

## Ombudsman welcomes further scrutiny of Barroso appointment

Press release no. 11/2016 - 11/09/2016

The European Ombudsman, **Emily O'Reilly**, has welcomed Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker's decision to refer the issue of Mr Barroso's appointment as adviser and non-executive chairman at Goldman Sachs to the Commission's [Ad Hoc Ethical Committee \[Link\]](#).

In reply to Ms O'Reilly's [letter \[Link\]](#) last week expressing concern about the appointment, Mr Juncker [pledged \[Link\]](#) to ask for details of Mr Barroso's responsibilities as well as the terms of reference of his contract which will then be assessed by the Ad Hoc Ethical Committee.

Ms O'Reilly stated: *"I am pleased to see that President Juncker has responded to the widespread concerns about this appointment and particularly in agreeing as a first step to my suggestion that the Ad Hoc Ethical Committee should play a role in assessing those concerns.*

*I am also pleased that President Juncker has very importantly noted that the Treaty obligation on former Commissioners to behave with integrity goes beyond the 18-month notification period concerning new positions, as per the Code of Conduct ."*

In light of the high public concerns around this issue, the Ombudsman urges the Ad Hoc Ethical Committee to form an opinion as soon as possible. Ms O'Reilly also stressed the need for the Commission to act on any advice of the Committee. A recent Ombudsman [inquiry \[Link\]](#) found maladministration as the Commission had failed to investigate the compatibility of a former Commissioner's contract with the EU treaty, despite concerns raised by the Ad Hoc Ethical Committee.

*"The Ad Hoc Ethical Committee will now have a very serious obligation placed upon it fully to inform itself of all relevant matters concerning this appointment. Citizens should expect that the outcome of this assessment, and the reaction of the Commission to it, will lay the basis for increased citizen trust in the integrity of the relationship between public service and private interest. There is much at stake in terms of public trust, this matter must be thoroughly and adequately dealt with. It is important also that such an assessment is completed as soon as is reasonably possible, within weeks and not months."*

Ms O'Reilly also noted that key issues raised in her letter concerning an eventual reform of the



Code of Conduct, including by introducing sanctions, remain open. The Ombudsman looks forward to receiving a fuller reply on this when the Commission considers its response to her [Decision \[Link\]](#) concerning the Commission's handling of a former Commissioner's post term-of-office paid position.

The European Ombudsman's letter to President Juncker can be found [here \[Link\]](#).

President Juncker's letter to the European Ombudsman can be found [here \[Link\]](#).

The Ombudsman's Decision concerning the handling of a former Commissioner's post term-of-office paid position can be found [here \[Link\]](#).

The website for the Ad Hoc Ethical Committee is [here \[Link\]](#).