



OFFICE FOR HARMONIZATION IN THE INTERNAL MARKET

(TRADE MARKS AND DESIGNS)

HABM PERSONALVERTRETUNG • OAMI COMITE DE PERSONAL • OHIM STAFF COMMITTEE •
OHMI COMITÉ DU PERSONNEL • UAMI COMITATO DEL PERSONALE



Alicante, 26 November 2015

Note for the attention of the Members of the Administrative Board and the Budget Committee

SUBJECT: Protection of staff representatives' rights in international organisations

The OHIM Staff Committee feels deeply concerned and would like to call your attention to the urgent situation at the European Patent Office (EPO), as reported by the EPO trade union SUEPO. Last week, three staff representatives were suspended from service in Munich with immediate effect. The EPO has initiated disciplinary proceedings against them.

Since many of you are members of the Administrative Council of the EPO, we urge you to ensure that the rights of EPO staff representatives are being fully respected. Any sanctions, such as the suspension or dismissal of staff representatives, are entirely improper unless and until it can be proven that the staff representatives concerned were guilty of serious wrongful acts.

It is the job of a staff committee to give voice to the concerns of staff. Sometimes those concerns need to be expressed in frank and forthright terms, but always in a highly professional way. Proper social dialogue demands nothing less. Staff committees count on monitoring bodies such as the Administrative Board to make sure that staff representatives are free to express the worries of staff without fear of punishment for doing so. In other words, staff representatives need extra protection in order to avoid possible abuses of power.

If the EPO Staff Representatives are being punished simply for performing their statutory role of representing the EPO staff, and for opposing unpopular management policies as part of a social dialogue, the Administrative Council should express its concern, in uncertain terms, to the EPO management.

Yours faithfully

OHIM Staff Committee