**JOSÉ MARÍA ‘PEPE’ ÁLVAREZ**

José María “Pepe” Álvarez, secretary general of the General Workers’ Union of Spain (Belmonte, Asturias, 1956) moved to Barcelona in 1975, just before Franco died. That year he started working in a metal industry (now owned by Alstom) and joined the UGT, at that time, still a non-legal organization.

In 1976, Pepe was elected member of the secretariat of UGT in his working centre. Two years later, in 1978, the first trade union elections after the dictatorship take place and he became a member of the Works Council.

During the eighties he engaged more and more in the metal federation of UGT in Catalonia, until he was elected secretary general of the Union in Catalonia in 1990. From that position he worked for a politically independent, modern, diverse trade union, fully integrated in complex reality of the autonomous region, opening the union to new realities and collectives, and successfully leading the organization until he was elected secretary general of the confederation during the 42nd congress of UGT, in March 2016. He was re-elected secretary general in May 2021, during the 43rd congress.

 He was elected vice president of the ETUC in 2019. Pepe is known for his talents as a great negotiator against both institutions and employers, with whom he has signed many agreements but never renouncing the principles of the major defence of workers' interests. He is also known for a fast, bright ability for detecting and understanding transversal issues and bringing them into the union work and structure.