

## The Staff of the European Patent Office demands social dialogue

### The European Patent Office is in a deep crisis.

Since the receipt of the first European patent application in June 1978, the EPO has become a leader in the worldwide patent world, and a driving force in European economic integration. Indeed, the European Union has entrusted the EPO with the administration of the European Unitary Patent, once the legislation enters into force. It is the only European Organisation that is not only self-financing, but also generating revenue for the member states.

However, since 2013 the EPO has been experiencing a prolonged crisis, the worst in its history.

The core of the problem is that decisions are made without proper consultation of all stakeholders, which include staff and their representatives. Worse still, any voice of dissent is actively quashed; there have even been instances of violations of fundamental rights, none of which would have been tolerated by the authorities of the member states or in other European institutions. For years, the member states have turned a blind eye to the abuses.

*The European Patent Organisation (EPO) is an intergovernmental organisation created by the European Patent Convention (EPC) signed in 1973. It comprises 38 member states, including Portugal, which sit on the Administrative Council, the supervisory body of the EPO.*

*The EPO employs about 7000 multilingual, highly educated staff members.*

*About half of all staff are members of the Staff Union of the EPO (SUEPO), which represents their collective interests.*

Then, as of 1 July 2018, the Administrative Council appointed a new President of the EPO, Mr António Campinos (of Portugal), **with the explicit task of restoring social dialogue**. Sixteen months into his presidency, little has changed. While Mr Campinos has proved more adept than his predecessor at providing fig leaves for his administration, Staff is still subjected to prevarications. As before, Staff is not consulted in any meaningful way in matters directly affecting their working conditions, health and livelihood. As before, Staff is subjected to the abuses of officials appointed by the previous administration, and which Mr Campinos has deliberately chosen to keep in place in spite of their track record.

We, the largest staff union of the EPO, are less than impressed with Mr Campinos' own track record and choice of collaborators.

**We demand that the governments of the Member States take up their responsibility and ensure that the EPO is run according to their mandate.**

Failure to discharge this duty is likely to have deleterious effects on the ability of the EPO to fulfil its tasks, which in turn will likely affect negatively the interests of industry and governments across Europe.

Portugal is the country from which Mr. Campinos comes. As such, Portugal has a particular responsibility in the current situation.

To raise awareness about this, SUEPO

- has already held a demonstration in Munich, on 23 October, and
- will be holding a **demonstration in The Hague on 7 November, at 12:00.**

Given the special position held by Portugal, **we will also march by the Portuguese Embassy in The Hague.**

We call on all members states, patent applicants and patent attorneys to give this matter the attention it deserves.

SUEPO Executive Committee, local branch The Hague