

# Social policy at the European Patent Office: My question to the Minister

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For a number of years I have been regularly called upon to intervene with regard to the **social situation at the European Patent Office**. Essentially, a form of management which is authoritarian and arbitrary, which has been condemned, among others, by the **Court of Human Rights at The Hague**, is causing massive dysfunction within the institution. There have been a number of suicides over the past few years, and, most recently, the dismissal has been announced of a number of employees, among them members of the staff union executive. **I must again urgently draw the French government's attention to this situation, by submitting a written question to the French Minister Emmanuel Macron:**

Claudine Lepage is calling the attention of the French Minister of the Economy, Industry, and Digital Affairs to the situation at the European Patent Office (EPO). This intergovernmental organization and its 7000 highly qualified staff members, recruited from among the 38 Member States, unquestionably make a huge contribution to innovation, competitiveness, and economic growth within Europe. For a number of years, however, the authoritarian and arbitrary social policy of the Office has been incurring great difficulties, in particular with regard to the fundamental rights of the individual, and the violation of social law. We must emphasise that four suicides in 32 months have occurred among the personnel, a deplorable situation. Above all, in February 2015, the Court of Appeal at The Hague, to which recourse was made by representatives of the staff, condemned the social policy adopted by the EPO, ruling it contrary to fundamental rights. The French President of the Office, however, refuses to respect this decision, on the pretext that the Office enjoys a status of immunity. This management, which must be strongly subject to censure, is causing a direct impact on the reputation of France among international institutions. Claudine Lepage is demanding to know whether measures will be taken to remedy this situation, which can only become worse, and which threatens the very future of the institution, at the very moment at which, after 30 years of negotiation, an agreement has been reached on the unitary European patent, with the EPO being entrusted with seeing this put into effect.