



Ombudsman: EU administration at critical point in treatment of ‘revolving doors’

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The European Commission risks undermining the integrity of the EU administration without a more robust approach to the movement of staff to the private sector, the Ombudsman concluded following a broad inquiry into ‘revolving doors’.

While the Commission has made improvements since the last Ombudsman inquiry, it still needs to do more. The Commission should:

1. Forbid jobs temporarily if they pose risks that cannot be offset by restrictions or if restrictions cannot credibly be monitored and enforced.
2. Make its approval of a new job conditional on the staff member obtaining a commitment from the new employer to publish any restrictions on its website.
3. Publish the decisions on staff members' new jobs faster.

“ The movement of regulators into sectors they formerly regulated has become a problematic issue in Brussels, yet this is not fully reflected in how the EU administration deals with the matter ,” said European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly.



“ There is a tendency to underestimate the corrosive effects of officials bringing their knowledge and networks to related areas in the private sector.

The EU administration is at a critical point in its treatment of ‘revolving doors’. Failing to control the practice now will allow the embedding of a culture that may erode public confidence in the integrity and expertise of the EU institutions.

Permanent jobs in the EU administration imply a commitment to the public good over the long term. They should not be seen as a stepping stone to related jobs in the private sector ,” said the Ombudsman.

The inquiry covered a **sample of 100 decisions** taken by the Commission in 2019-2021, across 14 Directorates-General, all Commissioner cabinets, the Commission’s Legal Service, and the Secretariat-General. Of these 100 decisions, the Commission **prohibited only two activities** . The Ombudsman did not find maladministration, see [here \[Link\]](#) for the inquiry findings.

The inquiry forms part of the Ombudsman’s overall work in this area, including ongoing inquiries related to the [European Investment Bank \[Link\]](#) and the [European Central Bank \[Link\]](#).

In former inquiries related to the [European Banking Authority \[Link\]](#) and the [European Defence Agency \[Link\]](#), the Ombudsman found that both should have temporarily forbidden the jobs in question.

Annual Report 2021

Today, the Ombudsman is also launching her Annual Report for 2021, with complaints related to transparency and accountability accounting for the biggest proportion of inquiries (29%).

The Report documents the Ombudsman’s work on improving public access to documents, including by publishing a [guide \[Link\]](#) for the EU institutions to help them fully meet their obligations in this area. It gives details on a range of inquiries including whether [Frontex’s complaints mechanism \[Link\]](#) could be made more accessible, how the Commission ensures Croatian authorities respect fundamental rights in the context of [border management operations \[Link\]](#), and how the European Investment Bank should improve [transparency about the projects it finances \[Link\]](#).

In 2021, the Ombudsman opened 338 inquiries – of which six were on her own initiative – while the average length of time for an inquiry was less than four months.

The [Annual Report \[Link\]](#) also features the European Ombudsman’s new logo – officially launched today – representing the office’s mission: accountability, transparency, and trust.