

Decision in case 2108/2018/TE on the European Commission's allegedly incorrect statements concerning the international language Esperanto

Decision

Case 2108/2018/TE - Opened on 18/12/2018 - Decision on 18/12/2018 - Institution concerned European Commission (No maladministration found) |

The complaint to the European Commission

1. The complainant is a German association promoting the use of Esperanto.
2. On 5 October 2018, the complainant wrote to the representation of the European Commission in Berlin, expressing its concerns about several statements made by the Commission in its Communication 'A New Framework Strategy for Multilingualism' of 2005 and in press communications of 2012 and 2013.
3. In particular, the complainant was concerned that the Commission wrongly implied in these statements that the 'planned language' Esperanto had no cultural references, that people would need to learn it "*from scratch*" and that learning Esperanto would involve a lot of time and resources. The complainant argued that these statements were inaccurate, as there would not only be literature and songs in Esperanto, hence cultural references, but also a number of native speakers.
4. The complainant further criticised that the Commission mentioned, in the context of Esperanto, its commitment to multilingualism and diversity rather than uniformity. The complainant found this statement in this context to be misleading, as the idea of Esperanto was never to replace existing languages, but to supplement them.

The European Commission's response to the complainant

5. On 29 October 2018, the complainant received the reply from the Commission. In its reply, the Commission clarified that it is the EU Member States that would decide on the legal status of languages and the support languages receive. However, within the scope of its competences,



the Commission would promote linguistic diversity, for instance as part of the EU programme Erasmus+. The Commission also stressed that its multilingualism would not take a stand “*against*” any language or devalue the respective language community in any possible way.

6. The complainant was not satisfied with the Commission’s response and therefore turned to the Ombudsman.

The European Ombudsman's finding

7. The Ombudsman notes that the Commission reassured the complainant that it does not disparage any language or its language community in any possible way. The Commission also correctly noted that it is the EU Member States that decide on the legal status of languages and not the Commission.

8. The Ombudsman considers the Commission’s reply reasonable.

9. Based on the information provided by the complainant, the Ombudsman finds no maladministration in this case. [1]

Fergal Ó Regan

Coordination of Public Interest Inquiries ▫ Unit 2

Strasbourg, 18/12/2018

[1] This complaint has been dealt with under delegated case handling, in accordance with Article 11 of the [Decision of the European Ombudsman adopting Implementing Provisions](#) [Link]