



Ombudsman reacts to opinion of Ethical Committee on Barroso

The European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly, has noted the advisory opinion of the ad-hoc ethical committee in relation to the decision of former Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso to take up a senior position with Goldman Sachs bank. A number of issues in particular are noteworthy at this stage.

- 1.** The Committee acknowledges that reputational damage was done both to the Commission and to the wider EU yet states that, legally, Mr Barroso did not breach the Code of Conduct
- 2.** The Committee says that it is not its role to determine if the Code of Conduct is sufficiently strict.
- 3.** The Committee appears to have based its inquiry solely on its reading of three documents already in the public domain [1]. There is no evidence, at least in the opinion, of any other relevant records being requested, received, or any interviews with relevant people undertaken.

The Commission is expected now to decide what, if any, action to take following the opinion but in light of recent communications between the Commission and the Ombudsman it would appear that the Commission does not intend to revise the current Code of Conduct.

Taking all of the above into account, and given the concern that continues to be expressed about Mr Barroso's appointment and the existing Code of Conduct, the Ombudsman will now reflect on the next steps – including a possible inquiry - she will take in relation to this important issue.

[1] The letter from the Ombudsman to President Juncker calling for him to ask the Committee for an opinion; President Juncker's reply to the Ombudsman, and a subsequent letter from Mr Barroso to President Juncker seeking to explain his role with Goldman Sachs and his views on President Juncker's actions.