May 08, 2021

To all Council members, Chairs and Auditors

From the German Council delegation

Dear Council members,

The members of the German constituency, hereinafter referred to as the German Council delegation, wish to raise the following concerns to the epi Council.

The German Council delegation appreciates the efforts made by the e:EQE Working Group, the Professional Education Committee (PEC) and the Digitisation Support Group (DSG) to prepare the e:EQE Discussion Paper. The German Council delegation recognises the need to adapt the European Qualifying Examination (EQE) to the digital transformation. The German Council delegation welcomes the aim of the Discussion Paper to bring the EQE closer to the "fit-to-practise" criterion and to make the examination more efficient for both students and the profession, especially for those who draw up and correct the examination.

However, the German Council delegation considers the ideas presented in the e:EQE discussion paper to be not yet fully convincing. In addition, the German delegation sees no need to rush through this reform being existential for the profession, only to to implement the reformed examination as early as 2024 or 2025. The reform of the EQE should be based on the principle: quality over speed.

A non-representative survey among European Patent Attorneys of industry and private practice in Germany, representing more than 100 European patent attorneys and including major applicants such as Robert Bosch GmbH, indicated that the Discussion Paper may not sufficiently take into account the concerns of the practical training of patent attorney trainees, the candidates.

Inter alia the survey showed concerns that candidates could be encouraged to rush through the exams to finalize them within 2 years, reducing their time-budget to develop practical experience. In addition, concerns were raised that the constant need to prepare new multiple choice questions being legally secure could impose an increasing work-load for those working out the EQE.

The experience with the first online EQE at the beginning of March this year encourages that a reformed e:EQE can be a success if it is implemented wisely and thoughtfully. For this purpose, however, the German Council delegation does not consider it sufficient to discuss the Discussion Paper only in the epi Forum, but rather considers a comprehensive discussion and participation of all interested circles indispensable.

Having said this, the German Council delegation calls on the Supervisory Board to engage in a broad discussion involving all interested parties and proposes to gather statements from interested parties in the coming months. Thus, the German delegation asks to hold a separate online conference within the next 4 months to enable an efficient and comprehensive discussion within all interested parties.

MOTION:

The German Council delegation asks the council to vote for setting up a video conference within the next 4 months for epi-members and invited guests to discuss the e:EQE Discussion Paper.