



**Union
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des services publics européens et internationaux

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Brussels 02 October 2023

*To: Ministers of all EPC Member States responsible
for the European Patent Organisation,*

Copy:

*EU Commissioner, Mr Thierry Breton (Internal
Market)*

*Chair of the Administrative Council of the
European Patent Organisation, Mr Josef
Kratochvíl*

EPO President, Mr António Campinos

*European Public Service Unions (EPSU),
Mr Jan Willem Goudriaan*

Dear Minister,

On the 5th of October 1973 the European Patent Convention (EPC) was signed in Munich, an important event that is now, 50 years later, being celebrated at the European Patent Office (EPO). The revised EPC as ratified in 2007 foresees in its Article 4a that a conference of ministers of the Contracting States shall meet at least every five years to discuss issues pertaining to the European Patent Organisation, the EPC and to the European patent system. To date, no such conference has taken place yet.

USF wishes to recall this obligation and support the claim for an Article 4a EPC Conference raised by the Staff Union members working at the European Patent Office already one year ago for the following reasons.

- Current decentralisation projects may pave the way for a systemic weakening of the EPO structures entailing a loss of corporate culture and shared know-how, ultimately the dissolution of the roles and competencies of

the organs defined under the EPC which are designed to genuinely serve European interests;

- the EPO policy currently triggers an external public discussion on the questionable reduction and precariousness of staff in the EPO's core tasks (see for example the attached report of the „IPQC“, the International Patent Quality Charter group set up by main industrial players).

Union Syndicale Fédérale (USF) is the largest federation of workers employed by European or international public services. USF is an affiliate of EPSU and fully supports all initiatives of EPSU aiming at highest quality standards of public services. These standards are meant both related to internal social issues and providing the best service to the (European) public at large.

In June and October 2022, the Staff Union of the EPO (SUEPO) addressed a claim to the Administrative Council of the EPO expressing the view that a Conference of the Ministers of the Contracting States as foreseen in Article 4a EPC is overdue. There has been no response so far.

USF assumes that you will see the relevance of the overdue Article 4a EPC Conference in the light of the challenges described above.

Yours sincerely,

Nicolas Mavraganis
USF President
(*e-signed*)

Attachments :

- The SUEPO Petition launched on 7th June 2022 and the Resolution of 21st October 2022
- A detailed explanation
- On IPQC: <https://www.juve-patent.com/legal-commentary/epo-and-ipqc-reach-impasse-in-patent-quality-discussion/>