

Kluwer Patent Blog

Union calls for strike at the EPO, first time since president António Campinos took office

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The SUEPO trade union has called for a strike in all EPO sites around the next Administrative Council's meeting in June.

'Almost one year after the arrival as Mr. Campinos as President of the EPO, we note with regret that the social situation hasn't improved and that none of the root causes of the many issues that trouble our organisation have been addressed. The Battistelli administration and its anti-staff policies are still in place. The situation in the office is more toxic than ever, as also shown by the recent disastrous staff survey results and the worsening of staff health. There are many reasons for discontent', the SUEPO wrote to president Campinos last week.



The SUEPO declared it wants:

1. Fair settlement for all SUEPO Officials/Staff Representatives abusively sanctioned by the Battistelli administration;
2. Fair reporting, instead of artificially underrating hundreds of colleagues with “(far) below expectations”;
3. Respect for staff instead of threats of incompetence procedures;
4. Fair career progression for everyone, no managerial arbitrariness;
5. People-oriented management, instead of management by fear;
6. Fair assessment of the EPO financial situation, no pension reform based on a heavily biased study;
7. Fair salary and pension adjustment for the coming years, no erosion of purchasing power.'

The call for a strike is the first since president António Campinos took office in July 2018. Over the last half year, it had already become abundantly clear that Campinos has not been able or willing to take action and change the dreadful social climate at the EPO, a legacy of former EPO president Benoit Battistelli.

To its members, SUEPO wrote 'it seems now clear that our new President does not intend to fix the problems created by his predecessor. Worse still, Mr Campinos intends to continue the catastrophic Battistelli's HR policies. We have already seen the implementation of 5-year

contracts policy for all newcomers, a worst-ever reporting round and no fundamental change to the career system. The latest Financial Study is designed to make the EPO look poor and points at further reducing staff's benefits (salaries, pensions, allowances, ...) in order to cope with this "misfortune". . . (...)

The EPO staff survey mentioned earlier (and [reported about on this blog](#)) showed four in ten staff members say they face substantial obstacles to doing their job well. They have a very negative view of management effectiveness, with low confidence in senior management decisions. Only 39 percent feel they are treated with respect.

In the meantime, the president of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA), which represents the interests of more than 20.000 staff in the international civil service, wrote to Campinos yesterday as well, expressing 'grave concern about the apparent lack of meaningful progress in the social dialogue at the EPO as reported to FICSA.'

Under EPO regulations, organising a strike can take more than a month. The SUEPO wants the strike to take place around the next meeting of the Administrative Council on 26 and 27 June 2019. The strike action is subject to a staff ballot, which has to be organised by the administration before 16 June.

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