European Patent Office does not live in a Dutch no man's land

(EPSU/FNV Press Release, Brussels 06 November 2015) In a joint letter, EPSU, the European Public Service Union, and its Dutch affiliate, FNV, call upon the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte to take action against breaches of fundamental workers’ rights at the European Patent Office based in the Hague, Netherlands.

The European Patent Office's core activity is the examination of patent applications and the grant of European patents.

The media have reported on EPO’s unacceptable management led by its President, Mr Battistelli.

In a ruling of 17 February, the Hague-based appeal Court instructed EPO to uphold the rule-of-law and social dialogue standards in line with the European Convention on Human Rights and ILO Conventions No87, on the right to organise in trade unions, and No 98 on the right to collective bargaining.

EPO responded that the court ruling was not executable on the ground that it enjoys immunity. The Dutch government is currently backing the EPO in a case before the Dutch constitutional court aiming at declaring the Dutch judiciary system as incompetent to issue such rulings.

“Refusal to cooperate with labour inspectors, repetitive threats towards union representatives, breaches of data protection rules, these are just examples of EPO’s managerial practices. The Dutch government must not tolerate these abusive practices on its own territory that bring back workers to the 19th century. There must be limits to immunity” says FNV union official Marieke Manschot
“It is EPO’s whole governance that is deficient. European and international organisations must respect labour law and trade unions. They must accept the fact that they don’t live in a legal no man’s land. Immunity has been designed to facilitate international cooperation and protect those functions or people who need protection, not to abuse workers” says EPSU General Secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan

EPSU and FNV expect clear answers from Prime Minister Rutte on efficient and fast measures to remedy the situation at EPO.

See EPSU/FNV letter to Prime Minister Rutte sent on 04 November 2015 below.

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