



UNION SYNDICALE FEDERALE

des Services publics européens et internationaux

Avenue des Gaulois, 36 – B -1040 Bruxelles

Tél. (32.2)733.98.00 - Fax (32.2)733.05.33 - e-mail: usf@unionsyndicale.eu

www.unionsyndicale.eu

Brussels, 25 January 2016

Mr J. KONGSTAD
President of the EPO Council

Dear Mr Kongstad,

Union Syndicale Federale (USF) is deeply shocked to hear about the latest, disproportionate measures against trade union officials taken at the European Patent Office (EPO) in January 2016.

USF, together with numerous external observers and the media, has been following the deteriorating social situation at the EPO, especially since a Dutch Court of Appeal identified breaches of the European Convention of Human Rights at the EPO in its judgement of 17th February 2015.

The EPO has not yet met the requests of the judgement, nor has explained why fundamental rights decided and recognised by all thirty-eight Member States of the European Patent Organisation are inferior to the EPO's need for autonomy.

The EPO has also not yet explained why it refuses to allow competent national authorities to investigate staff members' suicides and their causes. In the meantime, the list of incidents of maladministration has grown beyond anyone's imagination and has seriously stained the reputation of the EPO and the international public service as a whole.

Now, in January 2016, measures unheard of in modern society are being imposed on trade union representatives: one case of serious downgrading and two sackings. It has been reported that internal disciplinary boards recommended far milder sanctions. These recommendations were ignored and arbitrarily replaced by harsher, disproportionate measures.

From information publicly available, it is an obvious conclusion for USF that the charges in the above cases were based on formal confidentiality issues rather than on substance. To misuse a seriously deteriorated social situation so as to orchestrate provocations and construe charges against union representatives is fundamentally conflicting with the duty of care of an international organisation.



UNION SYNDICALE FÉDÉRALE

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USF urgently calls upon all EPO organs to annul the decisions taken against trade union representatives.

USF calls upon all EPO organs to return to the rule of law and sound practice as commonly understood in the 21st century and to take all necessary corrective steps at their next internal meetings in order to avoid further irreparable damage to the Office's reputation, as well as to the social climate at the EPO.

Yours sincerely,

Bernd LOESCHER
President

Addressees:

EPO Administrative Council

Cc: EPO President, Mr B. Battistelli

Cc: SUEPO Munich, Ms E. Hardon, Mr I. Brumme, Ms M. Weaver