

Ombudsman launches list of Dos & Don'ts to help EU officials deal with lobbyists

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Launching her Annual Report 2016, the European Ombudsman, **Emily O'Reilly**, has also published practical advice for EU officials on interacting with interest representatives.

The [Dos and Don'ts list](#) will help ensure that public officials do not inadvertently breach ethical norms. The list should also help the interest representatives by clarifying what is appropriate thereby making sure that the interactions are positive and open for everyone involved.

"It is not always obvious to public officials as to what constitutes acceptable lobbying. What interactions make a genuine public interest contribution to effective policy-making and what might be the exercise of undue influence? This checklist will help ordinary civil servants to navigate these occasionally tricky waters," said Ms O'Reilly.

This is about giving public officials the tools to ensure that lobbying is carried out in an appropriate manner. Most public officials are extremely conscientious but in a fast-paced environment, where multiple meetings and other interactions are the norm, it helps to have some clear guidance on this issue so that their work is not undermined by poorly understood ethical and transparency standards."

The recommendations, which were drafted in consultation with the EU institutions, build on the Ombudsman's wider work in the area of lobbying regulation and are relevant to the imminent Brexit negotiations when large numbers of interest representatives will understandably seek to engage with EU officials.

The Ombudsman has written to the [Commission](#) and the [Council](#) asking about their Brexit transparency plans. Commission President Juncker's [reply](#) was generally positive (the Council's reply is due at the end of May)

"I welcome Commission President Juncker's commitment to 'unique and unprecedented' transparency in the Brexit negotiations. Once the negotiations formally start, the Commission will increasingly need to consult stakeholders to make fully informed decisions. At this stage, the public will need even greater reassurance about how the Commission is treating that input," said Ms O'Reilly.



The EU institutions have started positively by publishing the negotiating guidelines, the negotiating directives and guiding principles for making publicly available further Brexit-related documents. My office will be watching closely to make sure the current proactive approach to transparency is maintained throughout the talks."

Citizens' rights and Brexit transparency will be discussed at the annual conference of the European Network of Ombudsmen in Brussels on 19-20 June. Ms O'Reilly will use the occasion to remind her national colleagues - who will likely be the first port of call for citizens with questions about their rights - that her office can assist by obtaining expert replies on matters of EU law from the Commission and other EU institutions.

Ombudsman's Annual Report 2016

Concerns about transparency in the EU administration accounted for the biggest proportion of the Ombudsman's cases (29.6%) in 2016. The year also saw the Ombudsman open strategic inquiries and initiatives into key issues, such as how the Commission carries out conflict of interest assessments for its [Special Advisers \[Link\]](#) and how the Commission dealt with former President Barroso's [decision \[Link\]](#) to take a post with Goldman Sachs Bank.

The Ombudsman made proposals to improve the [system of trilogues \[Link\]](#) and the [system of Commission expert groups \[Link\]](#). She also made recommendations to the Commission on the authorisation of pesticides and closed her inquiry into public [access to clinical study reports related to Humira \[Link\]](#). The inaugural edition of the European Ombudsman [Award for Good Administration \[Link\]](#) was launched (attracting 90 nominations) while the first of the annual European Network of Ombudsmen conferences in Brussels focused on Ombudsmen cooperation in the areas of migration, lobbying transparency and the rule of law.

The complete Annual Report 2016 is available [here \[Link\]](#).