

'Further abuses at European Patent Office'



Demonstration against patent office, Archive photograph 2016, Remco Out

RIJSWIJK - The Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV) is sounding the alarm on new abuses at the European Patent Office. According to the union, the organisation, which is based in Rijswijk, is on the cusp of breaking Dutch law with plans to abolish the majority of permanent contracts. The Patent Office refutes the claim.

The FNV is complaining about a plan to replace contracts for future employees with temporary contracts with a maximum duration of five years, which is extendible. You can't simply do that here, states the union in a letter to Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Minister of Social Affairs and Employment Wouter Koolmees. The union believes that the government needs to intervene.

'The abuses at the European Patent Office are stacking up,' says Tuur Elzinga, Vice Chair of the FNV. 'We have already [taken action](#) along with the staff as the management were intimidating staff and critical individuals had been dismissed with immediate effect.'

'Nothing decided yet'

The Patent Office denies that anything has been decided yet. The office is also absolutely not bound by national employment laws, as an international organisation, a spokesperson responded. According to him, European legislation is also not applicable, as the office is not an EU institution.

The European Patent Office was set up in 1977. Countries outside the EU are also members. 6800 people work there, 2700 of these in Rijswijk. These are mainly permanent employees. The organisation's Administrative Council is meeting in March about ways to hire temporary employees more easily.