

Kluwer Patent Blog

Demonstration EPO staff during meeting about re-election president Campinos

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Staff members of the European Patent Office will demonstrate in front of the Isar building in Munich during the meeting of the Administrative Council on 29 June 2022, where re-election of president António Campinos will be discussed.

The demonstration has been organised by trade union Suepo. According to an [announcement](#) distributed among Suepo members, Campinos was elected and mandated by the Administrative Council in 2018 to restore social dialogue at the EPO after the harsh years of president Benoit Battistelli, but failed to do so. ‘EPO staff hoped the new President elect would put an end to the breaches of fundamental rights’, but is instead ‘protecting Mr Battistelli’s inheritance as long as possible and at all costs’.



‘Mr Campinos continues the attacks against staff representation and trade unions by banning them from freely using mass-emails on EPO lines and disbanded in 2021 any secretarial support for staff representation. There are also warning signs that staff representation and unions will be hidden further clicks away in the new Intranet.

Since 2012, the EPO is consistently testing the limits of Employment Law and feels only governed by the Tribunal. In this respect, Mr Campinos continues to act along the line of his predecessor.’

Salary adjustment procedure

The protest is also aimed against a financial study of Oliver Wyman & Mercer commissioned by Campinos in 2019, which became the basis for a salary adjustment procedure. According to Suepo, which asked Ernst & Young to study the EPO’s financial situation as well, ‘Ernst & Young found that the 2019 study consistently took an overly conservative approach. It was clear that the EPO had no deficit. (...)

Mr Campinos ignored all arguments and put in place as of July 2020 his new salary adjustment

procedure. Instead of the alleged deflation, inflation now materialized at the historical level of +11.1% in Germany since then. Again, it is difficult for a study to be more wrong. At the same time, EPO salaries were adjusted by only +0.5%. (...) In June 2022, the Coordinated Organisations (e.g. OECD, ESA, NATO, CoE) agreed to propose an interim adjustment of +7% for their staff retroactively to 1 March 2022. (...) EPO staff has no protection against high inflation.'

Mobility package

According to Suepo, the "Mobility Package" which will be decided about in the Administrative Council (AC) meeting of 29/30 June 2022, is creating a new lower category of staff called the "Young Professionals" with few rights and low salary, whereas there are generous rewards for national experts and EPO handpicked employees under the secondment policy.

'The EPO intends to hire bachelors for a three-year program. They will be deprived of allowances such as the dependent and travel allowance, have no right to pension transfer and no salary savings plan. (...)

Contrary to the Young Professionals, the secondment policy will be generous. National experts coming to the EPO will benefit from their national salary paid by the EPO and an allowance of +€5.000 per month. The handful of EPO employees (from high management?) seconded to national offices will continue to earn their full EPO salary without performing any work for the EPO.

The project is conveniently tabled in the Administration Council meeting during which the re-election of Mr Campinos will be discussed. In his time, Mr Battistelli offered free dental care to Council delegates to have their support. Now, Mr Campinos is offering them generous national experts posts.'

Social dialogue

In its announcement, the Suepo also points at the lack of real social dialogue, of which the General Consultative Committee (GCC) of 26 April 2022 serves as an example. The GCC 'confirmed to be neither an advisory body, nor a consultative body, but rather a promulgation body for rubber-stamping all proposals that come in. On the management's side, high managers silently attend and vote yes on all the President's reforms without formulating any reason. On the staff representation side, 99% of the documents either receive a negative opinion or an abstention because legal assessments and benchmarks are missing or the reforms are detrimental to staff without any justification. (...)

The trend deteriorated further in the GCC meeting of 26 April 2022 during which the [atmosphere was abysmal](#). Mr Campinos used foul language throughout, using expletives in various languages, and insulted most of the speakers (...) Meetings with Mr Campinos in which arguments cannot not be exchanged and where questions could not be answered, cannot be considered to have provided a meaningful consultation. (...) On 18 May 2022, a General Assembly took place during which some of the events of said meeting were reported to staff. At the end, a poll was organized during which 96% of the participants voted in favour of the request to publish the recording of the 26 April 2022 GCC.

Mr Campinos rejected this request (...) Mr Campinos has now postponed the approval of the minutes after the AC meeting and his re-election when the delegations look away.'

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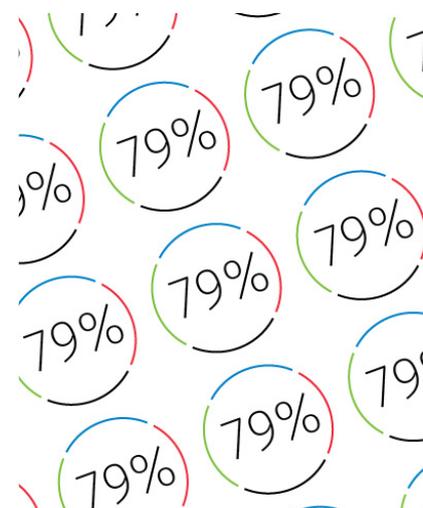
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