



**Union
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To: Mr. Josef Kratochvíl

Chairman of the Administrative Council
of the European Patent Organisation

Heads of Delegation to the Administrative Council
of the European Patent Organisation

CC: Mr António Campinos, President of EPO

OPEN LETTER

Denial of a meaningful social dialogue

Dear Mr Chairman,
Dear Heads of Delegation,

We are writing to you because USF is deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of social dialogue at the European Patent Office and the growing consequences this is having for the Organisation, its staff, and its governance.

When the current President took office following his first appointment, staff representatives called for a genuine break with the troubled period that had preceded his mandate and urged the establishment of a meaningful social dialogue. During the early years of his first mandate, encouraging steps were taken in that direction. Communication channels were reopened, dialogue resumed, and there was a genuine expectation among staff that mutual trust could gradually be rebuilt.

Regrettably, that momentum was not sustained. During the President's second mandate, social dialogue has progressively deteriorated. Consultation has too often become a formal exercise rather than a genuine exchange of views, while repeated concerns raised by staff representatives have gone unaddressed. As a result, trust between staff and management has reached a critically low level.

In December 2025, USF warned the Administrative Council that the continuing erosion of social dialogue would inevitably result in industrial action. Unfortunately, those warnings

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were not heeded. The consequences are now evident. In 2026 alone, more than 18,000 working days have been lost due to industrial action, an unprecedented figure in the history of the Organisation. This is not merely a labour dispute. It is a clear manifestation of the deep frustration felt by staff and of their loss of confidence in the current approach to labour relations.

USF recalls that both the EPO and the Administrative Council have repeatedly recognised the importance of social dialogue as a cornerstone of a healthy and effective Organisation. Yet meaningful social dialogue requires more than statements of principle. It requires a genuine willingness to listen, negotiate, and seek compromise. Regrettably, this willingness has been increasingly absent in recent years.

The forthcoming appointment of the next President provides the Administrative Council with an opportunity, but also a responsibility, to draw the necessary lessons from the current situation. The unprecedented scale of industrial action and the broader breakdown of trust between staff and management demonstrate that the Organisation cannot continue on its current course.

The EPO needs leadership that understands the value of genuine social dialogue and recognises staff representatives as legitimate partners rather than obstacles to be managed. The next President must be capable of restoring trust, rebuilding constructive labour relations, and fostering a culture of respect, transparency, and genuine engagement. At a time when the Organisation faces significant challenges and profound transformations, such leadership is not merely desirable; it is indispensable.

We therefore urge the Administrative Council to give due consideration to the concerns repeatedly expressed by staff and their elected representatives when deciding on the future leadership of the Organisation. A credible change of course is now essential if the EPO is to move beyond conflict and successfully address the challenges ahead.

After years of growing tensions and missed opportunities for dialogue, staff are calling for a new approach to leadership, one founded on trust, genuine social dialogue, and mutual respect.

Yours faithfully,
Nicolas MAVRAGANIS
USF President