial" group but will also deal with "organisation", he does not wish to take responsibility for it, but rather to participate in a supporting role, like the two members of the Secretariat.

The meeting then moved on to the approval of **the 2024 accounts**. The **Treasurer** reminded the meeting that the audit report confirmed the accuracy of the figures presented, specifying that the management of FERPA's finances is included in the management of the ETUC's finances. He also pointed out that the 2025 deficit is smaller than that of 2024. The Executive

Committee **unanimously voted** to grant discharge to the Treasurer in respect of the 2024 accounts.

In **response** to a question from an organisation regarding solidarity criteria, the **Treasurer** referred to his memo, which members had received, stating that only affiliates in Groups 2 and 3 were eligible, provided they were in genuine need. For her part, Jessica pointed out that, as the Commission was covering one member per EU organisation, extended to Serbian and Turkish colleagues, this solidarity mainly concerned travel to mid-term AGMs. The **Secretary-General** insisted that this solidarity fund was important for small organisations that did not benefit from Commission funds.

Dick requests that the solidarity criteria mentioned in his note be applied immediately. His proposal is **adopted unanimously**.

The following organisations took part in the debate: FGTB/ABVV, UCR-CGT, UCR-CFDT, FNV, UJP-UGTE, UILP-UOL, SZEJ, USO, CSC/ACV, FEPJ-CC.OO, PA.SY.DY, FNP-CISL, UCR-FO, USO, SPI-CGIL, OGBL, SUS, OGB

The next item concerned **the affiliation of the USL of San Marino** as a member of FERPA. The **General Secretary** pointed out that this organisation has 756 retired members, recalled their letter of motivation and noted that they are members of the ETUC. The two other organisations in San Marino issued a favourable opinion.

With all this clarified, the USL's membership is **unanimously approved**. The Treasurer thanks the Committee for accepting this membership.

Before the **General Secretary** drew **conclusions** from the three days of meetings (Steering Committee and Executive Committee), Jessica thanked the Committee for its solidarity with the general strike on 26 November.

The Secretary General considered that the work had been very fruitful, with a great deal of commitment and a long-term vision. He felt more confident about the future of FERPA and warmly thanked the members. He also thanked the **interpreters and Julienne for her technical assistance**.

The President closed the meeting and thanked the interpreters for their patience.

Henri