

## **Decision on how the European Commission monitored a school competition in Italy that it sponsors (case 1724/2021/FA)**

Decision

**Case 1724/2021/FA - Opened on 26/10/2021 - Decision on 26/10/2021 - Institution concerned** European Commission ( No maladministration found ) |

Dear Mr X,

In September 2021, you submitted a complaint to the European Ombudsman, on behalf of your son, against the European Commission and its representation in Italy. You are dissatisfied with how the Commission monitored a school competition in Italy that it sponsors together with the European Parliament.

The competition is an initiative coordinated by an Italian university professor, inviting school pupils to make a promotion video about Europe for which they could win a trip to Brussels. You argue that the winning videos did not respect the competition's rules in terms of length, copyright and languages. You also contend that the organiser of the competition did not publish the ranking of candidates, as required in the call for competition. You turned to the Commission with your concerns but you are dissatisfied with its reply.

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

**There was no maladministration by the European Commission in this case.**

The Ombudsman's review is limited to examining whether the European Commission handled your concerns reasonably and in accordance with its role as a sponsor of the competition. It is not for the Ombudsman to redo the assessment made by the selection panel.

As explained by the Commission in its letter to you dated 8 September 2021, the Commission is not involved in the organisation of the competition as such. The evaluation of the videos is done by an independent selection panel, which includes staff members of the Commission and the European Parliament in Italy, in addition to university professors. As mentioned in the competition call, the selection panel's assessment is not open to review.



We note that, in its letter to you, the Commission addressed all your arguments regarding the alleged irregularities in the selection of the winning teams.

The Commission said that exceeding the required length for the videos was not a ground for exclusion. The panel had the discretion to balance considerations on length with other aspects. Regarding material allegedly covered by copyright, we trust the Commission's finding that the images concerned complied with copyright rules. The Commission also pointed out that the message on the use of languages merely expressed a preference and was not a mandatory requirement. Regarding the ranking of teams, the Commission said that the selection panel had decided to limit the publication of the ranking to the winning teams to avoid discouraging participants with lower marks and unnecessary comparisons.

We consider that the Commission's reply to your concerns is appropriate and reasonable.

On this basis, there is nothing to suggest that the Commission has not acted in line with its role as a sponsor.

Although we understand you will be disappointed with this reply, we nevertheless hope you find these explanations helpful [1] .

Yours sincerely,

Tina Nilsson Head of the Case-handling Unit

Strasbourg, 26/10/2021

[1] Full information on the procedure and rights pertaining to complaints can be found at <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/document/70707> [Link]