European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly has made a recommendation to the Council of the EU that it issue guidance to Member State governments concerning their use of sponsorship to fund the costs of holding the Council Presidency.

The inquiry followed a complaint about the practice of Member State governments holding the Council Presidency of seeking sponsorship from companies.

The Council argued that the issue of sponsorship is the sole responsibility of the government of the Member State holding the Presidency.

The Ombudsman noted that the Presidency is part of the Council, and that the public does not distinguish between the two. As such, she found that the Council's stance - that it has no responsibility concerning sponsorship of Presidencies - constitutes maladministration.

She made the recommendation that the Council issue guidance to Member State governments, so as to mitigate the reputational risks to the EU.