

## **Request for information in Strategic initiative SI/2/2019/EA on transparency of the Eurogroup Working Group**

Correspondence - 13/05/2019

**Case** SI/2/2019/MIG - **Opened on** 13/05/2019 - **Decision on** 03/12/2019 - **Institution concerned** Council of the European Union |

Mr Mário Centeno

President of the Eurogroup

Strasbourg, 13/05/2019

Re: Transparency of the Eurogroup Working Group (SI/2/2019/EA)

Dear Mr President,

I was encouraged to learn about your recent decision to look into the Eurogroup's transparency practices to see if there is room for further improvement.

In 2016, I welcomed the proactive transparency measures adopted by the Eurogroup, notably the publication of the annotated agenda and the President's summing-up letters. My subsequent correspondence with your predecessor, Mr Jeroen Dijsselbloem, helped clarify a range of issues. [1]

One outstanding matter is the transparency of the bodies involved in preparing Eurogroup meetings, in particular the Eurogroup Working Group (EWG). The influential role of the EWG in preparing and shaping the discussions that take place within the Eurogroup is set out in the Eurogroup Working Methods [2] .

I have now decided to pursue this important matter on two levels:

First, I have launched a strategic inquiry into how requests for public access to relevant documents have been handled by the Council and the Commission under the EU rules on public access to documents [3] . Specifically, I have asked the Council and the Commission to facilitate an inspection [4] by my Office of their files relating to requests for public access to



documents of the Eurogroup, the EWG, the Economic and Financial Committee (EFC) and the Economic Policy Committee (EPC) (see letters attached).

Second, I would welcome your views on the possibility of adopting a more ambitious approach to the transparency of the EWG, extending for example to the proactive publication of EWG meeting documents. Unless interested third parties have an opportunity to inform themselves at an early stage of the matters being discussed, they cannot provide the input and expertise that is so necessary to ensure high quality output in the area of economic policy for the Eurozone.

I would be grateful to receive your reply by 15 July 2019, if possible. I look forward to engaging with you constructively on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Emily O'Reilly European Ombudsman

[1] The correspondence is available at: <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/case/en/48285>

[2] These state that “ *the quality of the Eurogroup debate and the results depend greatly on good input, i.e. the preparation by the EWG* ”.

[3] Regulation 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32001R1049&from=EN> [Link].

[4] In accordance with Article 3(2) of the Statute of the European Ombudsman.