

# Complaint against the State concerning problems at Patent Office

RIJSWIJK - The European Patent Office (EPO) in Rijswijk is the subject of discussion once again due to problems on the workforce. Two trade unions at the international organisation, where a striking number of employees committed suicide in 2014, have submitted a complaint against the Netherlands. The reason: violation of the right to access to the courts.

At the EPO, which employs a few thousand people, there has been talk of a culture of intimidation by the management for years, resulting in serious damage to the working atmosphere within the organisation. “The management is also making it impossible for the trade unions to effectively represent the interests of their members,” says lawyer Liesbeth Zegveld. “Although an organisation like the Patent Office enjoys immunity from jurisdiction under normal circumstances, this does not apply if the trade unions have no effective legal remedy to raise the problems. In accordance with established case law at the European Court, a national court can adopt jurisdiction in this case.”

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On Tuesday, Zegveld submitted a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights. “As a signatory state, the Netherlands is obliged to ensure that the European Treaty is guaranteed on its territory. Instead of this, violations of human rights are being covered up.”

The issue at the Patent Office is in fact being debated in the Dutch House of Representatives today.

The organisation has now been led with a firm hand for years by the French despot Benoît Battistelli. State Secretary Van Dam (Economic Affairs) stated at the end of last year that he would be keeping a finger on the pulse at the Patent Office.