

European Patent Office boss leaves Van Dam's office in anger

The Frenchman Benoît Battistelli became irritated during a critical first meeting with State Secretary Martijn van Dam (Economic Affairs, PvdA - Dutch Labour Party) and left.

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State Secretary Martijn van Dam (PvdA, Economic Affairs) Photo Koen van Weel/ANP

The president of the European Patent Office in Rijswijk, Frenchman Benoît Battistelli, demonstrated his notorious temper this week in The Hague. Battistelli (65) became irritated during a critical first meeting with State Secretary Martijn Van Dam (Economic Affairs, PvdA - Dutch Labour Party). Battistelli stood up in anger after half an hour and left Van Dam's office at the ministry. This is confirmed by sources at the patent office.

Read also: This week, the member states must choose a side in the conflict between the boss of the European Patent Office, who they appointed, and the staff. [It will be a painful meeting.](#)

The international organisation in the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and Belgium (7000 employees) approves patent applications and grants European patents. But the patent office is mainly in the news due to [the ongoing conflict between Battistelli and the union](#) he does not want to recognise, SUEPO. The Administrative Council, the highest body of the patent office, which is made up of 38 member states, is voting today on an external investigation into punitive measures taken against union members.

During the first meeting on Friday 4 March, State Secretary Van Dam expressed his concerns about the working conditions and damage to the image of the patent office. But Battistelli accused the union of a smear campaign and said that he was supported by most member states. When the state secretary repeated his criticism as it did not seem to be getting through to Battistelli, the president broke off his discussion with Van Dam and left.

The state secretary had already expressed his concerns about the patent office, said an Economic Affairs spokesperson when asked. This conversation did not result in 'any new insights', according to the spokesperson. The patent office spokespeople say they cannot comment on the discussion with the state secretary, as they have not been informed of the content of the discussion.

A day before the conversation, Battistelli said at a press conference in Brussels that he mainly wanted to ask State Secretary Van Dam some questions himself. He previously told NRC:

"Primarily whether he realises that the Netherlands benefits a great deal from the patent office. We are investing 250 million Euro in a new building. We create 1 billion Euro in revenue for the Dutch economy. So I will ask him if he is aware of these elements."