

BRUSSELS TO CURTAIL PRACTICE OF CONSULTANTS FOR ITS CABINETS

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In early May, Minister for Public Enterprises Petra De

Sutter (Groen) drew criticism over revelations that two individuals working in her cabinet were still in postal service Bpost's employ.

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The Belgian federal government is set to restrict certain parties from being installed in its cabinets. Consultants, drawn from publicly listed companies and who are still on their payroll, would be barred.

Le Soir and *De Standaard* [report](#) that Brussels is to approve a bill towards that end on Friday, June 2nd. If passed, which government sources fully expect, employees of postal service Bpost and mobile telecommunications firm Proximus can no longer be 'lent' to politicians.

The impetus for such a bill to be drawn up was, in typical fashion, a scandal.

[As outlined](#) by *The European Conservative*, in early May, Minister for Public Enterprises Petra De Sutter (Groen) drew criticism over revelations that two individuals working in her cabinet were still in Bpost's employ.

Questions about a conflict of interest were soon raised since Bpost was negotiating contracts with the De Sutter cabinet at the time.

Despite the political fallout which resulted, technically De Sutter had not breached any laws. Yet, on May 9th, De Sutter sent the two consultants back to their original employer, since they could "no longer perform their duties" over "suspensions" cast on their persons.

A 2001 royal decree allows for consultants from publicly listed companies to enter into cabinet positions. Earlier in his office, Prime Minister Alexander De Croo (Open Vld) affirmed that Bpost—of which the Belgian state owns 50.01%—would partially pay consultants' salaries.

According to government sources, De Croo has now put the abolition of the practice on Friday's core cabinet meeting's agenda. For now, only Bpost and Proximus would be affected. The option to employ consultants from other public companies, such as the National Railway Company of Belgium (SNCB) and Infrabel, remains untouched.

This means that over 400 of such postings remain unaffected.

On Twitter, MP Kristof Calvo (Groen) commented that it "is a step forward," but that it is only part of a "much broader debate." He proposes "to reconsider the whole system of Belgian cabinets," as they are "too large," and "undermine a parliamentary democratic system, turning everything into party politics."

<https://twitter.com/kristofcalvo/status/1663911099270328323>