



Ombudsman welcomes progress on Commissioner ethics rules

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The European Ombudsman, **Emily O'Reilly**, welcomes Commission President Juncker's proposal to strengthen the Commissioners Code of Conduct by extending the 'cooling off' period during which former Commissioners and Commission Presidents must inform the Commission of their intention to take up a new post.

The European Ombudsman will continue to monitor the situation having recently suggested further ways of strengthening the Code.

She repeats however that some positions will not cease to be problematic simply because two or three years have passed. While the passage of time might diminish the likelihood that taking up a job will infringe the duty to act with discretion and integrity, it does not eliminate it.

In a case concerning a former Commissioner, the Ombudsman suggested the Code's rules be made more explicit, and possibly include a range of sanctions, to be imposed at the administrative level, for any breaches of the rules.

Ms O'Reilly is also still considering the role of the Ad Hoc Ethical Committee and the need for possible improvements to the operation of its important role.

In an inquiry Decision from December 2013 on the work of the Ethics Committee, the Ombudsman looked into whether the Commission should reform the Committee, with a broader and better defined mandate. The Ombudsman stated that she would "*consider whether it is appropriate to examine this issue in light of future developments relating to the functioning of the reconstituted Ad Hoc Ethical Committee.*"