

Zentraler Vorstand . Central Executive Committee . Bureau Central

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Union Recognition Working Group Report on the first meeting of 11 May 2015

After the first tripartite (AC/Office/Unions) meeting on 22 April where all parties expressed a cautious optimism that such engagement should lead to an improved social climate, a special Working Group (WG) was established to look into the particular issue of formal union recognition.

Yesterday, 11 May, the first bipartite (Office/Unions) meeting of this “Union Recognition WG” took place. We were disappointed when we discovered that the Administration’s main point was to ask what the Unions expected from these meetings, given that:

- we had already provided a draft framework agreement (over a year ago);
- more recently, we had provided other examples of union agreements with international organisations,
- we had sent out various publications and open letters.

Therefore, we were surprised when the Administration seemed to ignore this preparatory work and wanted to start the discussions from a blank sheet of paper.

As for the Administration's expectations, it emerged during the meeting that they seem to want to find a way to involve the unions in talks, provided that:

- there is no requirement to resort to external checks and balances to control the process, and
- the immunity of the EPO remains absolute.

They have not yet clarified whether such talks should involve mere consultation, “concertation” or actual negotiations.

Nevertheless, we tried to provide constructive general input, such as saying that binding negotiations should serve as a kind of balance for the democratic deficit inherent in the “architecture” of an international organisation like ours. We also mentioned that we see a contradiction in applying Circular 347 to parties who have an agreement; therefore, it should not apply to SUEPO.

All parties seemed to agree that some form of social contract would be required, replacing any previous “gentlemen’s agreement” with something more legally binding. We also proposed that to avoid an interminable *impasse*, some form of resolution procedure (probably involving third parties) would be required, not to be used for every issue, but rather be used as a last resort when an agreed solution had proven impossible to achieve through negotiation.

The broader issues of the amendment of the reforms (adopted or to be adopted by the AC) and their implementation, all of which still require fixing, or what may be the next steps after union recognition, all remained unanswered. Equally unanswered remains the issue of the Dutch judgment currently in Appeal.

The second meeting of the WG has been scheduled for 20 May, with the aim of providing an agreed progress report to the next tripartite meeting on 28 May.

SUEPO Central