

Letter to Emmanuel Macron regarding the crisis at the European Patent Office

18 November 2015

I was informed last week of the actions being undertaken by the management of the European Patent Office (EPO) against a number of executives of the SUEPO staff union and representatives of the personnel. A considerable number of witnesses have also been in touch with me, as recently as yesterday. I find the aims being pursued and the methods of investigation described in these communications profoundly shocking. The state of health of the persons involved concerns me deeply, and likewise the anxiety felt by their families. I cannot accept that, under cover of immunity from outside legal intervention, the individual and collective rights of the staff of an international organization can be trodden underfoot with the aims and practices of another age. The attempts to re-establish and develop social dialogue are not disruptive. For three years I have been following with close attention the social conflict and crisis of management at the EPO. I have talked to all the parties concerned, and I have consciously sent limited reports about my meetings and the initiatives taken to ease the situation and to contribute to the efforts to find a compromise solution. What has occurred in the past few days at a number of EPO facilities, however, has shown me that all such efforts will remain in vain unless radical change is forthcoming.

I am therefore making public the letter which I sent this Wednesday to the Minister of the Economy, Industry, and Digital Affairs, Emmanuel Macron, whose area of responsibility in the Government includes intellectual property, to draw his attention to the situation at the EPO and to call our country to action.