

European Patent Office: Successor sought for embattled boss Battistelli

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The European Patent Office (EPO) in Munich.

(Picture: dpa, Frank Leonhardt)

The Administrative Council of the European Patent Office has taken the first steps towards replacing Benoît Battistelli as President of the Office when his contract expires at the end of June 2018. During his time in power social unrest has been grievous – and still is.

The days and hours for Benoît Battistelli to occupy the top job at the European Patent Office ([EPO](#)) may well be numbered. The Administrative Council of the European Patent Organization, which monitors the activities of the Munich-based authority started preparations on Friday aimed at replacing the bitterly embattled President when his contract expires on 30 June 2018, and finding a new incumbent for the powerful position. There have been repeated arguments in the past, ranging from getting the Frenchman out of office ahead of time to extending his contract at least for a transitional period in the light of the crisis situation in the Office.

According to an Administrative Council document posted on [heise online](#), the search for a successor is supposed to begin officially on 3 July, after the next meeting of the Council at The Hague at the end of June, and reference to the position becoming vacant will be published on the EPO Website. Applications can then be made until 14 September, before Battistelli's successor can be chosen. The job description will stipulate, among other things, that: "Candidates must have an above-average capacity to establish and promote a social dialogue."

At the moment, the Office is in an uproar. The dispute over the efficiency line adopted by the Frenchman, who has been nicknamed the “Sun King” [escalated at the end of 2015](#), after he [suspended](#) the top leadership of the institution’s international staff union (SUEPO), and made loud accusations of “Mafia-like” structures and “institutional violence”. Since then the feud [has been getting steadily worse](#), with the staff repeatedly going on [strike](#). The next phase is [planned](#) for the coming meeting of the Administrative Council, following the most recent warning from the central staff council that Battistelli is aiming [to make things tougher](#) yet with regard to the already strict options for disciplinary measures. In parallel with this, it seems apparent that the top job at the Danish Patent Office [is also up for replacement](#). This has up to now been held by Jesper Kongstad, who heads up the European Patent Organization, but who also wants to step down from the Administrative Council. The Dane is regarded as a supporter of the Battistelli line, so the watcher can [hardly afford to fall out with the EPO boss](#).
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