



## **New statute: Ombudsman welcomes legal strengthening of her Office**

Press release no. 4/2021 - 10/06/2021

European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly welcomes the Parliament's approval (602 votes out of the 692 cast) of a strengthened legal framework for her Office.

The revised statute strengthens the legal base of the Ombudsman and introduces new safeguards to further guarantee its independence, including an adequate budget to support the Office's activities.

*"A strong, well-resourced and independent Ombudsman is essential for maintaining high ethics and accountability standards in the EU administration. I thank all those involved for their work on this new legislation and welcome the agreement across party lines and across EU institutions."*

*"I see the new statute as a validation of our Office's work over recent years in handling complaints, conducting proactive inquiries and keeping the EU institutions at the forefront of excellent public administration. This revision codifies many of the Office's current working practices,"* said Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly.

*"Furthermore, the new two year cooling-off period for any politicians who want to become Ombudsman in future, is important to ensure that the Office maintains its independence."*



The new statute confirms the power of the Ombudsman to launch proactive inquiries. Article 3 of the statute says: “The Ombudsman may conduct own-initiative inquiries whenever she finds grounds, and in particular in repeated, systemic or particularly serious instances of maladministration, in order to address those instances as an issue of public interest”.

The new cooling-off period means anyone running to become Ombudsman should not have been a member of the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Commission or a national government in the previous two years. The next election will follow the European elections in 2024.

## **Background**

The Ombudsman Office was established by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 and the first Ombudsman took office in 1995.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights, which became legally binding in 2009, recognised the right to good administration as a fundamental right of European citizens.

The Office has 73 posts, divided between Brussels and Strasbourg. There have been three European Ombudsmen since 1995.

The final legal step is the Parliament vote on the Statute, which will take place during the 23-24 June plenary session in Brussels, following the consent of the Council. The new statute will enter into force following its publication in the Official Journal of the EU.