



European Ombudsman

Press conference with Emily O'Reilly

18 May 2021

FOCUS ON 'REVOLVING DOORS' **NEW STRATEGIC INQUIRY INTO THE COMMISSION**



- Implementing rules on revolving doors is key to ensuring public trust
- In-depth **own-initiative inquiry** into how EC manages revolving doors
- EO asked for **detailed information (100 files)** on:
 - **14 Directorate-Generals**
 - the **Secretariat General** and other internal entities
 - **all Commissioner cabinets**

FOCUS ON 'REVOLVING DOORS' RECENT OR ONGOING INQUIRIES/INITIATIVES

- Former **EBA executive director** to financial lobby group:
 - **EO recommendation** to tighten rules
 - **EBA agreed** to implement (Sept 2020)
- Former **EDA chief executive** to Airbus (ongoing):
- Former **Commissioner Oettinger**
Letter to President Von der Leyen also reminding about obligations relating to tobacco lobbying (ongoing)

CASE HANDLING IN 2020

COMPLAINTS
HANDLED

2148

370*

INQUIRIES
OPENED

EU COVID-19 RESPONSE INQUIRIES

- EO started looking at EU crisis response in April 2020
- **Series of inquiries and initiatives** launched in July
- ECDC decision (February 2021) identified **issues in how national authorities provide data**
- **Delays and incomplete data hampered EU response**
- **But ECDC mandate is (too) limited**

EU COVID-19 RESPONSE INQUIRIES



- **Council decision (March 2021) – problems in initial months:**
 - lack of transparency in virtual meetings
 - decisions by written procedure not recorded
- **Situation improved**
EO suggestion to continue keeping more written records of meetings of national civil servants in preparatory bodies

EU RESPONSE TO COVID-19 CRISIS

Three strategic initiatives:

- **European Medicines Agency** and swift procedures for approving medicines and treatments linked to COVID-19
- **Commission** and transparency related to public procurement, scientific advice and lobbying
- **European Investment Bank** and transparency of the terms and criteria related to new financing measures for SMEs
- **Various complaints on the vaccine procurement strategy**, notably on access to advance purchase agreements (positive response) and on transparency of the negotiating team

FOCUS ON

ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION MAKING

Increase in complaints, reflecting importance of policy in this area.

EU-Mercosur trade agreement – ‘sustainability impact assessment’

- Complaint from 5 NGOs that no up-to-date assessment completed
- **EO decision** (March 2021): failure to finalise SIA was maladministration
 - Commission urged to ensure SIAs finished in good time in future

Projects of Common Interest and sustainability assessment of candidate gas projects, which could receive EU funding

- Complainant (NGO) concerned sustainability not properly assessed
- Commission acknowledged insufficient assessment but said it is revising this - **EO decision** (November 2020)

FOCUS ON

ENVIRONMENTAL DECISION MAKING

How the Commission approves **active substances in pesticides**

- Complaint from NGO as approvals even where EFSA identified risk
- EO decision (November 2020), with three suggestions to Commission:
 - Approve only substances for uses deemed safe by the EFSA
 - Explain decisions in clear language
 - Further limit use of the 'confirmatory data procedure'



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- **Various complaints concerning Frontex**
- Own-initiative inquiry launched in November 2020 on Frontex **complaints mechanism for fundamental rights abuses** (European Network of Ombudsmen involved)
- Separate own-initiative inquiry launched in March concerning **Frontex's other fundamental rights obligations**
- European **Parliament also investigating**

IMPACT OF THE OMBUDSMAN'S WORK

- Greater transparency of **EIOPA board votes** on technical standards for pensions and insurance
- Positive response from Commission in **BlackRock case** concerning award of contracts and conflicts of interest
- **EESC** to improve transparency of “mission” expenses
- **Positive ECDC response** to our COVID-19 inquiry
- New Commissioner guidelines on **participation in campaigns** after inquiry on video during Croatian elections
- **Europol** improving access to documents system





European Ombudsman
Award
for Good Administration

3rd Award underway
– almost 40 nominations

Digital award ceremony
on 24 June 2021

Keynote speaker - European
Commission President von der
Leyen





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