

FOSS PATENTS

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EPO labor dispute getting completely out of hand: three union leaders suspended, others pressured

The conflict between the leadership and staff representatives of the European Patent Office appears to be totally out of control now. The latest information would be unthinkable anywhere in the civilized world, but the European Patent Organization simply isn't part of the civilized world around it.

On Monday, the Staff Union of the European Patent Office (SUEPO) published a flyer about what allegedly happened in The Hague (the EPO's #2 seat in terms of the number of employees) on Friday (this post continues below the document):

[15 11 16 SUEPO Flyer](#) by [Florian Mueller](#)

Let me copy the three key allegations here--they just refer to two of the staff representatives by their first names, with "Jesus" being a typical Spanish first name (with an accent over the "u") and "Laurent" being a common French first name:

- Jesus was picked up from his office by President's emissaries. Upon return, he was visibly shaken and appeared to have suffered a nervous breakdown. Medical help was called, and he had to be wheeled out of the office in bad shape. He appears to have been subjected to severe, concerted and wilful pressure, especially intended to harm and destabilise.
- Laurent got or was scheduled to get a similar treatment. Noticeably distressed, he had to rush for medical help externally.
- The other members of the Staff Committee who witnessed the event were also deeply perturbed.

The last time I read stories like that they referred to Romania under its communist dictatorship. They also picked up people who returned in a perturbed state, though they also made them disappear quite often.

Last night I got a message--from a reliable source I won't disclose but it's nowhere near Munich--that three leaders of SUEPO's Munich chapter have been "suspended," among them [Elizabeth Hardon, who recently wrote a letter complaining about the way she was treated](#). Also, the EPO had [threatened legal action against her](#).

According to what I read on Twitter, TechRights blogger Dr. Roy Schestowitz (whose blog [cannot be accessed from the EPO network](#) without the use of software work-arounds for this kind of censorship) has also received legal threats from the EPO leadership. No details have become known yet.

I have not been threatened so far, but I am deeply sorry for those who have been. Rumor has it that Mrs. Hardon and Dr. Schestowitz are not the only ones.

It appears that Mrs. Hardon has decided to rather be proud and "suspended" than bow to lawlessness, corruption, and evil. I am so sorry for her and the other suspended union leaders, and I truly admire them for their steadfastness.

Dr. Schestowitz also deserves the greatest respect for his principled stance. Despite all the bullying, he continues to call out the EPO leadership on its actions and decisions. Most recently, TechRights has started to [talk about the unbelievable, extraordinary career path of Mrs. Elodie Bergot](#). It appears that the juiciest part of the story is actually not even on that blog but hidden somewhere between the lines of that post or the forthcoming one (Part II) on the same topic.

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EINGESTELLT VON FLORIAN MUELLER UM 9:22 AM 

LABELS: [EPO](#), [EUROPEAN PATENT OFFICE](#), [HUMAN RIGHTS](#), [PATENT POLICY](#), [SUEPO](#), [TECHRIGHTS](#)
