

## EPSU CJ: the lonely journey to affiliation to USF

Is a trade union, which is legally, financially and organisationally independent and comprises the staff of a single institution, *by definition* an 'in-house union', with whatever negative connotations this term may imply?



The course followed by EPSU CJ may have seemed contradictory.

Indeed, when, back in 2007, we established EPSU CJ, we set ourselves the goal of becoming the trade union of the staff and pensioners of a single institution, the Court of Justice, while announcing our wish to become part of *Union Syndicale Fédérale* (USF).

We knew however, from the outset, that the path to our affiliation to USF was barred by US Luxembourg, which, under the rules of USF, had a monopoly over the territory of Luxembourg for that union federation. That obstacle was removed in March 2015, when USL resigned from USF.

USF's [Dubrovnik Congress](#) (1 – 3 May 2015) formally approved [EPSU CJ's affiliation](#) as a full Member-Organisation. So, EPSU CJ became part and parcel of its 'natural' union family, alongside the newly-created 'Luxembourg branch' of USF.

Since 2010, EPSU CJ is the only [representative](#) trade union of the staff of the Court of Justice.

This is the first time that the Court's staff have had the advantage of maintaining, via EPSU CJ, organic links with the leading labour federation of the European and International Public Service.

### An 'in-house union'?

Being an 'in-house union' is not a direct consequence either of a lack of affiliation to a union federation, or of presence in only a single company or institution: Affiliation to a union federation does not immunise a trade union against all risk of complacency towards the employer. But nor does a union's presence in only a single institution prevent it from standing up for the staff in an inter-institutional spirit and in solidarity with the world of work.

EPSU CJ's record attests to this.

### A new era for EPSU CJ

EPSU CJ's lonely journey is now complete. Our full integration into the USF family has now been added to our in-depth knowledge of the institution and of the inter-institutional framework.

Through its members' subscriptions, EPSU CJ ensures its own financial independence, which enables it to provide legal assistance to its members and other staff. It has its own Website (<http://epsu-cj.lu/en/>). Its workings, including [its accounts](#), are transparent.

However, any trade union consists of people and they are the ones who inspire its action. Therefore, colleagues who appreciate the protection of a trade union should not take its existence for granted, but bring their own support; which means, as a first step, [joining](#).

The staff of our institution is fragmented by a series of overlapping cleavages, which reinforce the individualistic reflexes prevalent in society.

Still, every trade union –and it's [the institutions](#) which impose this condition– must «have as its statutory objective the defence of the interests of *the whole staff*». For our union family, compliance with this condition is more than pure form. It is a fundamental goal!

If EPSU CJ is to maintain and further develop its ability to solve 'small' and bigger problems, without giving in to corporatist fragmentation of society (given that the lack of a global plan for an open, democratic and social Europe of solidarity *deprives* trade unions of any legitimacy in the eyes of citizens), it will require renewal. But, for that, joining a trade union must cease to be an odd reaction and become the normal thing to do ...

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