



Award for Good Administration 2021

Speech - **City** Brussels - **Country** Belgium - **Date** 24/06/2021

Thank you Shada. Good morning everyone and a very warm welcome from here in the European Parliament in Brussels to our third biennial presentation of the European Ombudsman Award for Good Administration.

This is an event that my colleagues and I always greatly look forward to, and I am pleased that so many of you are joining us today from right across the EU administration.

When we set about planning the award last year, we were unsure as to whether we would get many or indeed any entries because of the challenging circumstances in which all of you were working. But, one by one, those entries did indeed arrive and I thank you all for taking the extra time and trouble to submit so many worthy and wonderful projects.

Those projects illustrate much of the work that is directly related to the pandemic, but also highlight the depth and breadth of your daily work that does so much to support and enhance the lives of millions of Europeans.

We are happy to be able to showcase all of this and to shine a light on work that often is not fully recognised and acknowledged.

The nature of my work as Ombudsman inevitably implies criticism when mistakes are made or standards drop but, in monitoring the EU administration, I also see the wealth and the value of the work that you do day in and day out, and this is our way of acknowledging that and of allowing best practice to be shared.

While this is of course a happy and a celebratory event, it is taking place against a backdrop of immense trauma and tragedy after 15 months of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Europe alone, approximately 1.2 million people have died, with many more becoming seriously ill or suffering the long-term aftermath of the illness. And you are all aware of the economic and financial fallout of the crisis, which is affecting so many individuals, so many businesses and so many business sectors.

It is undeniable that mistakes were made and, over the next few months and years, we shall no doubt gain greater insight into how decisions were made when it came to handling the crisis. But that insight will be valuable only if we learn from it and do not repeat the same mistakes should another similar crisis occur. The single greatest preventative measure is good leadership at political and at administrative level, and many of the initiatives showcased today did indeed spring from exemplary leadership decisions.



The pandemic has taught us and is teaching us a lot. For me, one of the biggest lessons is just how powerful and effective we human beings can be where there is a massive need to be effective coupled with a massive will to be effective.

The development and roll out of vaccines with unprecedented speed, unprecedented scientific collaboration and unprecedented resources is the most obvious case in point, but many other initiatives were executed in ways we could never before have imagined from an EU perspective, some of which you will see today.

All of this should teach us to be sceptical the next time a good project, a good initiative is rejected on the grounds of resources or timescale. I believe, for example, that political will alone may be all that is currently necessary to make sure that the rest of the world receives the same level of vaccine protection as the West currently does.

Friends and colleagues, thank you once again for entering your projects for these awards and for being with us today. Now it is my great pleasure to introduce the Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen to share her thoughts on what you collectively have achieved.