

Decision of the European Ombudsman in the case 116/2021/SF on how the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) evaluated a proposal for funding of a Jean Monnet Chair under the Erasmus+ programme

Decision

Case 116/2021/SF - Opened on 10/02/2021 - Decision on 10/02/2021 - Institution concerned European Education and Culture Executive Agency (No maladministration found)

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Strasbourg, 10/02/2021

Complaint 116/2021/SF

Subject: Decision of the European Ombudsman in the above case on how the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) evaluated a proposal for funding of a Jean Monnet Chair under the Erasmus+ programme

Dear Ms X,

On 15 January 2021, you submitted a complaint to the European Ombudsman against the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and its decision not to fund your proposal under the Erasmus+ programme [1] . You consider that the points awarded to your proposal were too low and you are dissatisfied with EACEA's reply to your review request. You argue that there were procedural irregularities and substantial errors in the evaluation of your proposal.

After a careful analysis of all the information you provided with your complaint, we have decided to close the inquiry with the following conclusion:

The complaint does not reveal maladministration.

In your review request to EACEA, you claimed that the COVID-19 pandemic affected the procedure as the results were published later than set out in the Erasmus+ programme guide [2] . You also argued that the evaluation committee did not follow the award criteria set out in the Erasmus+ programme guide, that the evaluation committee did not provide adequate reasoning



for its conclusions and that there was no coherence between the scores awarded and the comments provided in the evaluation report. You consider your proposal should have received 98/100 points instead of the 77/100 points awarded.

The role of the Ombudsman is to ensure good administration in the EU institutions. When evaluating proposals for EU funding, good administration means, for instance, that the EU body concerned should follow the applicable procedure and assess all the criteria set out in the call. These are thus aspects that the Ombudsman can examine. However, it is not for the Ombudsman to re-evaluate the proposal. The Ombudsman would therefore question the evaluation of a proposal only in case of an indication of a manifest error of assessment.

In its reply to your review request, EACEA noted that the Erasmus+ programme guide clearly says that the timelines are indicative only. EACEA further said that the time it took to finalise the evaluation does not indicate that the evaluation was not done properly. EACEA said that it had found no procedural irregularities.

In response to your arguments about lack of reasoning and incoherence between scores and comments, EACEA said that the evaluation report highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. EACEA then addressed your comments for each award criterion. EACEA said that the comments in the evaluation report were coherent with the main strengths and weaknesses identified in your proposal and that the award criteria set out in the Erasmus+ programme guide had been followed when evaluating your proposal.

We consider that the information provided with your complaint shows that EACEA took into account all award criteria when evaluating your proposal. EACEA has dealt properly with your review request by addressing your concerns about the procedure as well as your arguments about inconsistencies in the evaluation report. EACEA's reply is reasonable and coherent and there is nothing that would indicate any manifest error of assessment or mistake in the procedure.

For these reasons, the Ombudsman has closed the case [3] .

We understand that you may be disappointed by this decision, but we hope that the above explanations are nevertheless helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Tina Nilsson Head of the Case-handling Unit

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_en [Link]



[2] https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en

[3] Full information on the procedure and rights pertaining to complaints can be found at

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/document/70707> [Link]