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"Revolving doors": Ombudsman will step up supervision of senior EU officials

Press release no. 18/2014 - 23/09/2014

The European Ombudsman, **Emily O'Reilly**, has called on the European Commission to make its review processes on "revolving doors" cases more robust to avoid conflicts of interest. She has also called on the Commission to regularly publish online all relevant information as regards senior EU officials, including their names, who leave to work outside the EU administration. This follows complaints from five NGOs and the Ombudsman's inspection of 54 "revolving doors" files.

During her investigation, the Ombudsman found deficiencies in how decisions on "revolving doors" cases are reasoned and documented. It is not always clear whether the officials concerned provided the information needed for the Commission to make well-informed decisions, nor how comments from its services were taken into account. Further, it does not always explain fully why it has decided to approve a request to take up a job offer. The Ombudsman urges the Commission to correct these omissions.

Emily O'Reilly explained: "Civil servants have a legitimate right to take up job offers when they leave the public service. However, in order to maintain citizens' trust in the EU civil service, the EU institutions must strengthen and make more transparent their systems of review to make sure that such moves do not give rise to conflicts of interest.

International experience has shown us that this "revolving doors" phenomenon can at times potentially have a corrupting influence on senior staff, which damages public trust immensely. It is very important that we ensure that such a situation does not develop in Brussels. I will step up my supervisory powers accordingly."



Officials leaving EU employment must inform their institution of any proposed new employment during the period of two years after leaving their institution. Furthermore, former senior officials are not allowed to lobby their former colleagues for a period of 12 months following their departure.

EU institutions have the right to take disciplinary measures if an official takes a job which gives rise to a conflict of interest.

The Commission should reply by 31 December 2014.

The full text of the Ombudsman's recommendation is available at:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/draftrecommendation.faces/en/56216/html.bookmark>

The Ombudsman's Annual Report 2013

The Ombudsman is placing increasing emphasis on ethical issues, such as conflicts of interest. Ethical issues are, alongside issues related to the transparency of the EU institutions, citizens' participation in EU decision-making and fundamental rights, of most concern to EU citizens.

More information is available in the Ombudsman's Annual Report 2013 at:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/activities/annualreports.faces>