

How the European Commission dealt with a complaint about how the Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography responded publicly to critical media coverage

Case 874/2020/MIG - Opened on 29/06/2020 - Decision on 26/03/2021 - Institution concerned European Commission (No further inquiries justified) |

The complainant contacted the European Commission to raise concerns about how the Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography responded publicly to critical media coverage, notably comments she made during a TV show. The complainant alleged that these comments breached the Code of Conduct for the Members of the European Commission. Dissatisfied with how the Commission responded to these concerns, the complainant turned to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman found that the Vice-President's statements could be misunderstood and thus were inappropriate. While the Commission and the Vice-President made subsequent clarifications, the Ombudsman expressed regret that the Commission did not apologise for the incident, missing a chance to restore public trust. The Ombudsman closed her inquiry, calling on the Commission to take more care (and remind Commissioners) of the need to exercise due caution when making public statements.