



Chair person of the Administrative Council of the
European Patent Office
Mr. Christoph ERNST
ernst-ch@bmjv.bund.de
council_secretary@epo.org

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Subject: Employment Framework at EPO

Dear Mr. Ernst,

We have been informed by our colleagues of USF, our affiliate in the European institutions, agencies and international organisations, that the current management of EPO has proposed the introduction of a new Employment Framework. This framework would recruit EPO staff on the basis of fixed-term contracts. This is again a proposal that is not discussed and negotiated with the unions. It increases precariousness, insecurity and has negative consequences for the well-being of workers. Employers and unions as well as the European Commission and Member States have committed to fight against precariousness and have high standards regarding health and safety of workers. This was recently confirmed again by the EU social summit in Gothenburg and the EU pillar of social rights signed there.

A new employment framework that takes into account the needs of workers, their rights and improves health and safety and well-being, and at the same time seeks to strengthen the work of EPO might well be worthwhile. This is best done through social dialogue and negotiations rather than impose precariousness.

As a Federation with affiliates across Europe and including in public administrations and agencies (8 million members in 260 affiliated unions) we find the proposed model of putting workers on fixed term contracts dubious. It increases the risks of corruption, of revolving doors and of mixed interests. This undermines EPO as part of the European public service in which people in Europe can have confidence for its expertise, high standards and independence. It might make it even more difficult to ensure a geographically well-balanced organization.

We ask you and the EPO Council therefore not to adopt this framework.

On a more personal note: introducing such a comprehensive reform just before the new Director Mr. Campinos takes office smells of bad administration, and frankly of cynicism. It makes the work of Mr. Campinos more difficult to have a proper social dialogue almost setting him up for failure.

We look forward to your answer. As previous correspondence has not always been answered, I would appreciate if you can inform us of the standards for response to letters. Those of the European Commission (response within 20 days) seem reasonable as the European Ombudsman has indicated.

Yours sincerely,

Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU General Secretary

cc. Commissioner Thyssen cab-thyssen@ec.europa.eu; Agnes Jongerius (MEP) agnes.jongerius@europarl.europa.eu,
Mr. Battistelli council@epo.org, USF usf@unionsyndicale.eu Bernd Loescher Bernd.Loescher@consilium.europa.eu

EPSU Secretariat 40 rue Joseph II, box 5 - 1000 Brussels, Belgium
Phone: +32 2 250 10 80 Fax: +32 2 520 10 99 Mail: epsu@epsu.org www.epsu.org

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