

## WEEKLY NEWS - JANUARY 30, 2009 OHIM welcomes TM users to Board

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*OHIM's Administrative Board has invited representatives of five trade mark users organisations to become observers at its meetings*

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The five organisations are AIM, BusinessEurope, ECTA, INTA and MARQUES. They will all be able to nominate a person to attend the Board's meetings for two years in the first instance.

António Campinos, chair of OHIM's Administrative Board, told *Managing IP* the establishment of observer status on the Board was long overdue: "The absence of observers at a higher level did not favour transparency, cooperation or communication with users. After all, they are our major stakeholders."

The Board represents all 27 EU member states and the European Commission. WIPO and the Benelux Trademark Office also participate as observers.

Campinos said the decision to invite users groups as observers, which was made in December, was unanimous.

"I want to underline the constructive spirit of all member states, without exception, as well as the President of OHIM and in particular Margot Fröhlinger from the Commission," he said.

He added that, at its extraordinary meeting in September last year, member states called for further engagement with users: "With the discussions about the fee reduction and the cooperation fund, we are facing significant discussions and changes, so it is really important to have the users on board."

Tove Graulund of Zacco in Denmark told *Managing IP* she had been invited as the representative of MARQUES.

"In view of the complicated discussions that lie ahead, I'm delighted to see member states see the value of having users' contributions," she said.

Graulund added that MARQUES wrote a letter in February last year proposing that users' groups be more involved in discussions about OHIM's future.

One of the main tasks of the Board this year will be to build on the CTM fee reduction and establishment of a cooperation fund that were agreed at September's meeting.

"We don't all necessarily like all aspects of the compromise solution," said Graulund. "But it is a compromise and now is the time to build up trust in a positive environment."

Campinos said his experience of chairing WIPO's Working Group on the Madrid Protocol convinced him of the benefit of involving users: "We must seize this opportunity to create a more modern and user-friendly European trade mark and design system at all levels. I look forward to experiencing what we did with WIPO again in Alicante."