



The European Ombudsman's language policy

The European Ombudsman is firmly committed to the principle of multilingualism because cultural and linguistic diversity is one of the greatest assets of the European Union. The Ombudsman acts as a bridge between the European public and the EU in ensuring that the EU institutions adhere to the highest ethical, administrative and transparency standards. Addressing citizens in their own language is key to making the EU more accessible and accountable which in turn is essential for the success of the EU's democratic system.

The European Ombudsman tries to find a pragmatic balance between the principle of multilingualism and her obligation to use her limited resources in the most effective way. Where justified, the Ombudsman may decide to publish certain documents in a limited number of languages.

The following overview explains the Ombudsman's language choices concerning the most important communications and publications.

Communication with complainants and the public

Every EU citizen or resident has the right to use any of the 24 official languages in correspondence with the EU institutions, which have to reply in the same language. This principle applies to contacts with the European Ombudsman as well. All complaints, requests for information and any other requests may be sent and will be answered in any of the official EU languages.

The Ombudsman's website is available in all 24 EU languages, including the electronic complaint form and the interactive guide , which helps users to find the appropriate problem-solving mechanism at EU level or in the Member States. Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the services of the Ombudsman, he or she can get advice on where to turn in an EU language of his or her choice.

The Ombudsman's key publications, such as the Annual Report , the service brochure "Who can help you?" , and the Ombudsman's guidelines for businesses are available in all 24 EU languages. The same applies to information about the current European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly , as well as her predecessors. The European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour is available in all 24 EU languages as well as in the languages of EU candidate countries.

Case related work



The Ombudsman receives and handles complaints in all official EU languages. Most of her investigations, except those dealt with in an informal procedure (for example, by telephone), are published on her website. The language policy for the different case related documents is as follows:

- Recommendations and decisions are published in the language of the complainant and in English.
- Summaries of cases which have a wider public interest are published in all 24 languages.
- Special Reports are published in all 24 EU languages.
- Own-initiative investigations are published in English, together with summaries in all EU languages.
- Brief information about cases opened is available in English.
- Public consultations are published in all 24 EU languages. However, where justified, the Ombudsman may decide to invite feedback from targeted audiences in a limited number of EU languages.
- Follow-up studies are available in all 24 EU languages.

Strategic and organisational documents

Most of the Ombudsman's strategic and organisational documents, such as her statute , strategy , public register , and her Code of Conduct are available in all EU languages. The same applies to her public tender announcements . Her annual management plan or other more specific strategic documents are available in a limited number of EU languages.

Media and social media activities

The Ombudsman regularly informs journalists about her investigations and other news. As most of the relevant journalists are Brussels-based EU correspondents who need timely information and tend to master English, German or French, she publishes her press releases in those languages only. In cases of extreme time pressure, she may decide to publish press texts in English only.

The Ombudsman is increasingly using social media platforms to reach out to the public. Content published on these platforms is mostly in English due to their international outreach. She also publishes press releases, information about meetings and events and other news in English, German and French. The Ombudsman's publications and videos are spread on different social media channels in the 24 official EU languages.

Communication with the European Network of Ombudsmen

The European Ombudsman coordinates the European Network of Ombudsmen which consists of over 95 offices in 36 European countries. The network members regularly exchange experiences and best practices via seminars and meetings, a newsletter, an



electronic discussion forum and a daily electronic news service. Information about the Network as well as a joint statement are available in all 24 EU languages. The languages used within the Network are Spanish, German, English, French, and Italian.

Internal communication and recruitment

The Ombudsman's team is multicultural and covers a wide range of official EU languages. Wherever possible, cases, information requests or telephone calls are dealt with by a staff member whose mother-tongue is the language of the applicant or equivalent. If a language cannot be covered in-house, the Ombudsman uses external translation services.

The internal working languages are mainly English and French. Information about job openings in the Ombudsman's office is available in all EU languages. However, the specific calls for applications are mostly published in English, as a high level in English is a precondition for most Ombudsman posts.