

LIFER initiative: A vote on strike action has turned into a vote of non-confidence!

Dear Colleagues,

SUEPO does not organize petitions under [Circular 347](#) because we do not want to lend any legitimacy to that document by actually using it. Nevertheless, we take note of the impressive result of the ballot and congratulate the petitioners and Staff for their strong statement.

Call for a strike.

At the beginning of September, a group of 1095 colleagues signed a petition to allow a strike. The LIFER¹ initiative set out to challenge the restrictions imposed on the work of the unions (all unions) and the autocratic and antisocial policies introduced by the Battistelli administration.

The Vote.

The ballot took place last week. It was interesting to observe that PD43 organized the polls in a very cumbersome and *dissuasive* way. The ballot included an "I have no opinion" answer, which would be counted against the proposal. Polling stations were manned by members of the personnel department; in addition they were supervised by security wardens *as well as by managers*. The polling stations were small, and the process so slow, that at times long queues formed.

The result.

All hopes President Battistelli might have had that the quorum would not be attained, or if it was attained, that the results would have been at least inconclusive have been swept aside by the results: despite all the hurdles, a massive 4640 employees (close to 70% of all EPO staff) voted. This is overwhelming, even more so if we consider that some colleagues were absent (without having had the opportunity to set-up a proxy) and it may have been considered too risky for contractors and probationers to vote. This means that nearly all who were in a position to vote actually did so and of those who voted, an amazing 90% (4184 of 4640) gave a clear YES. Take out your calculators: this means that even most of middle management endorsed the petition! A vote on strike action has turned into a vote of non-confidence. The message is clear: **EPO Staff does not want to live and work in a despotic environment.**

The Consequences.

It is now crystal clear that Mr Battistelli's HR "policy" is a dismal failure. In a normal "social democracy", those responsible not only could, but would resign from their post. We are all entitled to expect senior managers, such as VP4 and PD43, will seriously consider their positions, or risk to be removed from their posts. We are also entitled to expect that the Council finally takes its responsibility and keeps a watchful eye over Mr Battistelli's behaviour until a new President is appointed.

¹ The Claims:

- Legal protection - fix the appeal system
- Investigation guidelines - amend in line with European rights
- Fair strike regulations - "No" to circular 347
- E-mails - freedom to communicate at the Office
- Repair the career system - remove the bottleneck

The position of SUEPO.

We still consider Circular 347 (among many other restrictive measures) an illegal attempt to limit the work of legitimate staff unions and their representatives. We will challenge the validity of these measures until they are finally repealed and until SUEPO is properly recognized and respected as a negotiating social partner. The President now has to bear the consequences of his choices and explain to the Administrative Council why he had to organize a strike!

We now look forward to:

- further steps as a consequence of the LIFER initiative
- radical changes in the highest echelons of the EPO
- *bona fide* negotiations between the (new) administration and all social partners.

SUEPO supports all claims put forward in the context of the LIFER initiative and wishes to remind the President that SUEPO remains open to *genuine* social dialogue.

The SUEPO Central Chairman

on behalf of SUEPO The Hague, SUEPO Munich, SUEPO Berlin, SUEPO Vienna