



[EPO president Benoit Battistelli.](#) © EPA

## European Patent Organisation staff protest against ‘culture of fear’

To take a stand against the culture of ‘fear and intimidation’, employees of the European Patent Organisation (EPOrg) are protesting at the French and German embassies in The Hague on Thursday afternoon. Around 2,700 people work at the international organisation in Rijswijk.

By: Bart Dirks, Thursday 28 January 2016, 11:03am

### Patent agency hires detectives to investigate own staff

The European Patent Organisation (EPOrg) in Rijswijk has hired a controversial British agency to investigate staff representing their union. According to employees, the investigations are the latest weapon in EPOrg president Benoît Battistelli’s reign of terror. Read the article written in June 2015 by Anneke Stoffelen [here](#).

A protest already took place in front of the Ministry of Economic Affairs in The Hague in December. There are frequent updates on president Benoît Battistelli’s alleged ‘reign of terror’. The Suepo union states that under his reign, work pressure has been increased and Battistelli has unilaterally forced through changes to the labour conditions. Anyone offering criticism may expect to suffer reprisals.

‘A series of investigations are in progress against three employees in the Netherlands,’ says lawyer Liesbeth Zegveld. ‘Even working for the union is seen as undermining behaviour by

the board of management of the patent office. More and more people are joining the union, but fewer and fewer people dare to take on leading positions there.’

### **Dismissal of two colleagues**

The concrete cause for the protest is the dismissal of two colleagues and the demotion of a third at the organisation’s headquarters in Munich. One of the fired employees is the Dutch department head of the union, Elizabeth Hardon.

Last week, 1,300 employees protested in Germany, but there has been commotion in Rijswijk and at other locations of the European Patent Office (EPO) for some time. The organisation has 7,000 employees working at five offices in various countries. They evaluate patents for 38 affiliated member states.

### **Respect the right to strike**

### **Raising the alarm about reign of terror following fifth suicide at European patent office**

Staff union SUEPO is raising the alarm on the suicide of an employee of the European Patent Organisation (EPOrg) in Rijswijk. Suepo states that awful working conditions may have contributed to the fifth suicide in three years’ time at the patent office. Read the article on this suicide written in September 2015 [here](#).

Last year, the Court in The Hague ruled that the patent organisation must let unions do their work for collective interests and that it must respect the right to strike. The court of cassation will take on the case on Friday, as the patent office did not adhere to the ruling.

Staff union Suepo raised the alarm on the suicide of an employee in August 2015. A 42-year-old employee of the location in Rijswijk ended his life on the last day of his vacation. Before that, another employee from the Rijswijk office jumped from the seventh floor of the building. Three employees of the headquarters in Munich committed suicide in a little over three years’ time, as a result of awful working conditions according to the union.