

Public consultation on the draft statement of public service principles for EU civil servants

Public consultation - 24/02/2011

24 February 2011

This public consultation has now closed.

Introduction

The European Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in the activities of the EU institutions [1] . His experience of dealing with complaints and his contacts with the institutions and their staff, with citizens, and with civil society organisations, have led him to conclude that civil servants and the public would benefit from a straightforward and concise statement of public service principles for EU civil servants [2] .

The Ombudsman has prepared a **draft** of such a statement, on which he invites comments.

The draft aims to take into account, among other things, the best practices that exist in the Member States. To promote this objective, the European Ombudsman consulted the national ombudsmen in the European Network of Ombudsmen before preparing the draft. The **consultation document** sent to the national ombudsmen and a **report** on their responses are available as background documents.

The reasons for proposing a statement of public service principles

The aims set out in the European Ombudsman's *mission statement* include " *building trust through dialogue between citizens and the European Union and fostering the highest standards of behaviour in the Union's institutions.* "

The Ombudsman also aims to have a " *positive impact on the administrative culture of the EU institutions* " (see the Ombudsman's *Strategy for the mandate*).

The statement has been drafted with a view to making clear certain fundamental values, which



the behaviour of EU civil servants should reflect. By setting out those values clearly, the statement aims to promote citizens' trust in the European civil service and the EU institutions that it serves.

The draft statement is intended to complement existing instruments, including the *Staff Regulations*, the *Financial Regulation*, and the *European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour*, which contain general rules and principles governing the behaviour of civil servants. It will help civil servants to focus on the spirit in which they should apply the detailed internal rules of EU institutions governing matters such as the acceptance of gifts and conflicts of interest. It will thus promote good administration and make maladministration less likely to occur.

The public consultation

Comments on the draft public service principles are invited from individuals and from organisations.

The Ombudsman is writing to the EU institutions and bodies mentioned in Article 13 of the Treaty on European Union, and to the Network of Heads of EU Agencies to inform them of the public consultation.

All comments received by the deadline will be taken into account in finalising the European Ombudsman's statement of public service principles for EU civil servants.

Like all EU institutions, the Ombudsman must work as openly as possible and his mission statement encourages transparency. A list of the persons and organisations from whom comments are received will be published, therefore, on the European Ombudsman's website. The comments themselves will be accessible to the public, on request.

If there is a good reason why your name should not be published and/or your comment should not be made publicly accessible, please explain the reason when you send your comment.

How to contribute

Comments should be sent to the Ombudsman by 15 May June 2011

- by letter: European Ombudsman, 1 avenue du Président Robert Schuman, CS 30403, F - 67001 Strasbourg Cedex, France;
- by fax: +33 (0)3 88 17 90 62;
- by e-mail: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/shortcuts/contacts.faces> [Link]



Draft for public consultation Public service principles that should guide EU civil servants

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Commitment to the European Union and its citizens

Civil servants should be conscious that the Union's institutions exist in order to serve the interests of the Union and of its citizens.

They should make recommendations and decisions only to serve these interests, not for any other purpose.

Civil servants should carry out their functions to the best of their abilities and aim to set a good example to others.

Integrity

Civil servants should conduct themselves at all times in a manner that would bear the closest public scrutiny. This obligation is not fully discharged merely by acting within the law.

Civil servants should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation that might influence them in the performance of their functions. They should declare any private interests relating to their functions.

Civil servants should take steps to avoid conflicts of interest and the appearance of such conflicts. This obligation continues after leaving office.

In claiming expenses and allowances, civil servants should be guided by a sense of propriety,



rather than seeking to maximise their benefits.

Objectivity

Civil servants should be open-minded, guided by evidence, and willing to hear different viewpoints. They should be ready to acknowledge and correct mistakes.

In procedures involving comparative evaluations, civil servants should base recommendations and decisions only on merit and any other factors expressly prescribed by law.

Civil servants should not allow the fact that they like, or dislike, a particular person to influence their professional conduct.

Respect for others

Civil servants should act respectfully to each other and to citizens. They should be polite, helpful, and co-operative.

Transparency

Civil servants should be willing to explain their activities and to give reasons for their actions. They should welcome public scrutiny of their conduct, including their compliance with public service principles.

[1] The term "institution" is used here as shorthand to cover what are formally known, in EU language as the "institutions, bodies, offices, and agencies".

[2] The term "civil servant" refers to the staff of the EU institutions. They are formally known, in EU language, as "officials and other servants".

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