

The European Ombudsman's language and translation policy

Page content - 15/10/2015

The European Ombudsman is committed to the principle of multilingualism, both as a way to preserve the linguistic diversity of the EU and to make the EU administration more accessible to citizens.

Since the Office was created in 1995, the European Ombudsman has sought to find a pragmatic balance between the principle of multilingualism and the obligation to use the Office's limited resources in the most effective and efficient way. More recently, the development and continuous improvement of machine translation has allowed the Ombudsman to have a more expansive translation policy for documents on its website.

Since November 2023, almost all documents on the Ombudsman's website are available in all 24 EU languages using either manual or machine translation services. Machine translations, which are made available automatically at the first visit of each given page of the website, are clearly signalled and regularly updated to benefit from the latest improvements in the translation tool. The source language version is clearly marked as such.

The following overview outlines which documents are translated manually, and which documents are subject to machine translation.

Communication with complainants and the public

All complaints, requests for information, and any other requests may be sent and will be answered in any of the official EU languages.

Sections of the website not subject to machine translation

All 'static' content of the website (for example, all pages containing information about the [role of the Ombudsman \[Link\]](#), about [Emily O'Reilly \[Link\]](#) and her predecessors, or about the [main areas of work \[Link\]](#)), as well as the [information to send a complaint \[Link\]](#) and the electronic form, are available in all 24 EU languages on the basis of manual translation.



The Ombudsman's key publications, such as the [Annual Report \[Link\]](#), are available in all 24 EU languages on the basis of manual translation, as is the European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour which is additionally translated into the languages of countries that were EU candidate countries at the moment of publication.

Most of the Ombudsman's strategic and organisational documents, such as the [statute \[Link\]](#), the [strategy \[Link\]](#), [rules on public access to Ombudsman documents \[Link\]](#), the [Implementing Provisions \[Link\]](#), and the [Code of Conduct \[Link\]](#) are available in all 24 EU languages on the basis of manual translation. The same applies to public procurement. The [annual management plan \[Link\]](#) or other more specific strategic documents are available in a limited number of EU languages.

Translation policy related to inquiries

The Ombudsman receives and handles complaints in all official EU languages. Most of the Ombudsman's inquiries, except those relating to a failure to reply, are published on the website. The language policy for the different case related documents is as follows:

- [Recommendations \[Link\]](#), [solutions \[Link\]](#) and [decisions \[Link\]](#) are available in the language of the complainant and in English. Machine translation is available for the other official EU languages.
- [Summaries \[Link\]](#) of cases which have a wider public interest are published in English and made available in all other EU languages through machine translation.
- [Special Reports \[Link\]](#) are manually translated in all 24 EU languages.
- [Own-initiative investigations \[Link\]](#) are published in English. Machine translation is available for the other official EU languages.
- Brief information about [cases opened \[Link\]](#) is available in English. Machine translation is available for the other languages.
- The case description pages of public interest inquiries have a short teaser text, summarising an outline of the case and the latest stage of the inquiry. These summaries are in English only and are available by machine translation in the other official EU languages.
- Public consultations are manually translated 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. If published, and depending on the format, the feedback received may be available through machine translation.
- [Follow-up studies \[Link\]](#) are published in English and available in all other EU languages through machine translation.

Translation policy of media and social media activities

Press releases are usually published in English, French and German, and available by machine translation in the other official EU languages.



The Ombudsman uses several [social media platforms \[Link\]](#) to reach out to the public. Content published on these platforms is mostly in English due to their international reach. Information about [meetings and events \[Link\]](#) is usually in English and made available in all other EU languages through machine translation.

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 experience and best practices via seminars and meetings, a newsletter, an electronic discussion forum and a daily electronic news service. Members of the European Network of Ombudsmen can submit [queries \[Link\]](#) to the European Ombudsman about EU issues that have arisen during their inquiries. Information about the [Network \[Link\]](#) as well as a joint [statement \[Link\]](#) are available in all 24 EU languages through manual translation. 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 by staff, the Ombudsman uses the translation services of EU institutions.

The Office's internal working languages are mainly English and French. Information about [job openings \[Link\]](#) is made 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. Machine translation is available for all other official EU languages but the reference version remains the English version.

Quality of translations on the website

We endeavour to provide our website users with accurate and clear translations produced through a combination of manual translation and machine translation.

If visitors encounter issues with the quality of manual translation or notice inaccuracies, we encourage them to report them by using the online contact form.

The quality of machine translations available on our website is not verified manually. As such, these translations might not always reflect the intended meaning or tone of the original content. While the machine translation tool used by the Ombudsman (e-Translation, a tool developed by the European Commission) is advanced and continuously improving, visitors of the website



should be aware that these machine translations may contain errors potentially reducing the clarity and accuracy or misinterpretations. To this end, the Ombudsman publishes a disclaimer on machine-translated pages. We recommend consulting the source language content when questions arise concerning the accuracy of the information presented. Visitors of the website are advised to approach machine-translated content with caution and to use it as an additional resource rather than a definitive source. Any discrepancies or differences created in the translation of the source text are not binding. The Ombudsman accepts no responsibility or liability whatsoever based on machine-translated content.