

Cooperation and dialogue are priorities for new EPO president Antonio Campinos

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Effectiveness, international cooperation and staff relations are three main areas on which Antonio Campinos intends to focus as new president of the European Patent Office. Campinos, who started in office on 1 July 2018, wrote this in a message which was published today on the EPO website. According to Campinos, it is 'an immense honour to follow in the footsteps of some of the great characters who have shaped IP in Europe and beyond.' He considers himself 'privileged to lead an institution that is unquestionably a success story. 38 member states have been pulling in the same direction to create a strong international organisation. The EPO enjoys a reputation for being a leader in granting high quality patents. It also has nearly 7 000 highly qualified and experienced staff who have shown that they can increase the performance of the whole Office, particularly over the last few years.'

But 'there is always room for improvement', according to Campinos, who writes the EPO 'has already shown itself to be a highly efficient organisation. (...) But I want to ask the question, can we be more effective by delivering services in the right way? That's a question which we're going to have to explore from a multitude of perspectives. Talent management, quality, automation, digital transformation, big data analytics and many others will play their role in facing challenges. (...)



Another area where we could assess the need for further action is in the field of co-operation. Part of our strength lies in the fact that we are an international organisation. We cannot therefore live in isolation, but instead form part of a rich IP ecosystem, with many different actors. That means we may have to assess the nature of that co-operation. For example, can we reinforce co-operation with our member states?'

Campinos also stresses the importance of 'dialogue with staff. Earlier today, I sent a message to all our staff members in my capacity as their new President. I wanted to let them know immediately that staff engagement is among my top priorities, that I would welcome their ideas on any changes we might consider making to this Office.'

In June 2019 this should lead to the presentation to the Administrative Council of a 'Strategic Plan that will present a multi-annual work programme for the EPO.'

Besides staff members, other EPO stakeholders, 'including you', can expect to be invited to consultations during the course of the next year 'on how we tackle the strategic issues that face this organisation - whether you are a patent applicant, a national patent office or simply someone interested in following developments at the EPO through this blog.'

After only four days in office, it is hard to tell whether Campinos will bring change at the EPO after the controversial years of Benoit Battistelli's leadership, which led to enormous social problems. But his announcement that 'staff engagement is among my top priorities', and his personal message to all staff members certainly seem positive steps. A first real test will likely be his handling of the cases of three SUEPO leaders, whose dismissals and downgrading were reversed last week by the Administrative Tribunal of the ILO, as well as the case of the Irish judge Patrick Corcoran.

Striking is Campinos' focus on effectiveness, rather than efficiency, which could be a sign that the new EPO president is aware of complaints from users that the enormous increase in productivity under Battistelli has led to a decline of, or threatens patent quality at the EPO.

Remarkable, furthermore, is that his predecessor isn't mentioned in Campinos' message. And an almost revolutionary change is at the bottom, contrary to the blogposts of Benoit Battistelli and perhaps the most significant sign of change: Campinos has apparently decided that his contributions will be open for comments.

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