

Annual Activity Report

of the Authorising Officer by Delegation

Year 2024

28 March 2025



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Introduction

The Ombudsman in brief

The Treaty on the functioning of the European Union empowers the Ombudsman to carry out inquiries into maladministration in the activities of the Union's institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, with the exception of the Court of Justice in its judicial role. Inquiries may be carried out in response to complaints, or on the Ombudsman's own initiative. The Ombudsman's independence is guaranteed by the Treaties.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights includes the right of EU citizens to complain to the Ombudsman. Companies, associations, and third country nationals resident in the EU also enjoy this right. The Ombudsman can deal with complaints about breaches of Charter rights, as well as other cases of maladministration. The Ombudsman therefore empowers citizens by helping them to realise their fundamental rights.

The Ombudsman's mission statement

Our mission is to help to support European citizenship. We do this by listening to citizens, to our stakeholders, and by working with the institutions of the EU to help to create a more accountable, transparent, ethical and effective administration.

Scope of the Annual Activity Report

The Annual Activity Report (AAR) of the authorising officer by delegation of the European Ombudsman is prepared in accordance with Article 74(9) of the Financial Regulation.

This AAR reports on the implementation of the Ombudsman's Annual Management Plan (AMP) for 2024 and focuses on the organisational, administrative, budgetary and financial aspects of the Office's activities in 2024. Annex 1 contains detailed information on the breakdown and allocation of human resources available to the Ombudsman. The Operating Framework, which sets out our main processes is attached as annex 2. The detailed report on the implementation of the budget in 2024 is attached as annex 3.

Outcomes of inquiries and efforts to improve good administration in the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, including events and outreach activities, are recorded in the Annual Report of the Ombudsman, which the Ombudsman will submit to Parliament later in the year. For ease of reference, the draft Annual Report for 2024 is annexed to this report (annex 4).



Highlights of the year

Main achievements in 2024

Real-life relevance and impact

1. Achieved an overall acceptance rate of 82%;
2. Saw a further increase in the percentage of complaints within the mandate, which reached 39%;
3. Opened 411 new inquiries on the basis of complaints and closed 421 complaint-based inquiries;
4. Opened 4 strategic inquiries and 6 strategic initiatives, including on how the Commission applies rules to ensure transparency and stakeholder participation in expert groups;
5. Registered 212 complaints in the area of public access to documents, the highest number recorded within a year;
6. Welcomed the European Parliament's unanimous approval of the EO's special report on Commission delays in dealing with access to documents requests;
7. Organised an event on how public administrations can be both resilient and responsive in a volatile and polarised political environment;
8. Organised an ENO webinar on the implementation of the EU Whistleblower Directive and on problems linked to free movement.

Citizens' awareness

9. Improved the online complaint form to make submitting and following up on complaints easier;
10. Publicised information and updates on key inquiries on the website;
11. Saw a significant rise of visitors to the website and a further rise of followers on all social media platforms, including a 25% increase on LinkedIn;
12. Diversified social media coverage by opening accounts on Threads and Bluesky;
13. Celebrated winners of the Ombudsman's Award for Good Administration through an online web story;
14. Published a scrollable web story explaining the work done by the Ombudsman in the area of ethics;

Efficiency

15. Succeeded in having high implementation rates across most key performance indicators;
16. Implemented new processes to further streamline the complaint-handling procedures;
17. Continued monitoring AI developments and established guidelines to inform staff on the use of third-party AI tools;
18. Reached a 97% occupation rate of establishment plan posts;
19. Achieved a budget implementation rate of 97.6%;
20. Signed a cooperation agreement with the European Parliament on cybersecurity.



1. The structure and organisation of the Office

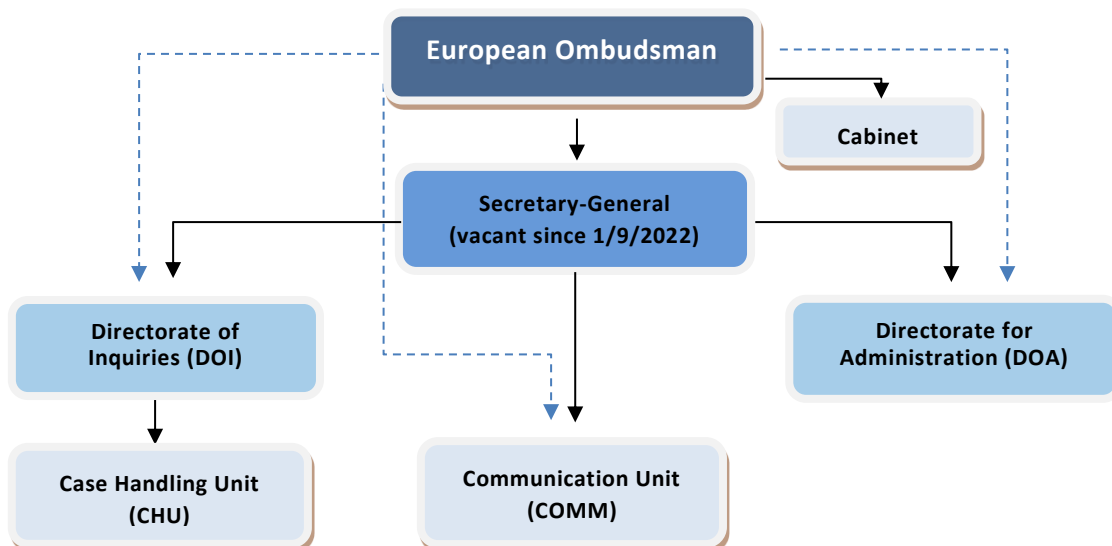
The **Cabinet (CAB)** works under the direct instruction of the Ombudsman. It advises and assists the Ombudsman to help ensure implementation of her vision, strategy and objectives. Cabinet members also liaise and represent the Ombudsman externally and draft speeches and articles on behalf of the Ombudsman.

The **Secretary-General (SG)** is responsible for the overall management of the Office and for ensuring coordination and implementation of the Ombudsman's strategy. Since the retirement of the Secretary-General in September 2022, the Directors and the Head of the Communication Unit report directly to the Ombudsman. Coordination is done at the Directorates' level with the support of the SG staff and the Ombudsman's Cabinet.

The **Directorate of Inquiries (DOI)**, which includes the **Case-handling Unit (CHU)** implements the Ombudsman's strategy in the area of complaints and inquiries, by uncovering maladministration and promoting good administration across the EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies.

The **Directorate for Administration (DOA)**, is responsible for all matters related to human resources (HR), budget and finance (FIN), process management, business continuity and infrastructure (PBI). The Directorate establishes and implements the appropriate internal control mechanisms and prepares information for the various budgetary control authorities. As of 1 September 2022, following the SG's retirement, the Director for Administration became the authorising officer by delegation.

The **Communication Unit (COMM)** supports the Ombudsman's objective of increasing citizens' awareness of the Office and co-ordinates the Ombudsman's relations with the European Network of Ombudsmen.





2. Our activities in 2024

The table and the scoreboard below show the results achieved in 2024 based on the priorities, actions and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets set out in the Annual Management Plan (AMP) for 2024.

The following sections provide further information on the activities carried out with reference to the main processes of the Operating Framework.

2.1 Implementation of AMP 2024 actions

The table below lists the actions under the four high-level objectives of the Strategy 'Towards 2014' and describes the state of implementation of each action.

ACHIEVE LASTING IMPACT ON THE EU ADMINISTRATION					
1	Operational objective: Engage in debate on EU reform and key thematic areas and topical issues				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Monitor the momentum around reform and provide input to the debate, where relevant.	Number of meetings/events we participate in on these topics	5	DOI/ COMM/ CAB	The Ombudsman and her cabinet, as well as the Director of Inquiries, participated in 14 events which contributed to debates on EU reform on such issues as migration and fundamental rights, the EU's access to documents regime, ethics and participatory democracy. The theme of the year - the importance of an independent and accountable public administration - was highlighted in several Ombudsman interventions at these events. A communications campaign supported the theme of the year, specifically by highlighting inquiries with a positive outcome and showcasing past winners of the Award for Good Administration.



	Organise stakeholder meetings/events with academics and other experts.	Number of meetings/events Attendance by invited participants	2	CAB/ COMM	<p>A panel debate on the importance of independent public administration took place on 17 April. Around 25 participants including journalists, EU staff and civil society took part. The European Commissioner for Budget and Administration was among the speakers.</p> <p>A targeted stakeholder meeting with journalists (8 participants) took place on 10 July. Discussion focused on how best to hold the EU institutions to account.</p> <p>On 25 September, a stakeholder event was held to mark the past 10 years of the EO. Academics, civil society organisations, journalists and EU officials were among those invited. Around 100 people attended.</p>
	Follow up on strategic work linked to AI in EU IBOAs	Completion date	Q3	DOI	Strategic initiative opened in Q1 and closed in Q4.
2	Operational objective: Revisit key inquiry areas to assess impact				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Issues on which the Ombudsman plans to follow up include (i) the Commission's approach to tobacco lobbying, (ii) the transparency and supervision of the Recovery and Resilience Facility, (iii) Commission experts groups, (iv) disclosure of environmental	Completion date	Q3	DOI	(i) Commission's approach to tobacco lobbying – follow-up letter sent to the Commission President, (ii) Transparency and supervision of the Recovery and Resilience Facility – the Ombudsman participated in an event organised by the European Court of Auditors, while the Director of Inquiries



	information by IBOAs.				participated in an event organised by ECA earlier in the year, (iii) Commission experts groups – OII opened in Q1 2024 and closed in Q1 2025. (iv) Disclosure of environmental information by IBOAs – EPRS study published in September and presented to DOI in November 2024.
3	Operational objective: Enhance the mainstreaming of disability rights in EO work and office activities				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Map strategic work for the review of EU institutions by the UN CRPD in March 2025.	Completion of internal document and mapping of subsequent potential strategic work	Q2/Q3	DOI	Follow up work launched on JSIS (SI), the decision was published in Q1 2025. Mapping to be conducted after the UNCRPD Committee issues its conclusions, which are expected after the Committee meeting on 10-11 March.
Organise a training on disability and inclusion for EO staff	Number of staff having attended the training, quality of the training (preferably with organisation led by people with disabilities)	50%	DOI/ DOA- HR	A training by the European Disability Forum took place on 3/6/2024 and was attended by 90% of the staff (77 staff members).	
4	Operational objective: Monitor follow up to all suggestions				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Put in place a system to monitor the follow up to all EO 'suggestions'.	Implementation date of tool	Q4	DOA/ DOI	Following internal discussions it transpired that the system in place was sufficient to address the objective, no further action required (April).



ENSURE REAL-LIFE RELEVANCE TO EUROPEAN CITIZENS					
5	Operational objective: <i>Deploy artificial intelligence to improve the quality and efficiency of our work</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Identify processes that could be either activated or improved and accelerated with AI tools. Monitor developments at the interinstitutional level; Identify possible tool(s); Build synergies; Deploy the tool(s).	Number of processes identified and/or deployed	At least 1	DOI/ DOA/ COMM	AI Solutions for Video Production: completed, two solutions identified, tested, purchased and deployed. Large Language Models: testing by AI task force, IT, and Inquiries Officers on GPT@JRC in progress. Inclusion of all Ombudsman decisions as knowledge tool (Retrieval Augmented Generation) was underway by the end of 2024. Complaint Summarisation Tool: tool to include systematic use of EC tool for summarisation of online complaints was created. Pilot phase to be launched in 2025. Captioning in conferences: initial exploration of what the European Commission is working on.
6	Operational objective: <i>Enhance the visibility of the query procedure to improve its relevance to national ombudsmen offices</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Conduct an evaluation of the current query e-form and update it (or replace it) based on the results	Completion date Number of queries relying on new tool (usability of new e-form or tool/approach)	Q2 2	DOI/ DOA	Query e-form updated and 1 query received using the new form.



	Research and report on the results of previous queries (e.g. through follow-up emails to national offices that submitted queries over the past 2 years)	Completion of synthesis report Rate of offices replying	Q3 50%	DOI	Replies received from 10 offices (100% reply rate). The report is being finalised.
INCREASE CITIZENS' AWARENESS OF OUR WORK					
7	Operational objective: <i>Improve how our inquiry work is presented to the public</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Improve the website visitor experience by ensuring that non-complaint based inquiries (OIs) also get a timeline.	Implementation date	Q1	DOA/ DOI	This action was implemented in February 2024.
8	Operational objective: <i>Introduce the public to a new area of the Ombudsman's work: ethics</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Produce a scrollable web story highlighting challenges related to ethics in the EU institutions and mentioning notable cases in which the Ombudsman's work had positive impact on EU administration. Promote the story on social media.	Publication date	Q3	COMM	The scrollable story was published in September 2024.



9	Operational Objective: <i>Enhance the communication strategies of the Office</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Drafting and presenting new social media guidelines for staff.	Approval date	Q2	COMM	New social media guidelines were finalised in January followed by a presentation to staff on 4 July, with a booklet copy of the guidelines for each staff member.
10	Operational objective: <i>Achieve a better understanding of the Ombudsman's audiences, find new audiences</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Produce bi-weekly internal reports on digital communication products/actions (social media posts, speeches on medium, campaigns) performance.	Number of reports	Bi-weekly reports	COMM	Bi-weekly reports are regularly produced and saved on the intranet. By the end of 2024, 29 reports were produced.
	Issue a set of proposals based on the reports' analysis.	Frequency	2 sets per year	COMM	The second set of proposals was finalised in January 2025, and published on the intranet.
	Open an account on BlueSky	Implementation date	End 2024	COMM	The EO BlueSky account was opened in early December 2024 and has since had a steady follower growth.



CONTINUE TO IMPROVE OUR EFFICIENCY					
11	Operational objective: <i>Improve and develop the existing online account for complainants to allow increased interaction through this account.</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Add a feature that allows the Ombudsman's services to deposit correspondence with complainants directly into their online account and limit interaction through e-mail to plain notifications.	Implementation date	S2	DOA-PM	Preparatory work is ongoing.
12	Operational objective: <i>Help complainants enhance the completeness of their submissions</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Provide complainants with tailored advice when filling-in the online complaint form.	Implementation date Reduction in number of information requests Time gained	S1	DOI/ DOA-PM	Finalised in July 2024, with ongoing monitoring for fine-tuning based on user behaviour. Likely contributed to the lower percentage of out of mandate complaints compared to previous years.
13	Operational objective: <i>Further enhance the functionalities of CMS</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Identify and eliminate redundant tasks in CMS. Optimise user-experience in line with feedback received	Implementation date Efficiency gains	Q3	DOI/ DOA-PM	This action is ongoing.



14	Operational objective: <i>Simplify the creation of statistics about our core activity</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Implement an intuitive and reliable tool to enable more staff members in the EO's office to create and manage case-related statistics.	Implementation date Number of new users	Q4 5	DOA- PM	Implementation of the tool is postponed to 2025.
15	Operational objective: <i>Make the selection process for DOI trainees shorter and less resource intensive</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Adopt and implement a new selection procedure.	Adoption date Implementation date	Q1 Q2	DOI & DOA- HR	The new selection procedure was implemented according to the timeline (February-May).
16	Operational objective: <i>Enhance staff awareness on ethical conduct</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Organise trainings on ethical conduct tailor-made to functions of office entities/staff.	Effective implementation Number of trainings organised	Q3 At least 3	DOA/ DOI	This action is ongoing.
17	Operational objective: <i>Develop a dynamic and coherent L&D offer</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Create a competency framework (horizontal for all staff members & specific to functions) and draft tailor-made learning paths.	Adopt the general competency framework Adopt a competency framework for managers Learning paths for Inquiries Officers and managers completed	Q1 Q3 Q3	DOA- HR (with managers)	This action is ongoing.



18	Operational objective: <i>Improve the ICT security framework</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Conclude a Service Level Agreement with the European Parliament in the field of ICT security.	Deadline for signing SLA	S1	DOA-PM	The arrangement with the European Parliament was signed on 24 October 2024.
	Adopt an internal ICT security policy and take implementing measures.	Deadline for adopting policy	S2	DOA-PM	The drafting of the policy is ongoing.
19	Operational objective: <i>Optimise the functionality and effective use of the CMSEO environments</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Ensure that the Development, Test and Production environments for our core business application are used effectively and efficiently.	Actual sustainable functioning of these three environments	Q2	DOA-PM	This action was completed.
20	Operational objective: <i>Make green and social responsibility a priority</i>				
	Output	Indicator	Target	Owner	State of play
	Organise and/or participate in staff awareness raising sessions on green and socially responsible issues.	Number of sessions	Minimum 2	DOA/COMM	Staff participation in the inter-institutional May cycling challenge and the Parliament's Month of Sustainable Commuting challenge in September to promote green modes of transport. EO was again the winner of both. Encouraged staff to attend courses offered during EMAS week.



2.2 Scoreboard 2024

KPI	Measurement	Owner	Targets 2024	Results 2024	Results 2023
KPI 1	Percentage of complaints within the mandate	PBI	35%	39%	37%
KPI 2	Number of inquiries opened in cases of public importance (complaints, strategic inquiries and strategic initiatives)	PBI	50	49 (40+3+6)	56 (46+5+5)
KPI 3	Acceptance rate (previous year's results – composite indicator)	DOI			
	3a - Overall acceptance rate		80%	82%	81%
	3b - Acceptance rate in cases of public importance		80%	83%	75%
KPI 4	Perception of our key stakeholders (Result of feedback survey of complainants in admissible cases)	DOI	> 3 out of 5	3.57 (inquiries only) 2.93 (all admissible cases)	3.04 (inquiries only) 2.85 (all admissible cases)
KPI 5	Web activities (composite indicator)	PBI			
	5a - Visitors to the website		750 000	1 079 272	855 790
	5b - Advice given through the interactive guide to contact a member of the ENO		10 000	9 795	9 703
KPI 6	Social media activities (composite indicator)	COMM			
	6a - Increase of followers on social media				
	X (former Twitter)		+2%	+2.8% (1 014)	+5.1% (1 757)
	LinkedIn		+15%	+24.72% (3 659)	+64.9% (5 825)
	Instagram		+15%	+32.64% (4 513)	+90.76% (6 578)
	6b - Number of visits to the website through links posted on our social media channels		4 500	12 394	12 305
KPI 7	Handling of complaints and inquiries (composite indicator)	PBI			
	7a - Proportion of cases in which the admissibility decision is taken in one month		95%	98%	97%
	7b - Average duration of inquiries		150 days	168 days	165 days
	7c - Clearance rate (cases closed compared to new cases registered in the reference period)		100%	101%	100%



KPI Measurement	Owner	Targets 2024	Results 2024	Results 2023
KPI 8 Budget implementation (composite indicator)	FIN			
8a - Rate of budget implementation		93%	97.6%	95.4%
8b - Proportion of payments made within 30 days		100%	100%	99.9%
KPI 9 Management of Human Resources (composite indicator)	HR			
9a - Occupation rate of establishment plan posts		95%	97%	95%
9b - Percentage of workforce dedicated to core activities		65%	68.2%	67.8%
9c - Average number of training days per staff member		5	5.7 (w/ language training) 3.9 (w/o language training)	5.5 (w/ language training) 4.4 (w/o language training)

2.3 Core activities

The Ombudsman's work and achievements regarding the core activities, including statistical data on complaints and inquiries, are described in detail in the Annual Report to the European Parliament for the year 2024, a draft version of which is enclosed with this report as annex 4. This section therefore gives only a brief overview of key developments and achievements, an analysis of the results in terms of the KPIs and cross-references to relevant sections of the draft Annual Report.

2.3.1 Proactive work

(i) Strategic inquiries and initiatives

Strategic inquiries and initiatives are a key aspect of the Ombudsman's proactive work. They include own-initiative strategic inquiries aimed at addressing systemic issues within the EU administration. They also include strategic initiatives, whereby the Ombudsman generally pursues important topics to encourage the EU administration to be as open, accountable, ethical and responsive to citizens as possible, without necessarily launching an inquiry. Strategic initiatives can also be useful for gathering information that could form the basis for future strategic inquiries.

In 2024, the Ombudsman dealt with four strategic inquiries and six strategic initiatives on a diverse range of issues. Detailed information can be found in section 3 and in section 4.1.1 of the Ombudsman's draft Annual Report for 2024 (annex 4).

(ii) The European Network of Ombudsmen (ENO)

The ENO allows the European Ombudsman to have a positive impact on the ability of large numbers of European citizens to enjoy their rights under EU law, including fundamental rights under the Charter.



In practice and, where appropriate, the European Ombudsman advises complainants whose complaints are not within her mandate to contact the member of the ENO best placed to deal with them.

Furthermore, the query procedure allows members of the ENO to send questions to the Ombudsman about EU law-related issues. In 2024, the Ombudsman received one query about social security for migrant workers. In parallel, the Ombudsman reached out to ten ENO members who had submitted queries over the past three years to know more about the use they made of the information they received as part of the query procedure.

The Ombudsman also organised an ENO expert webinar for investigators and liaison colleagues, entitled 'The Whistleblower Directive and problems linked to free movement'.

Detailed information on the ENO-related work is available in section 5.3 of the Ombudsman's draft Annual Report 2024 (annex 4).

2.3.2 Complaint handling

(i) Caseload and KPI results

The overall number of complaints registered in 2024 was 2 267 (compared to 2 365 in 2023). The overall number of new complaints dealt with in 2024 was 2 264, of which 875 were within the mandate. This compares to 2 392 complaints dealt with in 2023, of which 886 were within the mandate.

With a score of 39%, the result of KPI 1, proportion of complaints within the mandate, surpassed the target of 35% and was higher than in 2023 (37%).

In 2024, the Ombudsman opened and closed more complaint-based inquiries than in 2023, i.e. 411 inquiries were opened (391 in 2023) and 421 inquiries were closed (369 in 2023).

With 49 inquiries opened in cases of public importance, the result for KPI 2 remains very close to the target of 50.

The results of two of the three components of KPI 7 (efficiency: composite indicator for the handling of complaints and inquiries) are on or above the set targets. The proportion of admissibility decisions taken within one month reached 98% (the target is 95%) and the clearance rate reached 101%¹ (the target is 100%). Only the average duration of inquiries, which was 168 days, did not reach the target of maximum 150 days. This reflects the fact that, in 2024, the Office continued closing inquiries that took longer than expected, often because they required several rounds of exchanges with the institutions concerned.

Information on the work on complaints and the outcome of inquiries is available in section 3 of the Ombudsman's draft Annual Report for 2024 (annex 4). Relevant statistical data can be found in section 4.

(ii) Complaints in the area of public access to documents and the Fast-Track procedure

In 2024, the Office received 212 (2023: 167) complaints in the area of public access to documents, by far the highest number recorded within a year. The Ombudsman opened inquiries into 160 (2023: 118) complaints², out of which 34 (2023: 16) were dealt with under

¹ The clearance rate is the ratio between the number of new cases registered and the number of cases closed in a year.

² Out of the 160 inquiries opened in 2024, three inquiries were based on complaints received at the end of 2023 and 157 inquiries were based on complaints received in 2024.



the Fast-Track procedure. It closed 143 (2023: 106) inquiries³, out of which 29 (2023: 22) were Fast-Track inquiries.

The share of Fast-Track inquiries was 21% of all public access to documents inquiries, compared to 14% in 2023, 28% in 2022 and 58% in 2021. While the share of Fast-Track cases is higher than in 2023, it remains below previous figures. This is because, in many cases, the institution concerned had not yet adopted a confirmatory decision when the complaint to the Ombudsman was made, meaning its final position was unknown. In such cases, the Ombudsman cannot deal with the case through the Fast-Track procedure.

Under the Fast-Track procedure, the Ombudsman endeavours to open inquiries within five working days and have a decision or outcome (such as a solution proposal or recommendation) within 40 working days. In 88% of the inquiries opened in 2024 through the Fast-Track procedure, the admissibility decision was taken within the indicative timeline, the average being of four working days. The Office issued an assessment within 40 working days in 38% of all cases that were opened in 2024 and in which the assessment was finalised, and within 60 working days in 50% of those cases.

As regards findings, in 2024, the Office made a proposal for a solution in 14 cases and recommendations in three cases concerning public access to documents. The Office made suggestions for improvement in four cases.

(iii) Impact, acceptance and follow-up

Information on the impact and achievements of the Ombudsman's work is included in Section 4.5 of the Ombudsman's draft Annual Report for 2024 (annex 4). This includes information on the acceptance rate of the Ombudsman's proposals to improve the EU administration. These proposals take the form of solutions, recommendations, and suggestions made by the Ombudsman. The acceptance rate is the percentage of positive replies to the total number of proposals and helps measure the extent to which, on an annual basis, the institutions follow up the Ombudsman proposals. As the Ombudsman gives institutions up to six months to follow up on suggestions made in her decisions closing inquiries, the acceptance rate for 2024 covers cases closed in 2023.

The analysis of how the EU institutions responded to the Ombudsman in 2023 shows that the acceptance rate was 82% overall compared to 81% in the previous year (target for KPI 3 is 80%). The institutions reacted positively to 75 out of the 82 proposals that the Ombudsman made to correct or improve their behaviour in cases closed in 2023. The acceptance rate in cases of public importance reached 83% (75% for cases closed in 2022).

The acceptance rate captures responses from the institutions at a particular point in time. It does not reflect all the efforts made by institutions over time to improve their administration and to address issues raised in Ombudsman inquiries. The Ombudsman attempts to recognise some of these good administrative practices through the 'Award for Good Administration', which is held every two years.

2.3.3 Communication and outreach

The Office continued its efforts to promote the work of the Ombudsman to the widest possible audience. It raised public awareness about specific inquiries, as well as the general role of the Ombudsman in maintaining high accountability and transparency standards in EU administration.

³ Out of the 143 inquiries closed in 2024, 1 was opened in 2022, 43 in 2023 and 99 in 2024.



The sections below provide a summary of the communication and outreach activities. Further information is available in the draft Annual Report for 2024 (annex 4).

(i) Outreach activities and events

At the annual press conference held in March, the Ombudsman presented the annual report for 2023 and discussed key inquiries and developments concerning ethics, access to documents, and fundamental rights.

An Ombudsman event in April focused on how public administrations can be both resilient and responsive in a volatile and polarised political environment. Further information is available in Section 5.1 of the draft Annual Report for 2024 (annex 4).

In September, the Ombudsman held the year's main event for stakeholders, including national and regional ombudsmen, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), civil society, academics, and journalists. The event acknowledged the contribution of stakeholders in strengthening the reach and impact of the Office. Additional details are available in Section 5.1 of the draft Annual Report for 2024 (annex 4).

Throughout 2024, the Ombudsman and staff members also continued their outreach activities by giving interviews to the press, speaking at major academic and legal conferences and speaking to visitor groups.

(ii) Media and social media activities

There were around 5 000 media articles mentioning or directly reporting on the Ombudsman's activities in 2024, with 66% of all coverage coming from EU countries.

In 2024, the Ombudsman's number of social media followers continued to rise. The Ombudsman's Instagram account saw about 33% growth in total followers (+4 513 new followers). On LinkedIn, the number of followers increased by almost 25% (+3 659 new followers). On X, the number of followers reached 37 202 in December 2024, which represented a 2.8% increase (+1 014).

The Ombudsman also opened accounts on Threads (2 661 total followers) and Bluesky (322 followers).

To strengthen the public's knowledge of the Ombudsman's work on ethics, the Office published a scrollable web story explaining the work done by the Ombudsman in the area of ethics and the impact it has had on the EU administration. This web story was supported by a social media campaign.

The Office also published a web story with video contributions highlighting some of the past 'Award for Good Administration' winners and the exceptional work done by EU officials in the fields of environmental protection, trade and natural disaster management.

During the course of 2024, several improvements to the website were also made, to make the Office's work processes clearer and to make submitting and following up on a complaint easier.

The number of unique visitors to the website (1 079 272) was well beyond the target of 750 000, while the number of persons who received advice through the interactive guide to contact a member of the European Network of Ombudsmen (9 795) was slightly below the 10 000 target.



2.4 Management Processes

On 30 January 2024, the Ombudsman issued the 2024 Annual Management Plan.

Throughout the year, the Ombudsman chaired weekly meetings of the management team.

Management monitored the implementation of the AMP actions, the casework statistics and the results in terms of the KPI targets.

Management also ensured the implementation of all business continuity measures and of the institution's duty of care, including through cooperation and coordination with the European Parliament and other institutions.

Throughout the year, the Director for Administration had exchanges with the Data Protection Officers and held regular meetings with the Staff Committee.

In her capacity as authorising officer by delegation, the Director for Administration represented the Office in its relations with the budgetary and control bodies.

2.5 Supporting processes

2.5.1 Information management

Information management is a collaborative task.

The Secretariat-General gathers and coordinates information related to overall management objectives (such as for the implementation of the annual management plan and key performance indicators), audits and various reports to supervisory bodies.

Information management related to the objective of ensuring consistent and rigorous assessments in the Ombudsman's case handling is supervised by the Director of Inquiries and the Ombudsman's Cabinet.

Promoting good records management and practices within the Office and information management relating to administration, human resources and finance are under the responsibility of the Director for Administration.

Access to documents and 'freedom of information' requests

In 2024, the Transparency Team dealt with 35 requests for public access to documents held by the institution and requests for statistics, which were not already readily available ('freedom of information' requests). Nineteen access requests related to specific cases, eight access requests were about the Ombudsman's administrative work and eight freedom of information requests pertained to case-handling statistics. In most cases, wide partial access was granted. In only one case, the applicant sought to review the initial decision (by making a 'confirmatory application'). The Ombudsman received one consultation request from another institution on the possible disclosure of documents originating from the Office.

For the first time, the Ombudsman's Office received a request for access to text messages sent or received by the Ombudsman regarding a specific case. The handling of the request, in line with the Ombudsman's Decision on Records Management, showed that the Office avoids using text messaging, instant messaging or similar tools for substantive work



communications. However, a number of text messages relating to media follow-up on the cases were identified and disclosed. This was an opportunity to implement and showcase the Ombudsman's practical recommendations and best practices on the matter. The applicant did not seek to review the access granted.

Data protection

In 2024, the Data Protection Officer (DPO) continued to play an essential role in ensuring that the institution's data protection practices complied with the relevant regulations. The DPO was responsible for handling requests from data subjects and ensuring that the Office's processing of personal data was carried out in accordance with the applicable legal framework.

Furthermore, the DPO was consulted in nine events qualifying as data breaches. None of these data breaches warranted a notification to the EDPS as they were considered to be non-severe. In some non-severe cases, the Ombudsman informed the data subjects in the interests of good administration, even though such information was not necessary under the EUDPR.

In 2024, the DPO continued to collaborate with the Internal Auditor in the context of its review of the Institution's Data Protection Framework and ensured implementation of the agreed actions. The DPO was also involved in responding to inquiries and matters raised by the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS).

In the last week of December 2024, the Office received a "request for comments of the data controller" from the EDPS following a complaint against the Ombudsman. The Office is still assessing the next steps.

2.5.2. Process management, business continuity, infrastructure and ICT

(i) Process management

The changes introduced in 2023 to the processing of "out-of-mandate complaints" and "failure to reply" inquiries were refined and consolidated in 2024. Assistants now manage an increasing proportion of these tasks. The processing time for complaints falling outside the Ombudsman's mandate has substantially shortened, with most complainants receiving outcomes within a few days. This development enables inquiries officers to focus more on complex inquiries.

To further the efficiency of the complaints process, the online complaint form was revised, providing clear guidance to complainants and enabling them to submit complaints that are more likely to fall within the European Ombudsman's mandate. In parallel, an overhaul of the information regarding the Ombudsman's work on the website has given clearer and more detailed information about the mandate and the types of complaints that fall within its scope. These improvements have likely contributed to a noticeable increase in the percentage of cases that are within the mandate.

A dynamic database for managing contacts within the institutions was created, to enhance the Office's overall effectiveness in handling inquiries and complaints. Ultimately, this database is envisioned to serve as a platform for exchange with institutions, facilitating more efficient and secure communication and to foster collaboration in the future.



(ii) Document management

The European Ombudsman has become a depositing institution at the European Union Historical Archives in Florence. The Office finalised the digitisation and actual deposit of documents relating to the mandates of the first and second Ombudsmen in mid-2024.

Although the Ombudsman does not hold EU Classified Information, staff members may still need to handle and inspect such documents during an inquiry. To do so, they require a personal security clearance, which is granted by the Ombudsman after a thorough review by the Member State of origin of the relevant staff members. In 2024, the Ombudsman reinforced its capacity to handle EU Classified Information, increasing the number of staff members cleared to do so by 40%.

(iii) Efforts to reduce the environmental footprint

The European Ombudsman rents office space in buildings of the European Parliament and uses its infrastructure, including IT, security, facilities management and canteens. As a result, the Ombudsman's environmental management is linked directly to, and benefits from, the efforts made by Parliament in this area. For example, Parliament installed solar panels on its buildings in Strasbourg, with production having started in October 2024. The electricity generated is shared amongst the Parliament's buildings, including the Havel building.

The Office promotes sustainable modes of transport by offering a flat-rate contribution to staff who commute to and from their place of work, with 68% of eligible staff members receiving the contribution. Additionally, the Office provides an annual bicycle maintenance session. Car parking spaces remain limited whereas the bicycle infrastructure is continuously improving. The Office also actively promotes digitalisation to reduce the use of paper and facilitate the exchange and storage of documents; extensively uses the videoconference systems available in the two places of work to limit missions; and encourages Green Public Procurement practices in all purchases and in organising events.

(iv) ICT activities

In relation to ICT matters, the Office relies on, and collaborates closely with, the European Parliament, including on IT and cybersecurity. The Office strengthened its cybersecurity by concluding a cybersecurity agreement with Parliament and participation in the SECABC (Secure European Centralized Address Book & Certificates) initiative. A Local Cybersecurity Officer (LCO) has been appointed to liaise with the inter-institutional Cybersecurity Board (IICB) and the team of website developers has implemented security enhancements based on recommendations from the Parliament's Chief Information Security Officer (CISO). Furthermore, the Office relies on the European Commission for the integration and maintenance of all EU corporate tools used by the European Ombudsman and collaborates with both institutions for the use of inter-institutional IT framework contracts.

ICT activities in 2024 included the procurement of new equipment and the recruitment of an additional software developer, as well as the maintenance and enhancement of internal tools, including the Case Management System, the Recruitment System, the website, extranet, and intranet. In 2024, the sustainability of the environment hosting the Case Management System was bolstered to improve its reliability and pave the way for future developments to meet the institution's evolving needs. Concerning the website, the transition to a new Ombudsman in 2025 was prepared and Europa Web Analytics was installed, providing valuable insights into user behaviour and enabling data-driven decisions to improve the online presence. The Office uses and promotes the use of



corporate applications or open-source software whenever possible. The European Ombudsman's website, for example, uses only open-source software.

Particular attention was devoted to monitoring developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI). In addition to the ongoing use of AI for translating the website and complaints material, the Ombudsman continued to keep abreast of developments that could benefit the institution's work. The office acquired AI-powered tools for video production and explored the feasibility of utilising a tool to summarise lengthy documents. Furthermore, considering the challenges that AI raises, the Office established guidelines to inform staff on the use of third-party AI tools.

2.5.3 Human Resources

(i) Personnel and office organisation

The Office has a highly qualified and multilingual staff that can deal directly with complaints about maladministration in most official EU languages and raise awareness about the Ombudsman's work throughout the EU. The recruitment policy follows the general principles and employment conditions of the EU institutions and seeks to respond with agility to emerging needs.

In 2024, the Ombudsman's establishment plan comprised 75 posts, in addition to which, there was an average of seven contract agents working with the Office. Furthermore, nineteen trainees gained work experience at the Ombudsman's Office during the year. One of these trainees was selected following a call specifically aimed at candidates with disabilities.

Considering its small size, the Office continued to achieve a balanced geographical distribution in 2024 with 18 EU nationalities represented among staff and four nationalities represented among the five managers (see details in Annex 1).

Assistants' contributions to the handling of complaints outside the Ombudsman's mandate (OMCs) was further consolidated with assistants handling the majority (73.6%) of all OMCs. Moreover, the assistants continue to play a central role in implementing a leaner and speedier procedure for handling simple complaints about EU institutions' failure to reply to citizens' requests. The performance gains are significant: inquiries officers have more time to focus on inquiries and strategic investigations and assistants have direct contact with the Office's core business and therefore a more rewarding work experience.

The Office continued the introduction of SYSPER modules with a view to streamlining administrative procedures and using its resources efficiently. In this context, it obtained and implemented SYSPER's module on applying for pension.

(ii) Ethics and good conduct

Ensuring that staff conduct is in line with the highest ethical standards is a constant and top priority for the Ombudsman's Office. To this end, the Office has adopted a number of policies, guidelines and internal measures.

In line with the Internal Auditor's recommendations concerning the EO's ethical framework (see 2023 AAR), the Office established a disciplinary board. The Office also adopted an anti-fraud policy to further strengthen its ethical framework. The policy is designed to deter fraudulent activity, encourage and facilitate prevention, promote



detection, ensure that investigations of fraud are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner; and generally promote an 'anti-fraud' culture in the Ombudsman's Office.

To maintain staff awareness of conflict of interest matters at a high level, all staff are asked annually to revise, if necessary, their declarations of their spouses/partners' professional activities as well as their own conflict of interest declarations using SYSPER's ethics module.

Informing staff of their obligations during and after their time in the Office remains a priority: new staff and trainees are asked to declare their interests before starting, thus allowing the Office to take these into consideration in the assignment of cases/files; they also attend ethics-related induction trainings provided by the HR team and the confidential counsellors.

In line with the Ombudsman's zero-tolerance approach to harassment, raising staff awareness on harassment, conflict resolution and communication matters in general, is a priority for the Office. Interactive trainings on conflict resolution in November 2024 and January 2025 were organised in Brussels and Strasbourg, respectively. Staff's participation in these types of training is mandatory.

To improve internal communication and thus ensure high-level working conditions and efficiencies, the Office organised trainings on giving and receiving feedback for all administrators.

Along with the administration, the two confidential counsellors (a selection procedure to appoint them took place in 2024) assist staff in finding solutions to potential work-related problems and conflicts. They advise and support colleagues to identify the best reporting channel and relevant procedure. They also play an important role in familiarising new staff and trainees with the Office's ethical standards. Their annual reports as well as information they share with staff are published on the intranet page dedicated to ethics and good conduct.

(iii) Working conditions and well-being

The Office's hybrid work policy (adopted in October 2021) supports the Ombudsman's ambition to promote a modern, digital and flexible work environment that enhances professional and private life balance and staff well-being. The policy, which is results-oriented and trust-based, provides for 40% average presence in the office per month and allows flexibility as regards daily working arrangements. It includes the right to disconnect and allows staff to work from outside the place of employment 15 days per year.

To ensure the well-being of staff and optimal remote working conditions, the Office continued to support staff in improving their home office setups. This included providing equipment such as chairs and computer screens.

While flexibility and remote work contribute to professional and private life balance, the need for social interaction and the sense of belonging to a team are equally important for the well-being of staff and an organisation as a whole. In 2024, the Office continued to focus on bringing staff and teams together in person to reinforce team spirit, facilitate the integration of recently recruited staff and improve communication. Staff were involved in trainings/events organised by the Office, including an all-staff retreat in Strasbourg (June) and a staff get-together in Brussels (November).



2.5.4 Budget and Finance

(i) Implementation of the 2024 budget

The appropriations available in the Ombudsman's budget for 2024 amounted to EUR 13 843 160 and included 75 establishment plan posts. Title 1 (Expenditure relating to persons working for the institution) amounted to EUR 11 196 351. Title 2 (Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure) amounted to EUR 2 405 409 and Title 3 (Expenditure resulting from special functions carried out by the institution) to EUR 241 400.

The detailed report on the implementation of the budget is attached to the present report (annex 3).

The following table shows expenditure in 2024 in terms of appropriations committed and paid (in Euros).

Title	Initial budget 2024	Final budget 2024⁴	Committed	Paid
Title 1	11 196 351	11 213 851	11 030 767.96	10 960 938.59
Title 2	2 405 409	2 363 909	2 243 652.91	1 989 163.25
Title 3	241 400	265 400	229 582.35	159 234.20
Total	13 843 160	13 843 160	13 504 003.22	13 109 336.04

The implementation rate (including appropriations carried over from 2024 to 2025) is 97.55% (compared to 95.39% in 2023). Of the total appropriations, 94.70% were paid (compared to 93.09% in 2023).

The amount of appropriations carried over from 2023 to 2024 is EUR 394 667.18, i.e. 2.85% of the 2024 budget (compared to EUR 304 549.52 carried over from 2023 to 2024, i.e. 2.3% of the 2023 budget).

Furthermore, 76.59% of the appropriations carried over to 2024 from 2023 were used (compared to 73.27 % in 2022).

In the following table, all totals are cumulative.

Indicators	Target 2024	Q1	Q1+Q2	Q1-Q3	2024	(2023)
F1: Percentage of budget implementation	Total : 93%	20.6%	58.4%	77.7%	97.55%	(95.39%)
F2: Proportion of payments made within 30 days	Total : 100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	(99.9%)

⁴ After transfers.



The average time for payment of invoices from private providers of goods and services was 13.2 days (13.5 days in 2023).

(ii) Transfers

During 2024, one modification of the establishment plan and five transfers between budget lines were necessary. These modifications of the initial budget are presented in detail in the annexed 'Report on budgetary and financial management for the financial year' (annex 3). The total amount transferred was EUR 280 500 (2% of the total appropriations for 2024).

(iii) Procurement

Five very low-value contracts not exceeding EUR 15 000 and one low value contract not exceeding EUR 60 000 were awarded following procurement procedures launched in 2024.

(iv) The 2025 Estimates

The estimates for the year 2025 were sent to the Commission, Parliament and the Council on 3 April 2024.

Total appropriations for 2025 are EUR 15 558 918, which represents an increase of EUR 1 715 758 or 12.4 % compared to the budget for 2024. Title 1 (Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution) amounts to EUR 12 854 988. Title 2 (Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure) amounts to EUR 2 450 530. Title 3 (Expenditure resulting from general functions carried out by the institution) amounts to EUR 253 400.



(v) Detailed list of the Ombudsman's missions in 2024 (as published on the website)

Start date	End date	Destination	Purpose	Accompanying Persons	Daily Allowance	Accommodation	Transport	TOTAL
10/01/2024	12/01/2024	Brussels	Meetings in Brussels	n/a	€258,83	€438,48	€381,00	€1.078,31
30/01/2024	01/02/2024	Brussels	Meetings and events in Brussels	n/a	€227,59	€918,96	€366,80	€1.513,35
13/02/2024	15/02/2024	Brussels	Meetings and events	n/a	€240,98	€550,48	€127,00	€918,46
19/02/2024	21/02/2024	Brussels	Meetings and events	n/a	€227,59	€454,76	€381,00	€1.063,35
04/03/2024	08/03/2024	Brussels	Meetings and events	n/a	€437,32	€686,96	€514,00	€1.638,28
10/03/2024	12/03/2024	Vienna	Attend FRA forum and meetings	Head of Cabinet	€249,90	€348,50	€474,90	€1.073,30
17/03/2024	20/03/2024	Brussels	Meetings and events	n/a	€294,53	€637,71	€127,00	€1.059,24
07/04/2024	12/04/2024	Budapest	Meetings with representatives from the HU government in advance of the Council presidency; NGOs; the Hungarian Ombudsman and the Ombudsman will also deliver a lecture to local students.	Two Policy Advisers	€432,74	€927,55	€1.374,21	€2.734,50
16/04/2024	18/04/2024	Brussels	Meetings and events	n/a	€258,83	€358,48	€387,00	€1.004,31
07/05/2024	09/05/2024	Brussels	Meetings and events	n/a	€227,59	€510,00	€979,80	€1.717,39
14/05/2024	16/05/2024	The Hague	IOI conference	n/a	€202,78	€722,60	€728,30	€1.653,68
21/05/2024	24/05/2024	New York	UN panel	Head of Cabinet	€301,88	€1.635,72	€4.180,51	€6.118,11
11/06/2024	14/06/2024	Brussels	Stakeholder event and meetings with staff	n/a	€312,38	€871,26	€281,00	€1.464,64
18/06/2024	20/06/2024	Brussels, Maastricht	Media interviews and Maastricht conference	Policy Advisers (Maastricht)	€254,83	€483,46	n/a	€738,29
02/07/2024	03/07/2024	Brussels	Events and meetings	n/a	€156,18	€586,48	€387,00	€1.129,66
08/07/2024	11/07/2024	Brussels	Stakeholder event; meeting with OLAF.	n/a	€334,69	€1.122,21	€111,00	€1.567,90
03/09/2024	05/09/2024	Brussels	Presentation of Annual Report to the PETI committee.	n/a	€232,05	€735,60	€529,56	€1.497,21
20/10/2024	24/10/2024	Milan, Parma, Turin	Visit to EU agencies and events.	Head of Cabinet; Policy Adviser	€420,18	€958,30	€919,06	€2.297,54
11/09/2024	12/09/2024	Brussels	Meetings and interviews in Brussels	n/a	€151,73	€1.193,65	€366,80	€1.712,18
14/10/2024	17/10/2024	Luxembourg, Brussels	Conference with ECA and meetings and events in Brussels.	Policy Adviser (Luxembourg)	€339,29	€988,35	€0,00	€1.327,64
30/10/2024	07/11/2024	Ireland, Brussels	Speaking engagements in Galway and Dublin	n/a	€184,33	€532,79	€956,40	€1.673,52
18/11/2024	23/11/2024	Brussels, Tours	Staff meeting and events in Brussels, Graduation ceremony in Tours, France	Policy Adviser (Tours)	€508,73	€1.643,93	€922,84	€3.075,50
02/12/2024	04/12/2024	Brussels	Committee hearings in the European Parliament.	n/a	€254,36	€518,00	€562,00	€1.334,36
10/12/2024	13/12/2024	Brussels, Maastricht	Events and book launch (Maastricht)	Head of Cabinet (Maastricht)	€339,40	€1.070,00	€526,00	€1.935,40
					€6.848,71	€18.894,23	€15.583,18	€41.326,12



3. Financial management and internal control

3.1 Efficiency and economy

Whenever possible, the Office seeks to make savings to ensure that the budgetary resources are used in the most economical and efficient way while ensuring effective implementation of the work programme and of additional needs identified for the year. In 2024, compared to 2023, the Ombudsman managed to make savings amounting to EUR 57 000. Costs were cut, namely by 46% on the appropriations for meetings (from EUR 124 000 to 67 000).

The 2025 budget, prepared in 2024, makes reductions for an overall amount of EUR 116 156 in discretionary expenditure under Titles I, II and III of the Ombudsman's budget. Despite the significant weight the increase of salaries and allowances (14.8% increase of the Title I compared to 2024) has on the Ombudsman's budget, the overall increase is limited to 12.4% compared to 2024.

The following table shows the budget lines where reductions were made:

Title I	Budget 2024	DB 2025	+/- in €/2024	+/- in %/2024
A- 1 6 3 1 Mobility	19 950	18 000	-1 950	-9.77%
A- 1 6 5 0 European Schools	175 694	133 488	-42 206	-24.02%
Total A-2	195 644	151488	-44 156	-22.57%
Title II	Budget 2024	DB 2025	+/- in €/2024	+/- in %/2024
A- 2 3 1 Translation and interpretation	315 000	245 000	-70 000	-22.22%
Total A-2	315 000	245 000	-70 000	-22.22%
Title III	Budget 2024	APB 2025	+/- in €/2024	+/- in %/2024
B- 3 2 0 0 Documentation and library expenditure	3.000	1.000	-2 000	-66.67%
Total A-3	3 000	1 000	-2 000	-66.67%



3.2 Management and follow-up of controls

3.2.1 Recommendations from the Internal Auditor in 2024

Internal Audit Report 24/01 - The Internal Auditor's Annual Report for 2023

The Internal Auditor's annual report concluded that, based on the assurance and consulting work carried out and subject to adequate follow-up on the remaining open actions, there is nothing which came to the attention of the Internal Auditor that would impair the effectiveness and efficiency of the Institution's risk management, control and governance systems as well as its ability to attain its control objectives on a consistent basis.

Internal Audit Report 24/02 - Transversal follow-up of open actions from internal audit reports

The Internal auditor was able to close twelve of the eighteen actions covered by the follow-up. Of the remaining actions, the progress made on one classified as significant risk enabled Internal Audit to reclassify it as moderate residual risk. For the five other remaining open actions (concerning the review of ICT security), Internal Audit considered that the completion of these will require additional time.

3.2.2 Observations from the Court of Auditors

In the framework of the Statement of Assurance audits (SoA) 2023, the Court of Auditors indicated in its annual report that it did not identify any specific issues concerning the European Ombudsman.

The Office continued following up on the observations made by the Court of Auditors following its 2021 in-depth assessment of supervisory and control systems. Actions taken in 2024 include revised charters for the authorising officer by delegation and authorising officers by sub-delegation, a revised charter for the accounting officer and operating policy and procedures for ex-post facto verification. The revision of the internal rules and procedures to align them to the latest update of the Financial Regulation is ongoing.

3.2.3 Follow-up to the European Parliament's discharge resolution

(i) 2022 discharge

On 11 April 2024, the European Parliament adopted the [discharge decision](#) for the 2022 budget. The Ombudsman sent its detailed [follow-up report](#) to Parliament on 2 July 2024.

(ii) 2023 discharge

On 4 October 2024, the Ombudsman sent its [replies](#) to the 2023 discharge questionnaire. The related hearing took place at the European Parliament on 12 November 2024.

At the time of writing this report, the decision on the discharge procedure for the 2023 budget has not been finalised. The Ombudsman will provide its detailed feedback to Parliament in a follow-up report.



3.2.4 Management of the internal control systems

The AMP for 2024 identified a number of actions to reinforce the effectiveness of our internal control standards. These actions and their state of implementation are reflected in the table below.

ICS and related actions	Owner(s)	State of play
ICS 4 - Staff appraisal and development Create a competency framework and draft tailor-made learning paths.	DOA (with managers)	This action is ongoing.
ICS 6 - Risk management process Adopt and implement an updated risk management methodology.	DOA/All	A new methodology was adopted on 12/02/2024 (Ares(2024)1051139) and is being implemented.
ICS 8 - Processes and procedures Finalise the review of the financial policies to ensure alignment with the Financial Regulation. Continue the implementation of the E-invoicing system in collaboration with DG DIGIT (Commission).	DOA-FIN	Actions taken in 2024 include revised mission charters for accounting officer and for AOD and AOSD, and revised operating policy and procedures on ex-post facto verification function. The review of the internal rules on the implementation of the budget is ongoing. The E-invoicing system was implemented in March 2024.
ICS 10 - Business continuity Ensure effective implementation of the business continuity measures (training, tests, and alternative procedures).	DOA/All	Induction trainings are regularly organised. Larger scale training still needs to be organised. Procedures are periodically updated. Further involvement of all to be organised to update procedures and carry out tests.
ICS 11 - Document management Deposit the Ombudsman's non-complaint related paper archive fonds related to the mandates of the first and the second Ombudsman at the Historical Archives of the EU in Florence.	DOA-PBI	The paper archive was digitised and sent to the HAEU on 20 June 2024 (Ares(2024)4470283).
ICS 12 - Information and communication Conclude a Service Level Agreement with the European Parliament in the field of ICT security. Adopt an internal ICT security policy and take implementing measures.	DOA-PBI	The Arrangement on implementing measures in the area of ICT security was signed. The ICT security policy is in preparation.



3.2.5 Management of risks

Risk management is part of the Office's annual management cycle. Throughout 2024, the Office monitored the implementation of actions aimed at mitigating risks identified in the 2023 risk assessment exercise.

In the context of the Internal Auditor's 2023 review of the Ombudsman's Risk Management Framework, the Office reviewed how it assesses and manages risks and adopted a new methodology in January 2024.

A risk assessment exercise based on the new methodology was carried out in December 2024 prior to the adoption of the interim AMP for 2025. The exercise focused on a selection of operational objectives included in the draft AMP. The results of the assessment and of agreed follow-up actions are recorded in the risk register. Implementation of these actions is ongoing and will be monitored periodically. None of the potential risks analysed was ranked as critical.

There are thus no unmitigated risks that could have a significant impact on the implementation of the Ombudsman's Strategy or on assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives.

3.3 Control results

This section further reports on, and assesses, the elements identified by management that support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives⁵.

3.3.1 Effectiveness: the control results and benefits

The Ombudsman's Office uses internal control processes to ensure adequate management of the risks relating to the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions it is responsible for, taking into account the nature of the payments concerned.

The control objective is considered to be achieved if (a) no significant internal control weaknesses were reported/detected; (b) no significant and/or repetitive errors occurred.

The table below shows the indicators which were put in place to monitor the effectiveness of controls for financial operations: (i) number and percentage of errors prevented (ex-ante control)⁶, (ii) number of errors corrected (ex-post control) and (iii) number of errors prevented for procurement procedures. The evolution of these indicators should be analysed over time.

⁵ Art 36.2 FR: a) effectiveness, efficiency and economy of operations; b) reliability of reporting; c) safeguarding of assets and information; d) prevention, detection, correction and follow-up of irregularities; and e) adequate management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of underlying transactions.

⁶ Number of errors prevented divided by the number of authorised payments.



Type of controls	Indicator	2022	2023	2024
Ex-ante and ex-post controls on financial operations and procurement procedures	Number of errors prevented (<i>ex-ante</i>)	18	27	30
	% of errors (<i>ex-ante</i>)	2.31%	3.42%	4.1%
	Number of errors corrected (<i>ex-post</i>)	0	0	0
	Number of errors prevented in procurement procedures (<i>ex-ante</i>)	0	0	0

Ex-ante controls are performed on 100% of payments, in order to detect and correct any procedural errors with or without financial impact. Errors detected were of a technical nature (encoding errors in ABAC, missing supporting documents) and were corrected before the payment was made. This confirms the strong deterrence effect that ex-ante controls have on financial transactions.

The ex-ante controls in the procurement procedures carried out in 2024 did not reveal any mistakes of a substantial nature but rather clerical ones, such as typos.

Ex-post controls in 2024 resulted in no financial errors detected. The ex-post controller recalled that the internal rules on implementation of the Ombudsman's budget still need to be updated in order to be in line with the Financial Regulation.

The analysis of the registry of overrides and non-compliance events in 2024 revealed two requests for exception. The finance team continues to make staff members aware of the importance of financial procedures, namely to ensure availability of the budget before making an expense.

In conclusion, the analysis of the available control results and the assessment of the weaknesses identified has not unveiled any significant weakness that could have a material impact as regards the legality and regularity of the financial operations. It is possible to conclude, therefore, that the control objective as regards legality and regularity has been achieved.

In 2024 and over the past years, the implementation of ex-ante and ex-post controls has not resulted in any financial correction/recovery order after payment. This is because no financial error was detected and administrative errors were corrected before payments were made. These results are expected to continue, resulting in no estimated future financial corrections (0%).

Benefits of these controls have also been identified. While it is possible to estimate the costs of the control processes, it is more difficult to quantify all the benefits of the errors prevented and detected. Financial benefits mainly consist in ex-ante detection of errors in financial operations.

The benefits of controls are mostly non-financial. They help ensure compliance with legal obligations (article 74(5) of the Financial Regulation), have a deterrent effect and help improve procedures. Extensive ex-ante controls ensure the respect of the "four eyes" principle and add an element of *security* to decisions taken by the authorising officer. The ex-ante verifier also monitors new developments in regulations and plays an advisory role to the financial team.



For procurement procedures, considering the complexity of these activities and the limited number of contracts awarded each year by the Ombudsman, systematic operational and financial verifications are necessary to prevent the risk of reputational damage and avoid litigation.

3.3.2 Efficiency: time indicators and other efficiency indicators

The principle of efficiency concerns the best relationship between resources employed and results achieved.

During 2024, a total of 732 payments amounting to EUR 13.34 million were made. Out of these, 100% were executed on time, with an average payment time of 13.2 days, thus significantly below the maximum of 30 days allowed.

There are still areas needing improvement such as reviewing procurement procedures, updating checklists and financial policies to be in line with the Financial Regulation.

3.3.3 Economy: the costs of controls

The principle of economy requires that the resources used by the institution in the pursuit of its activities shall be made available in due time, in appropriate quantity and quality and at the best price.

Costs of controls mostly consist in staff costs. As the table below shows, the total cost of controls related to the European Ombudsman's expenditure amounts to EUR 69 805 and represents 0.52% of the payments made in 2024 (0.54% in 2023 and 0.48% in 2022).

Title of Relevant Control System (RCS)	Ex-ante controls				Ex-post controls				Total	
		(a)	(b)	(c)		(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)
	Full time equivalent	Total costs (in EUR)	Funds managed ⁽¹⁾ (in EUR)	Ratio (%) (a)/(b)	Full time equivalent	Total costs (in EUR)	Total value verified (in EUR)	Ratio (%) (d)/(e)	Total estimated cost of controls (EUR)	Ratio (%) (g)/(b)
Procurement and Administrative expenditure	0,52	62.816	13.342.590	0,47%	3 weeks per year	6.990	316.697	2,21%	69.805	0,52%

3.3.4 Conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of controls

Based on the most relevant efficiency indicators and control results, the Ombudsman's Office has assessed the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of its control system and reached a positive conclusion on the cost-effectiveness of the controls for which it is responsible.

The control strategy is considered adequate as, with a reasonable cost of controls, the main objectives were achieved on time. They provide reasonable assurance that the European Ombudsman's 2024 budget has been implemented effectively, on time and in compliance with the rules.



3.4 Whistleblowing and investigations by OLAF

The Director for Administration is not aware of any OLAF investigation or of any member of staff providing information under article 22(a) of the Staff Regulations in 2024.

3.5 Conclusions on the assurance

Results of controls of procurement, financial control and the analysis of exceptions support the conclusion that resources are used for the intended purpose and operations of the Office are legal and regular.

Analysis of the control results, ex-ante analysis of contracts and evaluation activities ensure sound financial management; the measures taken to protect information and assets also give assurance concerning the safeguarding of assets and information.

The follow-up of audit recommendations and the assessment of the internal control systems provide reasonable assurance that the control systems work as intended and fraud is prevented and detected.

Overall conclusion

The authorising officer by delegation has reasonable assurance that, overall, bearing in mind the level of expenditure and budget handled by the institution, suitable controls are in place and are working as intended; risks are being appropriately monitored and mitigated; and necessary improvements are being implemented.

4. Reservations and impact on the statement

4.1 Materiality criteria

In order to decide whether a weakness is significant and must entail a reservation in the Annual Activity Report, the authorising officer by delegation ('AOD') bases their judgement on the following materiality criteria, which apply to the European Ombudsman's budget:

4.1.1 Scope criteria

The weakness falls within the scope of the AOD annual declaration: it relates to the reasonable assurance regarding the legality and regularity of financial transactions, the true and fair view, the use of resources for their intended purposes, sound financial management, non-omission of significant information, efficiency, the safeguarding of assets and the prevention and detection of fraud.

4.1.2 Qualitative criteria

Qualitative assessment includes an analysis of the causes and the types of error(s), considering also mitigating controls and/or corrective actions taken:

- the nature and scope of the weakness,



- the duration of the weakness,
- the existence of compensatory measures,
- the existence of effective corrective actions to correct the weaknesses,
- residual reputational, financial, operational and legal/regulatory risk,
- significant control system weaknesses,
- critical issues reported by the authorising officer by sub-delegation, the European Court of Auditors, the Internal Auditor and the European Anti-Fraud Office.

4.1.3 Quantitative criteria

The weakness is assessed as significant in quantitative terms where the monetary value of the problem or the amount considered at risk is above the acceptable level.

The European Ombudsman uses a residual error rate threshold of maximum 2% of the total annual expenditure, as applied by other institutions such as the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors.

The European Ombudsman has thus decided on 2% of the annual appropriations as the materiality threshold in this regard, namely: EUR 276 863.20.

4.2 Reservation

No reservation.

4.3 Conclusion

Based on the above, the Director for Administration of the European Ombudsman has issued the annual declaration with no reservation.



5. Declaration of assurance

I, the undersigned, Marie-Pierre Darchy,

Director for Administration,

In my capacity as authorising officer by delegation, hereby declare that the information contained in this report gives a true and fair view⁷.

State that I have reasonable assurance that the resources assigned to the activities described in the report have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management, and that the control procedures put in place provide satisfactory guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

This reasonable assurance is based on my own judgement and on the information at my disposal, such as the results of self-assessments, the ex-post controls, the work and observations of the internal auditor, and the lessons learnt from the reports of the Court of Auditors for years prior to the year of this declaration.

Confirm that I am not aware of anything not reported which could harm the interests of the European Ombudsman.

Done at Brussels,

Marie-Pierre Darchy
Director for Administration

⁷ True and fair in this context means a reliable, complete and correct view on the state of affairs in the service.



Annexes:

Annex 1: Human resources and professional training charts

Annex 2: The European Ombudsman's Operating Framework

Annex 3: Report on budgetary and financial management for the financial year 2024

Annex 4: The European Ombudsman's draft Annual Report for 2024



Annexes

Annex 1: Human resources and professional training charts

A. Breakdown of human resources available to the Ombudsman

The European Ombudsman's job-screening exercise is carried out in accordance with Article 53 of the Financial Regulation. It is based on the "*Inter-institutional job screening methodology*" developed by the European Commission.

The job screening is a top-down and across-the board analysis of all jobs based on the organisational chart. The aim is to classify the human resources under one of the following three categories according to the organisational role each job is serving: 'Operations', 'Coordination and support' and 'Compliance'.

The categorisation of jobs is undertaken to identify the evolution of jobs in each role and with a view to maximising the proportion of jobs devoted to 'Operations'.

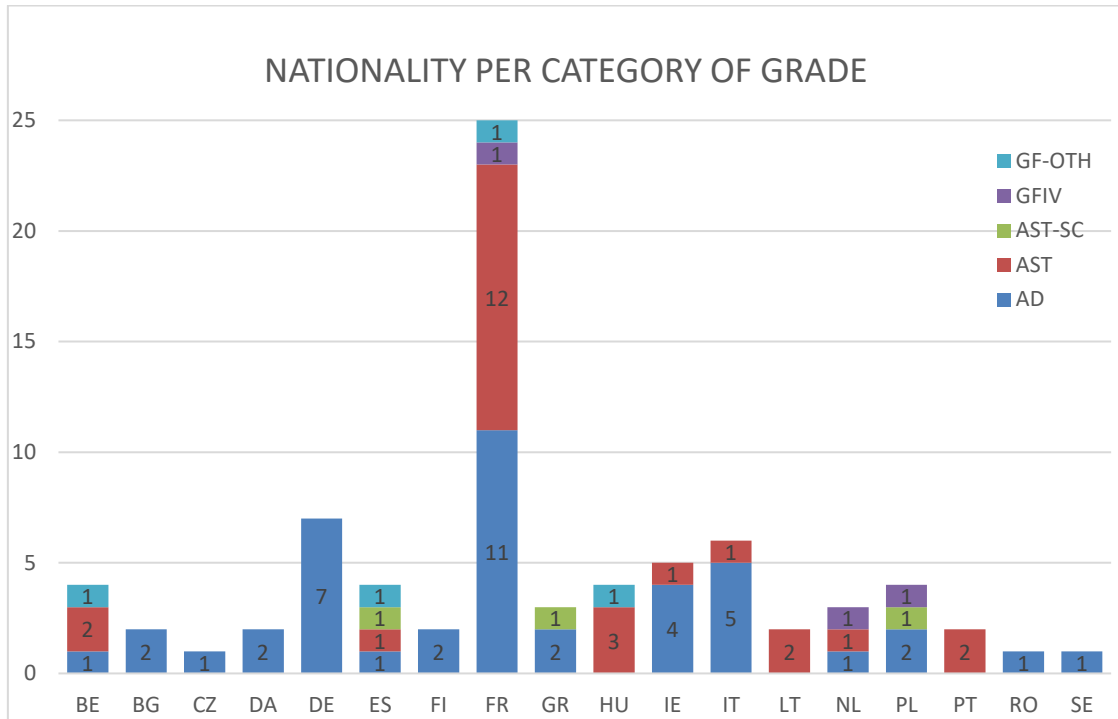
In December 2024, the categorisation of jobs performed by staff in the Ombudsman's Office resulted in the following figures.

Job-type category	2024	2023	2022
Operations	68.2%	67.8%	66.2%
Coordination and support	20%	21.5%	22%
Compliance	11.8%	10.7%	11.8%

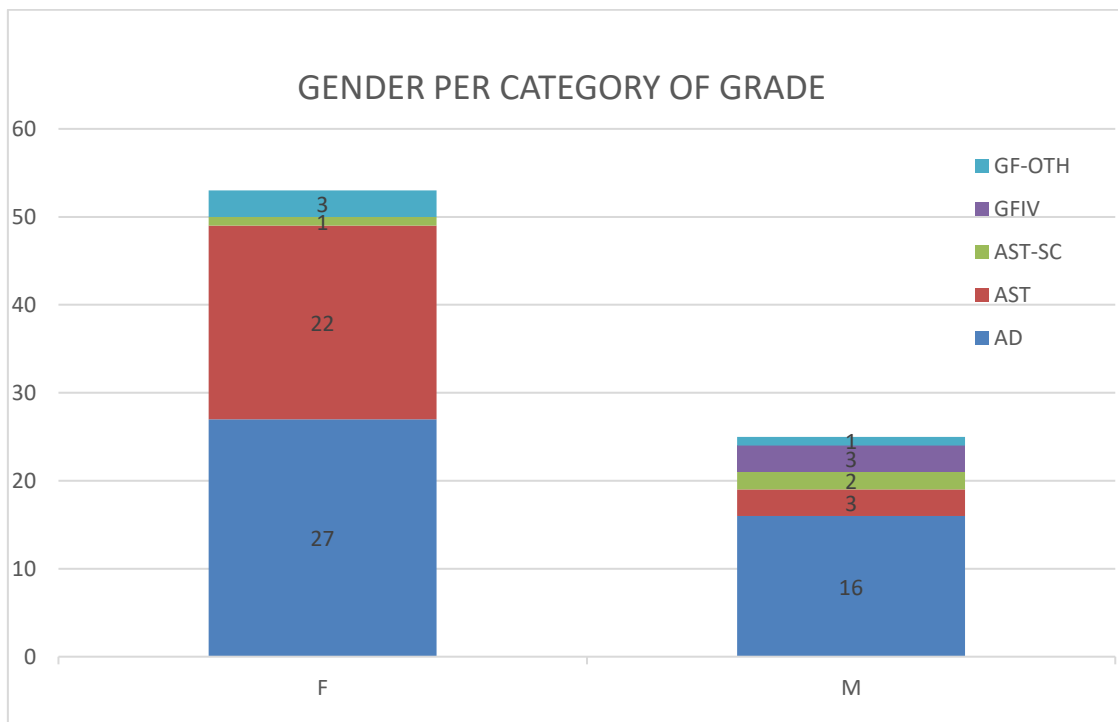
The three graphs on the following pages show the breakdown of staff respectively by nationality per category of grade, by gender per category of grade, and by gender and nationality among managers.



Graph 1 - Nationality per category of grade: snapshot on 31 December 2024

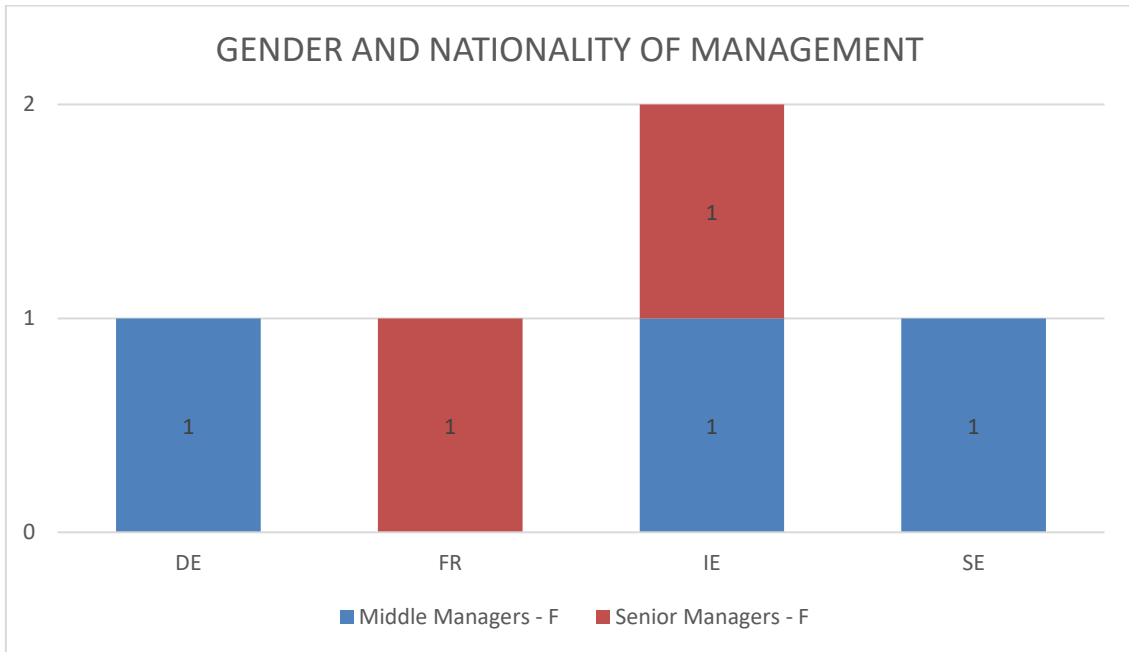


Graph 2 - Gender per category of grade: snapshot on 31 December 2024





Graph 3 - Gender and nationality among managers: snapshot on 31 December 2024

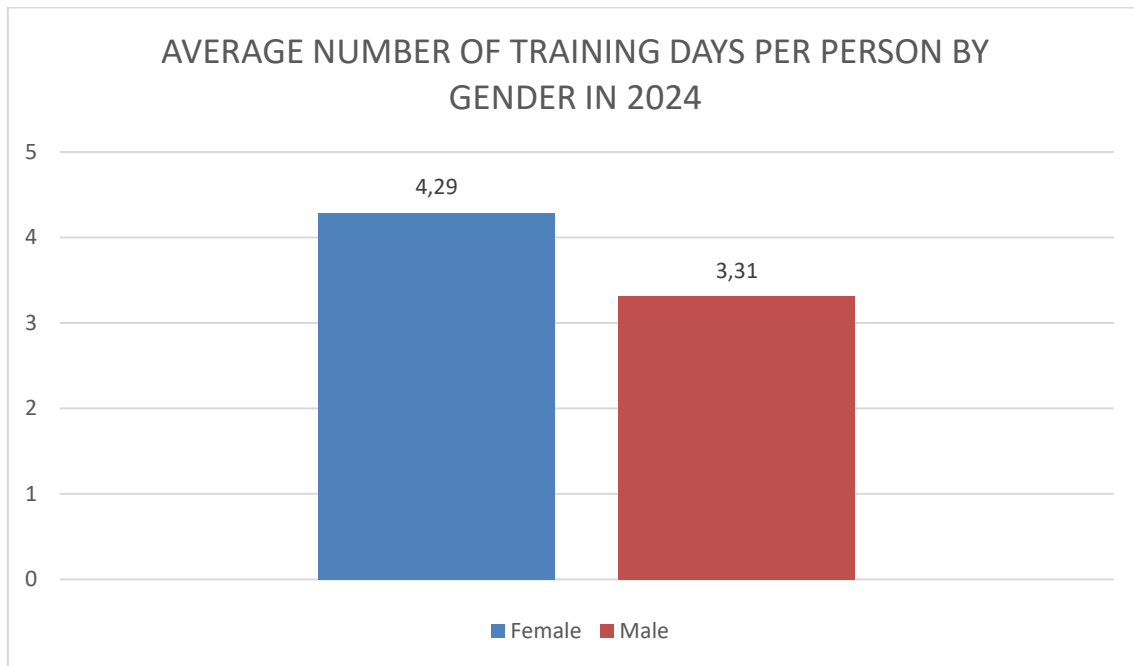




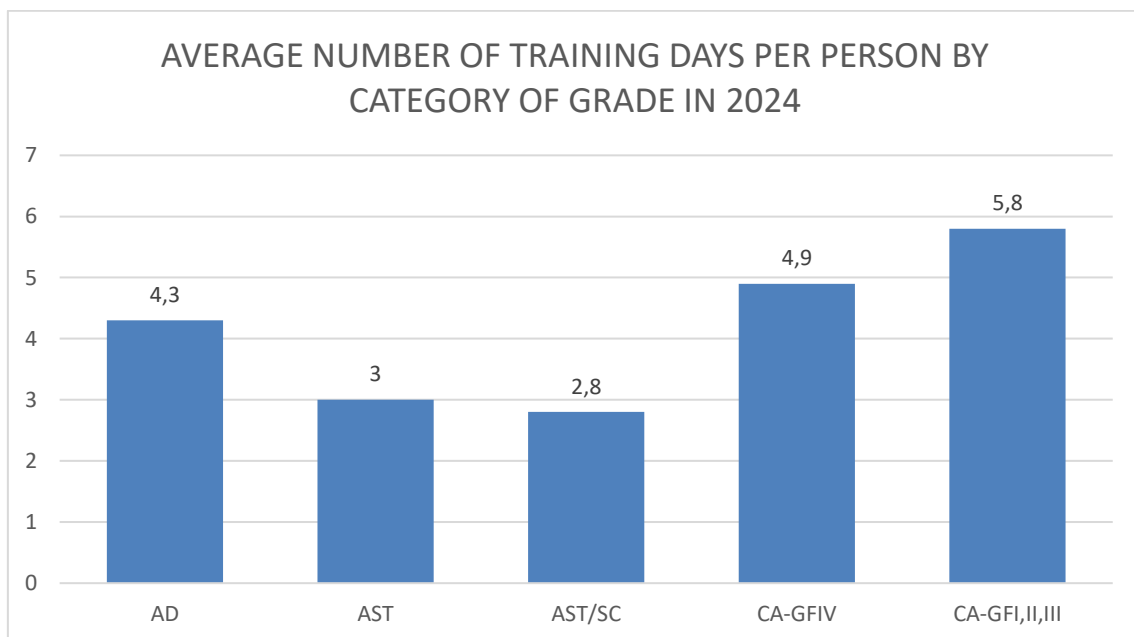
B. Number of days of professional training in 2024

The average number of training days per staff member was 3.9 excluding language training. Graphs 4 and 5 below provide the breakdown of training days by gender and by category of grade. Graph 6 provides a breakdown of staff enrolled in language classes.

Graph 4 - Training days per person (excluding language training)



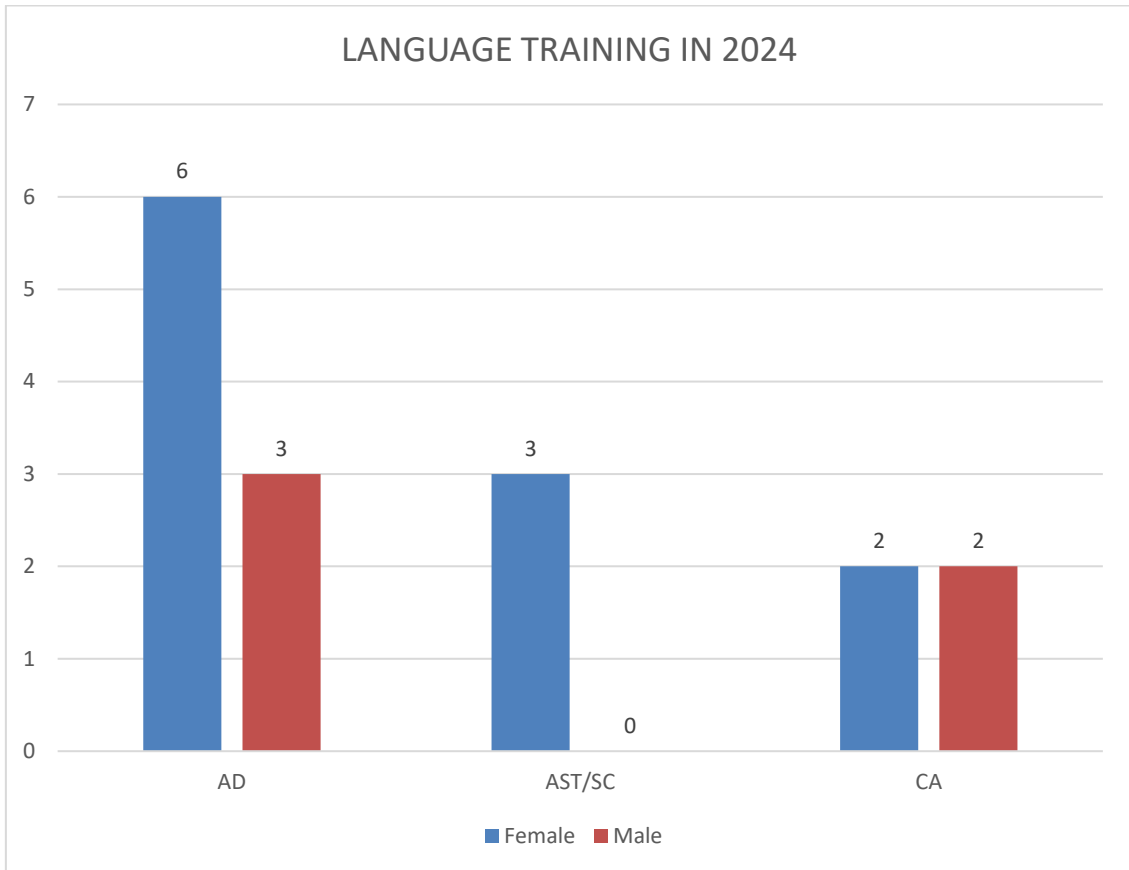
Graph 5- Training days by category of grade (excluding language training)





Graph 6 - Staff who took language classes by gender and by category of grade

In 2024, sixteen staff members were enrolled in language classes.





The following annexes are enclosed as separate documents.

Annex 2: The Ombudsman's Operating Framework (PowerPoint Presentation)

Annex 3: Report on budgetary and financial management for the financial year 2024

Annex 4: Draft Annual Report 2024 of the European Ombudsman

The Ombudsman shall submit to the European Parliament a report on the outcome of inquiries every year. The Annual Report of the European Ombudsman for 2024 will be presented to the European Parliament later in 2025. A draft version is attached to the present report.

The report will subsequently be made available in all languages in the [annual reports](#) section of the Ombudsman's website.



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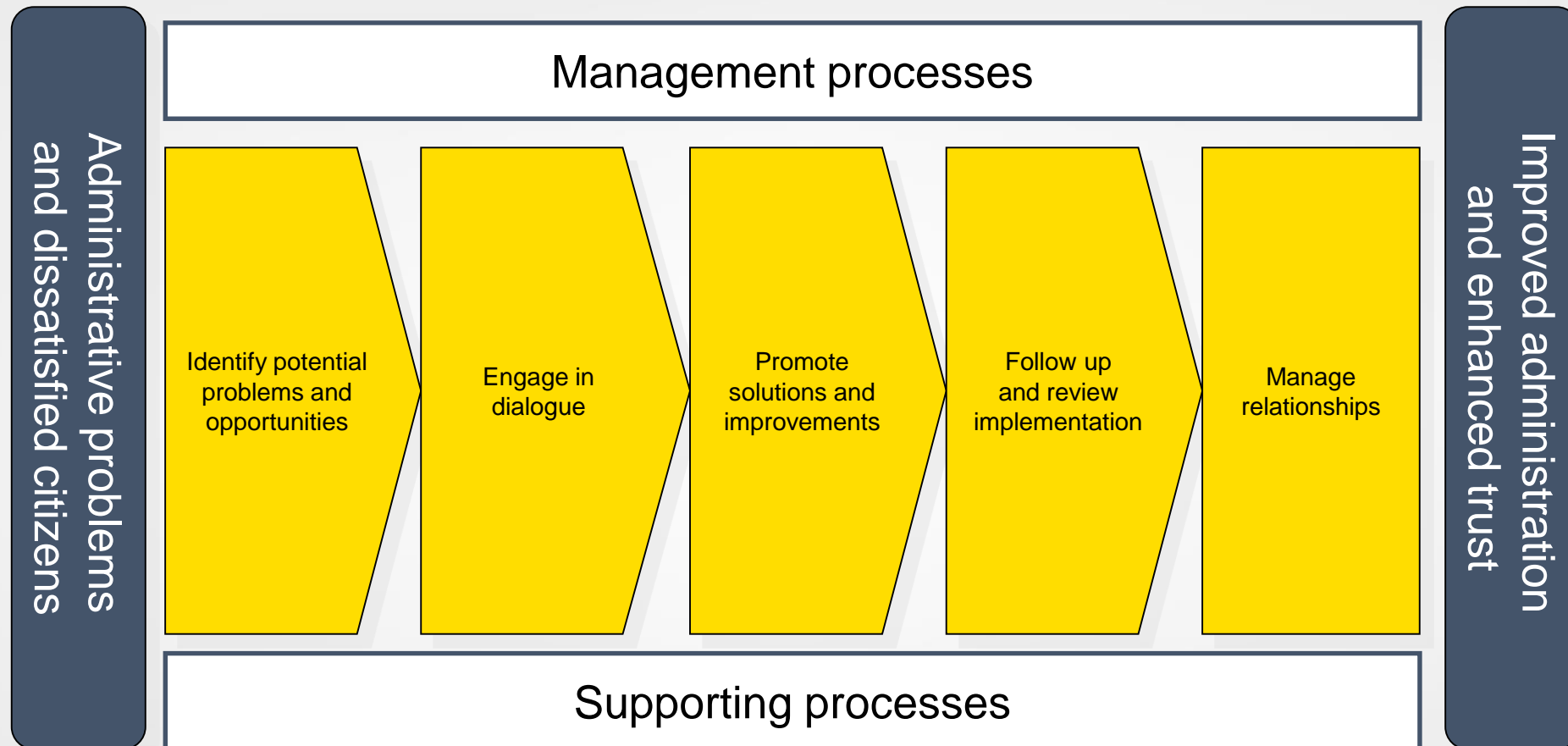
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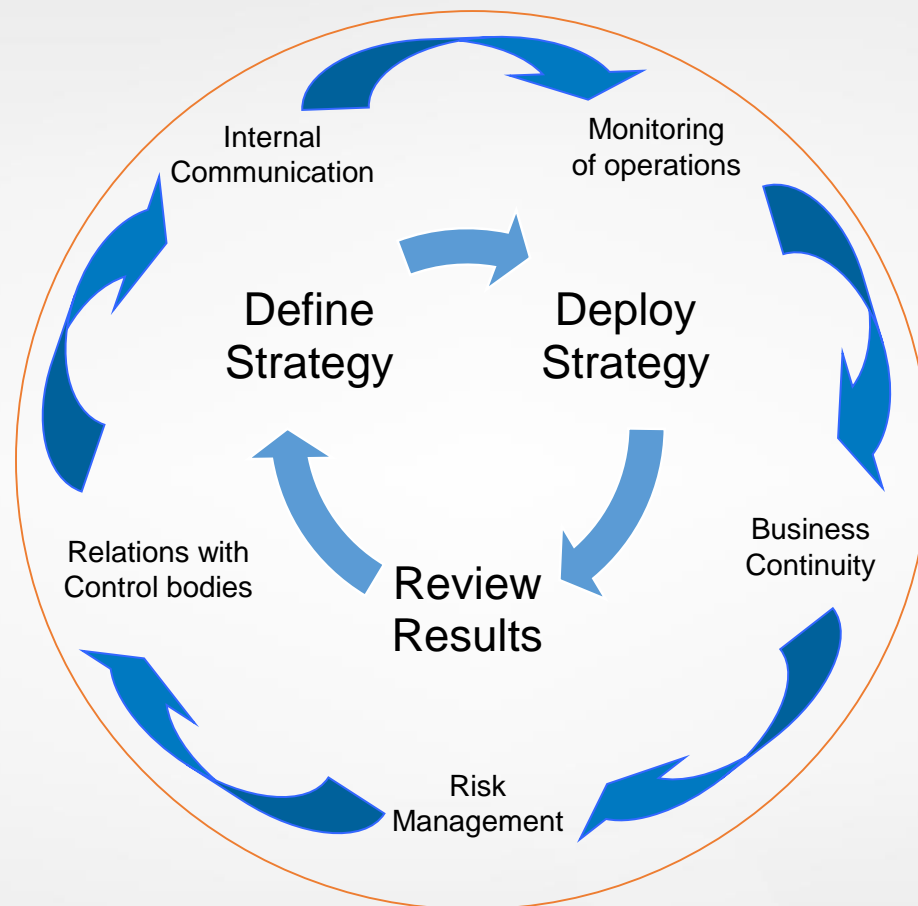
OPERATING FRAMEWORK AND KEY PROCESSES

V15 – February 2025

Operating Framework



1. Management processes



1.1 Define Strategy

Review results of current or previous strategy



Conduct consultations



Draft (or revise) Strategy



1.2 Deploy Strategy

Annual Management Plan (AMP)



Mid-term review of the implementation
of AMP actions



Annual Activity Report (AAR)



2. Identify potential problems and opportunities

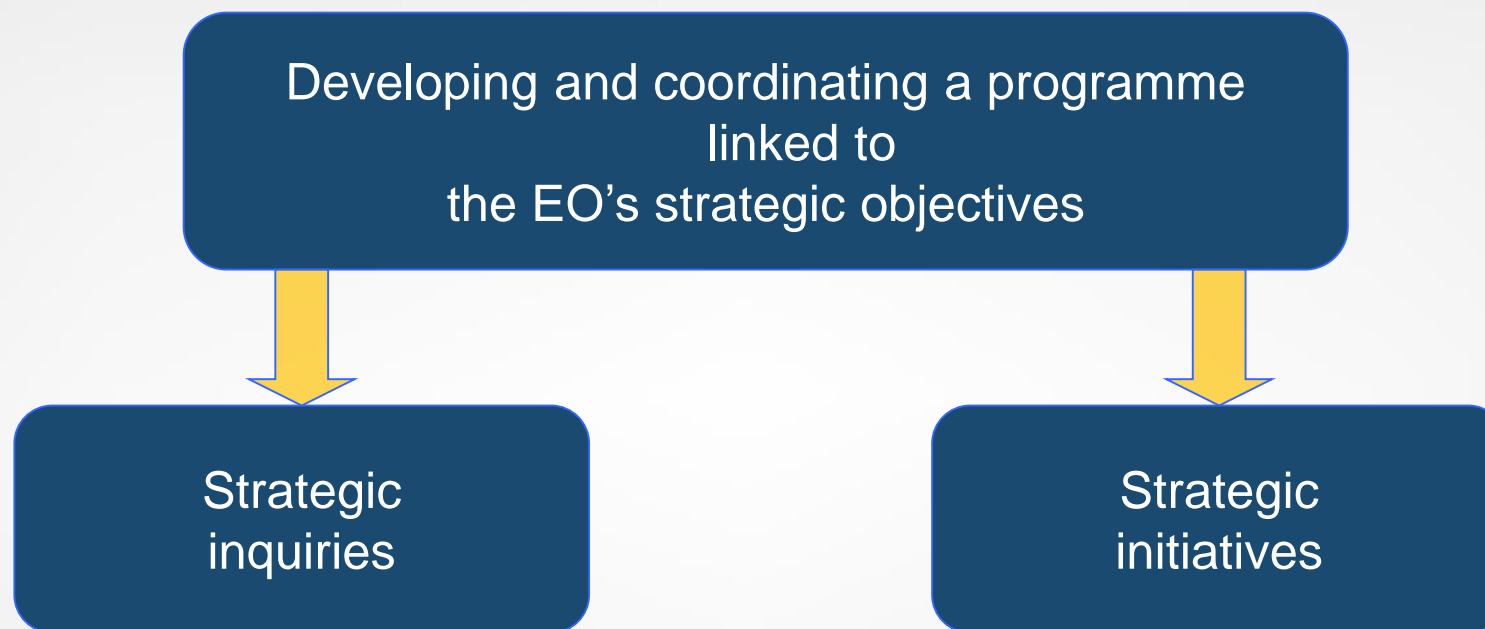
2.1 Proactive identification of systemic issues in the EO's fields of activity

2.2 Complaints

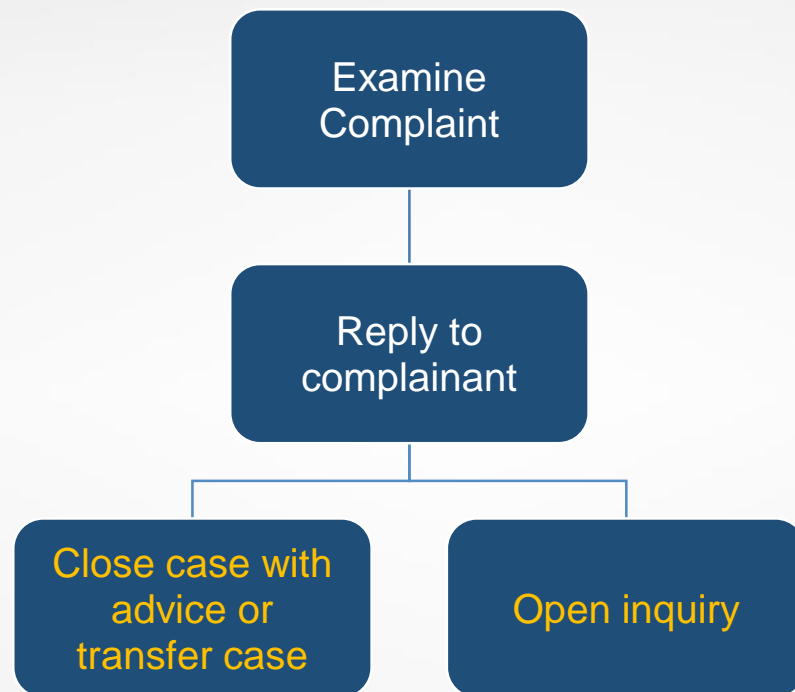
2.3 Other stakeholder input



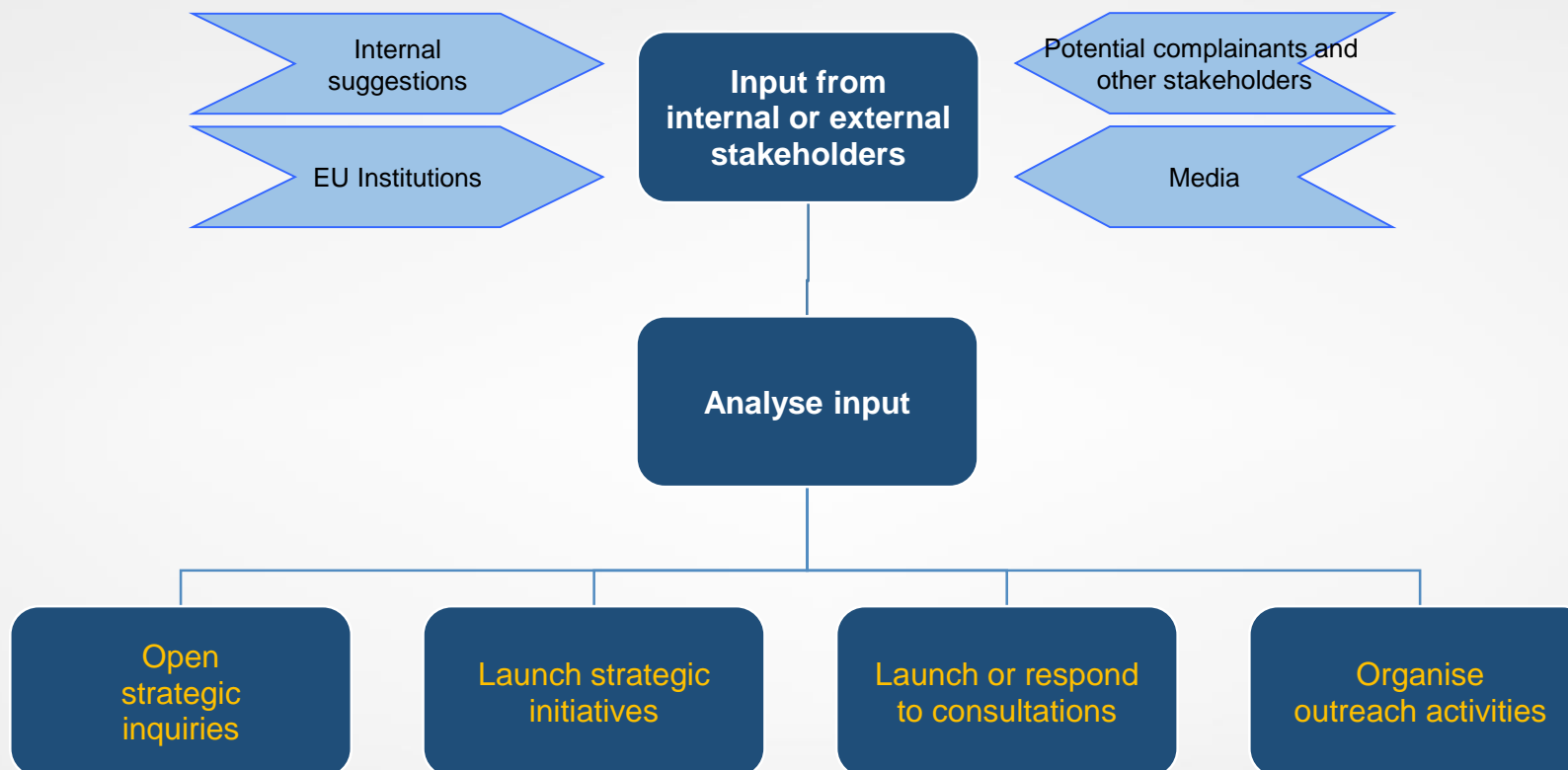
2.1 Proactive identification of systemic issues in the EO's fields of activity



2.2 Complaints



2.3 Other Stakeholder input



3. Engage in dialogue

In the context of

[3.1 Inquiries](#)

[3.2 Strategic initiatives](#)

[3.3 Consultations](#)

[3.4 Outreach and other activities](#)



3.1 Inquiries

Investigating complaints

Inquiries of
public importance

Fast-Track
inquiries
(Regulation
1049/2001)

Inquiries about
the institutions'
failure to reply

Strategic (own-initiative) inquiries

Queries from the ENO

Joint/parallel inquiries with the ENO



3.2 Strategic initiatives

Launching strategic initiatives



Inviting feedback from institution



Analysis of feedback
and follow-up



3.3 Consultations

Responding to consultations

Public consultations launched by EU institutions, requests from Committees of the European Parliament or from other stakeholders, ...

Launching consultations

Public, European Network of Ombudsmen, EDPS, ...



3.4 Outreach and other activities

Meetings and events with institutions
and other stakeholders

Target group activities

Proactive use of media,
including active social media engagement



4. Promote solutions and improvements

[4.1 Evaluation and recommendations in the inquiry process](#)

[4.2 Issuing general guidance](#)

[4.3 Informing and persuading](#)



4.1 Evaluation and recommendations

Solutions

Recommendations

Suggestions

Special Reports



4.2 Issuing general guidance

Practical recommendations for the EU
Administration

Thematic papers

Sharing and promoting
best practices



4.3 Informing and persuading

Publishing recommendations made in the context of inquiries

Publishing practical recommendations for the EU administration

Presentations to target audiences

Press releases and interviews

Organising thematic events



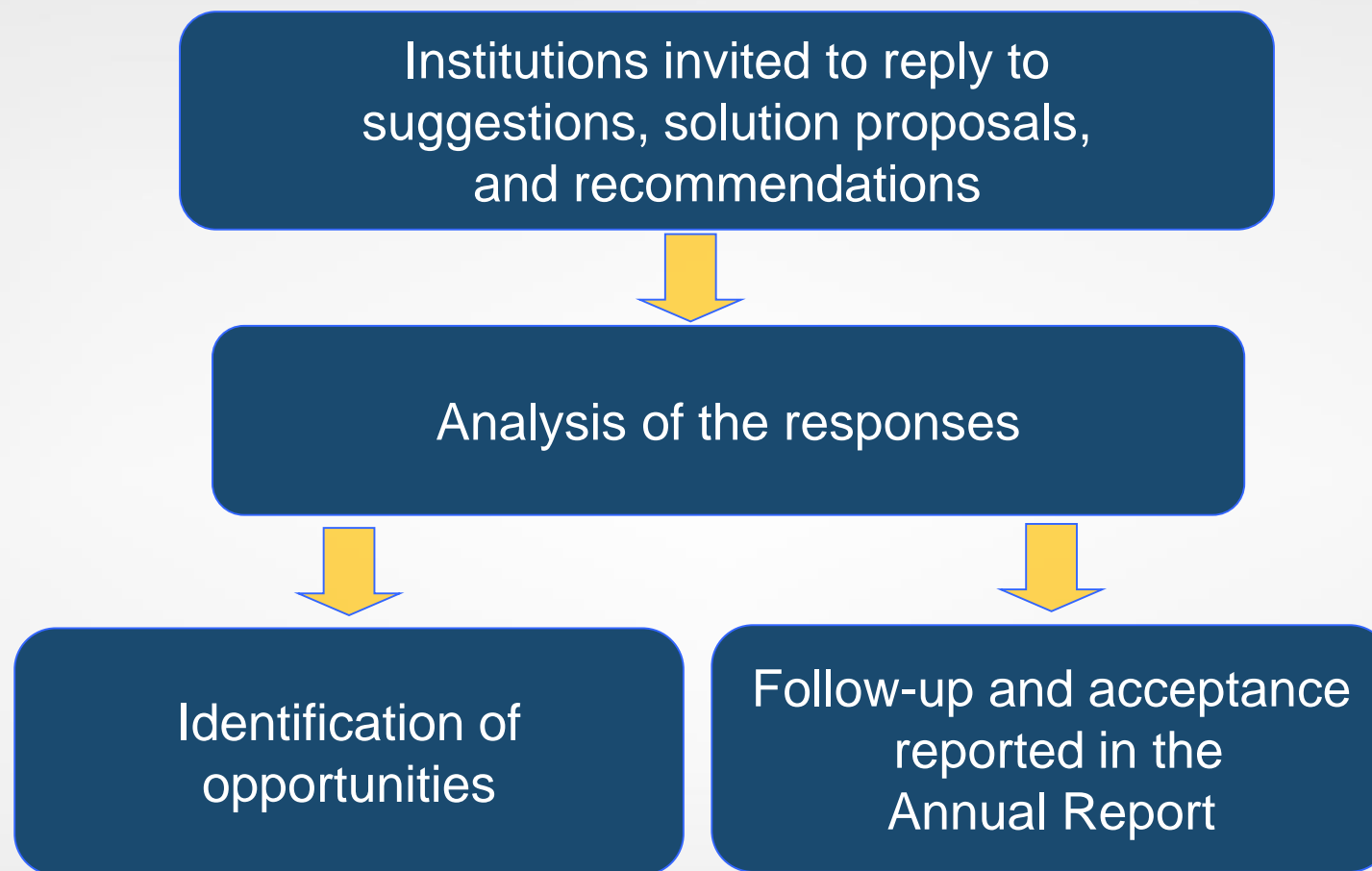
5. Follow-up and review implementation

5.1 Acceptance analysis

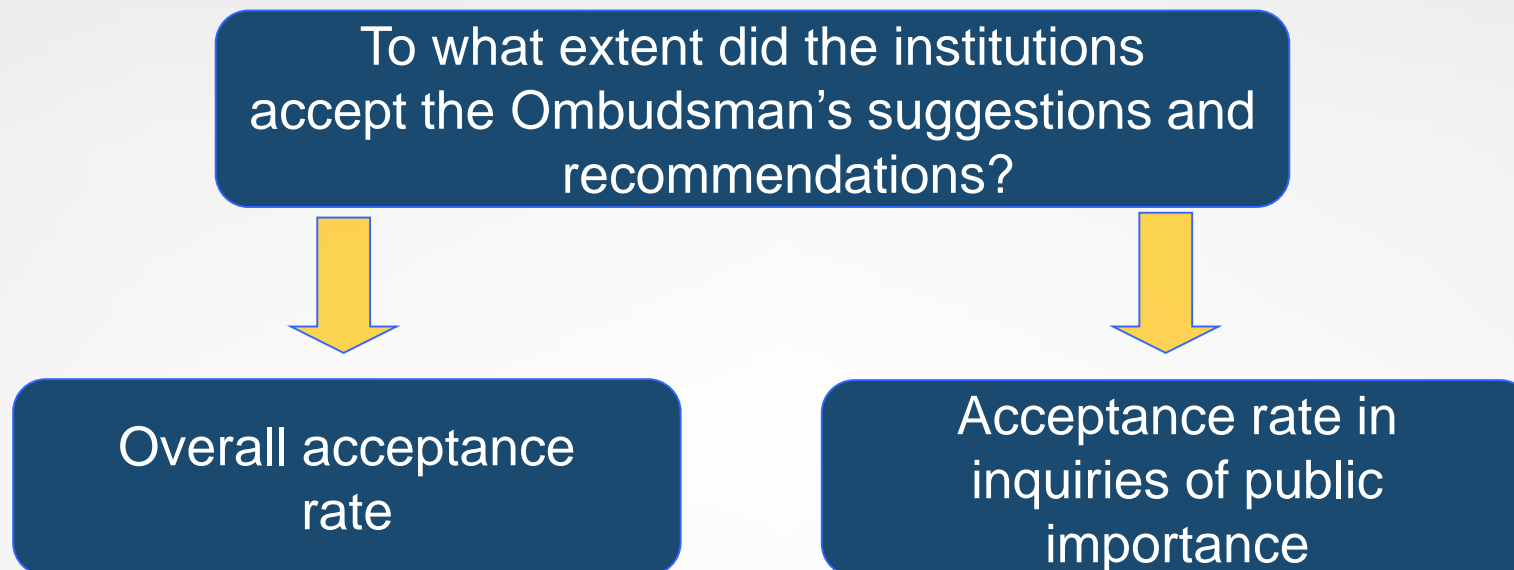
5.2 Acceptance rate



5.1 Acceptance analysis



5.2 Acceptance rate



6. Manage relationships

[6.1 Relations with complainants](#)

[6.2 Relations with the European Parliament](#)

[6.3 Relations with the European Network of Ombudsmen](#)

[6.4 Relations with other stakeholders](#)

[6.5 Recognising excellence in EU public service](#)



6.1 Relations with complainants

Dialogue throughout the life of the complaint

Complainant feedback survey

Requests for review

Information on institutions' follow-up



6.2 Relations with the European Parliament

Annual Reports

Special Reports

Meetings with MEPs

Appearances before Committees



6.3 Relations with the European Network of Ombudsmen

Transfer of cases

Parallel investigations

Queries

Seminars, workshops and other events

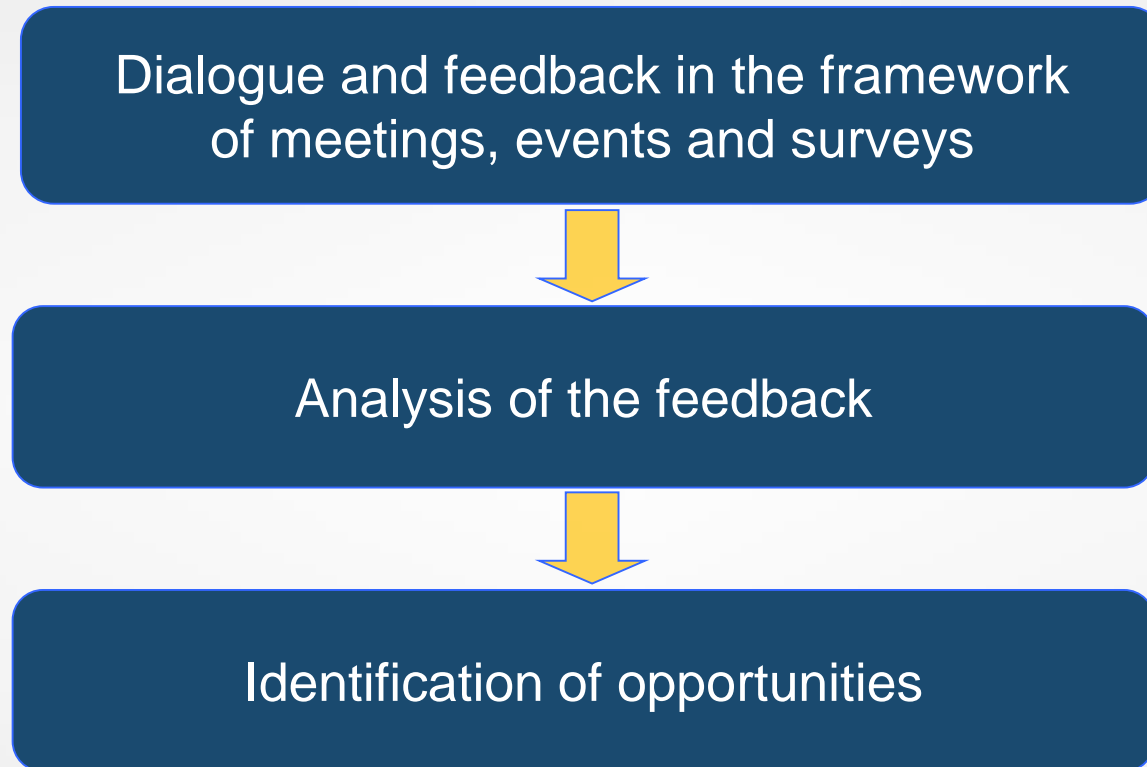
Electronic discussion forum and news
service

E-Newsletter



6.4 Relations with other stakeholders

(EU institutions, media, NGOs, ...)



6.5 Recognising excellence in EU public service

Inviting submissions for the biennial Award for Good Administration
(2017, 2019, 2021, 2023)



Review of submissions



Award Ceremony
(most recent in 2024)



7. Supporting processes

[7.1 Human resources](#)

[7.2 Finances and controls](#)

[7.3 Information management](#)

[7.4 ICT](#)

[7.5 Administration](#)



7.1 Human Resources

Implementing HR policies

Ethics & good
conduct

Working environment
and conditions

Recruitment

HR
management

Learning &
Development

Internal
communication



7.2 Finances and controls

Preparation of Estimates

Budget Execution

Financial Management

Asset Management

Procurement

Financial Reporting

Accounting

Internal & External Audit



7.3 Information Management

Complaints management
system

Managing non-complaints
related documents

Implementing the EUCI
Decision

Historical archiving

Public Access to
information
and documents

Data protection



7.4 ICT

Implementation of priorities and projects

Maintenance, updating and
security
of existing systems

Management of
hardware, servers and
standard applications

Relations with external
service providers

Management of
framework contracts

Preparation of budget
and reporting on the
implementation of priorities

Management of
external procurement



7.5 Administration

Direct
administration

Process management

Infrastructure

Business continuity

Managing
interinstitutional
cooperation

European Parliament
(Buildings and associated
services, IT Security,
helpdesk,...)

European Commission
(PMO, ABAC, SYSPER 2,
ARES...)

Translation Centre





European
Ombudsman

REPORT ON BUDGETARY AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

European Ombudsman

Financial year 2024



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Introduction

This report has been drawn up in accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2024/2509 of 23 September 2024 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the Union, and in particular Article 255 thereof.

The report summarises the European Ombudsman's budgetary and financial management during 2024 and outlines the institution's financial situation, budget evolution and main events having an impact on the budgetary performance.

The 2024 budget implementation shows the following patterns:

- The implementation rate for commitments and payments remains high compared to the previous year. The utilisation rate of appropriations amounts to 97.55% (95.39% in 2023) and payments represent 97.08% of total commitments (97.58% in 2023). Appropriations carried-over to 2025 represent 2.92% of total commitments (2.42% in 2023).
- Four transfers were made during the year for a total amount of € 280 500 in order to reallocate funds to finance specific needs. Detailed information on the purpose of the transfers is provided in section 2.2 below.



1 - Revenue

Established entitlements for the financial year 2024 totalled € 1 865 549.22. They represent 106.65 % of the estimated revenue of € 1 749 224 (Table 1), compared to 100.27% in 2023.

The total revenue recovered as at 31 December 2024 (€ 1 865 224.22) represents 99.98% of the entitlements established in 2024.

The detailed table can be found in Annex I.

Table 1 - Established entitled 2024

(EUR)				
Title	Estimated revenue 2024	Established entitlements 2024	Total recovered 2024	% in total
3 - Administrative revenue	1.749.224	1.865.489,75	1.865.164,75	99,98%
4- Financial revenue, default interest and fines	-	59,47	59,47	100%
6- Revenue, contributions and refunds related to Union policies	-	-	-	0%
Total	1.749.224	1.865.549,22	1.865.224,22	99,98%

Of the € 1 865 164.75 in revenue recovered, € 1 863 715.70 (99.92%) represent deductions from the salaries of Members and staff (taxes and special levies on remuneration and pensions). Other revenue recovered in the financial year amounts to € 1 508.52 mainly related to recoveries on travel costs and bank interests. Of the € 1 865 549.22 in established entitlements, € 1 865 224.22 (99.98%) were recovered. An amount of € 325 concerning travel costs was still to be recovered at 31/12/2024. By way of comparison, in 2023, deductions made from the salaries of Members and staff (taxes and special levies on remuneration and pensions) amounted to € 1 609 547.75 and other revenue for the financial year amounted to € 1 626.01.

2 - Expenditure

2.1 Final appropriations available, commitments and payments by title

Total appropriations available for 2024, appropriations committed, payments made during the year and the remaining amount to be carried over to 2025 are summarised in Table 2 and Table 3 below.

A more detailed analysis by chapter can be found in Table 5 to Table 10 below, together with explanatory notes on some specific chapters and/or items.



Table 2 - Final appropriations available and commitments by title

(EUR)

Title	Final appropriations	Appropriations committed	%
Title I - Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	11.213.851	11.030.768	98,37%
Title II - Buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure	2.363.909	2.243.653	94,91%
Title III - Expenditure resulting from general functions carried out by the institution	265.400	229.582	86,50%
Titles I, II and III - Total	13.843.160	13.504.003	97,55%

Table 3 - Commitments and payments by title

(EUR)

Title	Commitments	Payments	%	Carry-over	%
Title I - Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	11.030.768	10.960.939	99,37%	69.829	0,63%
Title II - Buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure	2.243.653	1.989.163	88,66%	254.490	11,34%
Title III - Expenditure resulting from general functions carried out by the institution	229.582	159.234	69,36%	70.348	30,64%
Titles I, II and III - Total	13.504.003	13.109.336	97,08%	394.667	2,92%



2.2 Budget transfers

During the financial year, the European Ombudsman made four budgetary transfers totalling € 280 500 (Table 4). The aim of these transfers was to ensure that the European Ombudsman's various departments operated smoothly and that any related requirements were met.

Table 4 - Budget transfers in 2024

(EUR)		
Type de transfert	Number of transfers in 2024	Total amount transferred
Title to title	1	41.500
Chapter to chapter		110.000
Article to Article		10.000
Item to item	3	119.000
Total	4	280.500

The main budget lines impacted were the following :

Reductions:

- European schools: -4 %
- Graduate traineeships, grants and exchange of officials: -5.4%
- Rent: -9.5%
- Meetings in general: -20.9%
- Translation and interpretation: -34.4%
- Communication and publications: -38.5%
- Fitting-out and installation work: -100%

Increases:

- Expenditure on archive resources: +667%
- Cleaning, maintenance and energy consumption: +51%
- Mission expenses (article 104): +38.6%
- Internal meetings: +32%
- Informatics: +24.8%
- Salaries, allowances and payments related to salaries (article 100): +5%
- Security and surveillance of buildings: +4%

The reinforcement of the above-mentioned budget lines was possible thanks to the savings resulting from unused appropriations for European Schools, graduate traineeships, rent, meetings in general, communication and publications, and fitting-out and installation work. Additional appropriations were also available as a result of lower needs for



translation. Indeed the Office has successfully integrated Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the translation processes for the European Ombudsman's website. During 2023 and 2024, this has not only made the website more accessible and inclusive by providing content in various languages as needed, but has also minimized the expenditure on translations.

Archives resources (budget item 3201): The European Ombudsman's Office has made significant progress in archiving its documents, with a first set of documents sent to the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence in 2024. This achievement was made possible by large efforts to prepare for this first deposit in 2023, covering a substantial part of the documents from the mandates of the two first Ombudsmen. To further this effort, a transfer of appropriations to budget item 3201 was needed in order to acquire the necessary know-how and workforce, with the aim of completing the archiving in the areas of communications, human resources and starting the archiving of the Ombudsman's complaints, which is the core activity of the institution.

Cleaning, maintenance and energy (budget item 2002): The European Ombudsman's operating costs for its premises in Strasbourg and Brussels have risen significantly due to high inflation and the ongoing crisis with Russia. As a result, maintenance costs have increased and energy prices have gone up, leading to higher actual expenditure for the premises Parliament rents to the European Ombudsman. To reflect this rise, the lump sum for rental charges had to be re-evaluated. However, despite the European Ombudsman's 2024 estimates having anticipated an increase, the European Commission reduced the corresponding expenditure. This reduction has resulted in a funding gap, necessitating additional appropriations for budget item 2002.

Missions (budget article 104): The transfer of appropriations to this budget line was needed because: (i) the initial appropriations for 2024 were based on the ones of previous years during which travel was limited due to the Covid-19 pandemic ; (ii) Inflation has caused expenditure for accommodations to increase, and (iii) in 2024 the Ombudsman was invited to and participated in more meetings and conferences with other institutions and external stakeholders than in previous years, during which she presented her work on issues of public interest. It should be added that the appropriations on this budget line had been maintained at the same level (€ 35 000) for many years.

Internal meetings (budget article 304): The reinforcement of budget article 304 mainly aimed at covering expenditure related to the organisation of additional internal meetings in the context of the Ombudsman's end of mandate, essentially to review and consolidate achievements and provide guidance and prepare the transition to a new Ombudsman.

Informatics (budget item 2100): Appropriations were transferred to budget item 2100 to address critical equipment replacement, and to conduct a new website accessibility audit. During the COVID-19 crisis, the European Ombudsman rapidly acquired hybrid equipment to ensure business continuity, this equipment showed signs of weakness and needed to be progressively replaced. The Office had initially anticipated this need in its 2024 budget estimates, but the European Commission's subsequent budget cuts left its IT budget underfunded. The inflationary trends both on equipment and costs for services by contractors added to the pressure on the Office's IT expenditure.

Salaries, allowances and payments related to salaries (budget article 100): The transfer of appropriations to budget article 100 was needed to cover the additional expenditure as



regards the remuneration of the Ombudsman following the upward revision of the estimated rate of increase of staff remuneration in 2024.

Security and surveillance of buildings (budget item 2003): Appropriations had to be transferred to this budget line because the costs for security and surveillance of buildings were higher in 2024 than initially estimated when preparing the 2024 draft budget.

The effects of the transfers at item level are detailed in Annex 2.

2.3 Title I - Expenditure relating to people working with the Institution

Table 5 and Table 6 below summarise the final appropriations, commitments and payments for 2024 in Title I.

Table 5 - Final appropriations available and commitments in Title I

(EUR)			
Chapters	Final appropriations	Appropriations committed	%
10- Members of the institution	533.000	516.983	96,99%
12- Officials and temporary staff	9.681.707	9.564.141	98,79%
14- Other staff and outside services	660.600	623.265	94,35%
16- Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	338.544	326.379	96,41%
Title I - Total	11.213.851	11.030.768	98,37%

In 2024, the utilisation rate of appropriations under Title I was 98.37% (in 2023, this rate was 95.34%).

Appropriations in Chapter 10 (Members of the institution) were used in 2024 at a rate of 96.99% (in 2023, the figure was 95.30%).

The utilisation rate for Chapter 12 (Officials and temporary staff) was 98.79% compared to 96.08% in 2023.

The utilisation rate for Chapter 14 (Other staff and outside services) was 94.35% compared to 88.98% in 2023.



Appropriations in Chapter 16 (Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution) were used in 2024 at a rate of 96.41% compared to 88.18% in 2023.

Table 6 - Commitments and payments in Title I

(EUR)					
Chapters	Commitments	Payments	%	Carry-over	%
10- Members of the institution	516.983	505.398	97,76%	11.585	2,24%
12- Officials and temporary staff	9.564.141	9.564.141	100,00%	-	0,00%
14- Other staff and outside services	623.265	621.765	99,76%	1.500	0,24%
16- Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	326.379	269.634	82,61%	56.745	17,39%
Title I - Total	11.030.768	10.960.939	99,37%	69.829	0,63%

In 2024, for Title I, payments totalled € 10 960 939, i.e. 97.74% of the final appropriations and 99.37% of the total commitments (in 2023, these rates were 94.75% and 99.37% respectively).

Commitments carried over automatically to 2025 in accordance with Article 12 of the Financial Regulation amounted to € 69 829, i.e. 0.62% of the final appropriations and 0.63% of the total commitments (in 2023, these rates were 0.60% and 0.63% respectively).

The largest proportion of the carry-over regarding Chapter 16 concerned staff training (€ 18 881) and the Crèches and childcare facilities (€ 36 728) for which legal obligations existed but invoices were not received or had been received but not fully processed by the end of the financial year.



2.4 Title II - Buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous expenditure

Table 7 and Table 8 below summarise final appropriations, commitments and payments for 2024 in Title II.

Table 7 - Final appropriations available and commitments in Title II

(EUR)			
Chapters	Final appropriations	Appropriations committed	%
20- Buildings and associated costs	1.560.709	1.558.399	99,85%
21- Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	402.000	399.868	99,47%
23-Current administrative expenditure	401.200	285.386	71,13%
Title II - Total	2.363.909	2.243.653	94,91%

The utilisation rate for appropriations in Title II reached 94.91% in 2024 (compared to 96.28% in 2023).

While most Chapters show a relatively high execution, the lower implementation rate for Chapter 23 (Current administrative expenditure) is due to reduced expenditure on budget article 231 - Translation and interpretation following the successful integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into the translation processes for the European Ombudsman's website.

Table 8 - Commitments and payments in Title II

(EUR)					
Chapters	Commitments	Payments	%	Carry-over	%
20- Buildings and associated costs	1.558.399	1.558.399	100,00%	-	0,00%
21- Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	399.868	200.954	50,26%	198.914	49,74%
23-Current administrative expenditure	285.386	229.810	80,53%	55.576	19,47%
Title II - Total	2.243.653	1.989.163	88,66%	254.490	11,34%



Payments totalled € 1 989 163, equivalent to 84.15% of the final appropriations and 88.66% of the commitments (in 2023, these rates were 89.21% and 92.66% respectively). Commitments carried over to 2025 in accordance with Article 12 of the Financial Regulation amounted to € 254 490, i.e. 10.77% of the final appropriations and 11.34% of the commitments (in 2023, these rates were 7.07% and 7.34% respectively).

The budget line which accounts for most of the carry-over of € 198 914 under Chapter 21 is budget item 2100 - Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work, with € 187 524. This mainly relates to IT projects, including those for which budgetary transfers took place in the second semester of the year and to existing commitments for which invoices were not received by the end of the financial year.

In Chapter 23 ('Current administrative expenditure'), the appropriations carried over concern budget article 231 - Translation and interpretation for € 20 247 and budget article 232 - Support for activities, where an amount of € 31 866 is carried over to cover management fees resulting from the application of the cooperation and service level agreements between the European Ombudsman and other Institutions.

2.5 Title III - Expenditure resulting from general functions carried out by the institution

Table 9 and Table 10 below summarise final appropriations, commitments and payments for 2024 in Title III.

Table 9 - Final appropriations available and commitments in Title III

(EUR)			
Chapters	Final appropriations	Appropriations committed	%
30- Meetings and conferences	188.000	170.942	90,93%
32- Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	65.000	56.490	86,91%
33- Studies and other subsidies	10.000	-	0,00%
34- Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	2.400	2.150	89,58%
Title III - Total	265.400	229.582	86,50%

In 2024, the utilisation rate of appropriations under Title III was 86.50% (in 2023, this rate was 91.29%).



Table 10 - Commitments and payments in Title III

(EUR)					
Chapters	Commitments	Payments	%	Carry-over	%
30- Meetings and conferences	170.942	142.970	83,64%	27.972	16,36%
32- Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	56.490	14.114	24,99%	42.376	75,01%
33- Studies and other subsidies	-	-	0,00%	-	0,00%
34- Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	2.150	2.150	100,00%	-	0,00%
Title III - Total	229.582	159.234	69,36%	70.348	30,64%

Payments totalled € 159 234, equivalent to 60% of the final appropriations and 69.36% of the commitments (in 2023, these rates were 67.06% and 73.46% respectively). Commitments carried over to 2025 in accordance with Article 12 of the Financial Regulation amounted to € 70 348, i.e 26.51% of the final appropriations and 30.64% of the commitments (in 2023, these rates were 24.23% and 26.54% respectively).

In Chapter 30 'Meetings and conferences', the majority of the carry-over relates to budget article 300 - Staff mission expenses (€ 24 704) for which legal obligations existed but invoices or expense claims were not received or had been received but not fully processed by the end of the financial year.

The budget line which mainly accounts for the amount of € 42 376 carried over under Chapter 32 ('Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination') is budget item 3201 - Expenditure on archive resources with € 40 295. This relates to on-going archiving related services, for which a budget transfer took place in the second semester of the year.

Additional details on the use of the appropriations of the year can be found in Annex 3.



3 - Appropriations carried over from 2023

The carry over of 2023 appropriations is shown in Table 11 below and in Annex 4.

Table 11 - Carry over of 2023 appropriations to 2024

(EUR)			
Chapters	Carry-over from 2023 to 2024	Payments on carry-over	Cancellations
10- Members of the institution	11.992	5.258	6.735
12- Officials and temporary staff	5.508	5.508	-
14- Other staff and outside services	3.172	202	2.970
16- Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	43.146	16.588	26.558
Title I - Total	63.819	27.556	36.262
20- Buildings and associated costs	2.784	1.915	869
21- Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	120.246	112.963	7.284
23- Current administrative expenditure	33.272	22.361	10.911
Title II - Total	156.302	137.238	19.063
30- Meetings and conferences	54.075	39.050	15.024
32- Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	30.355	29.410	945
33- Studies and other subsidies	-	-	-
34- Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	-	-	-
Title III - Total	84.429	68.460	15.969
Title I, II and III - Total	304.550	233.255	71.295

Automatic carry-overs of appropriations (Article 12 of the Financial Regulation) from the financial year 2023 to the financial year 2024, which totalled € 304 550, gave rise to payments amounting to € 233 255, i.e. a utilisation rate of 76.59% compared to 73.27% in 2023.



Annex 1: Estimated revenue, established entitlements and entitlements carried over

Line	Heading	Revenues 2024 (in EUR)			
		Initial Budget	Establ Rights of the Year	Recovered of Year	To be recovered of Year
3000	Tax on remunerations	844.937	819.659,37	819.659,37	-
3001	Special levies on remunerations	156.724	149.473,73	149.473,73	-
300	Taxes and levies	1.001.661	969.133,10	969.133,10	-
3010	Staff contributions to the pension scheme	747.563	894.582,60	894.582,60	-
3011	Transfer or purchase of pension rights by staff	p.m	-	-	-
3012	Contributions to the pension scheme by staff on leave	p.m	-	-	-
301	Contributions to the pension scheme	747.563	894.582,60	894.582,60	-
Chapter 30	Revenue from staff	1.749.224	1.863.715,70	1.863.715,70	-
310	Sale of immovable property — Assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
311	Sale of other property	p.m	-	-	-
312	Letting and subletting immovable property — Assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
Chapter 31	Revenue linked to property	p.m	-	-	-
3202	Revenue from the supply of goods, services and work for other Union institutions, agencies and bodies — Assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
320	Revenue from the supply of goods, services and work — Assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
321	Refunds by other institutions or bodies of mission allowances — Assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
322	Revenue from third parties in respect of goods, services or work — Assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
Chapter 32	Revenue from the supply of goods, services and work - assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
330	Repayment of amounts wrongly paid — Assigned revenue	p.m	1.774,05	1.449,05	325,00
331	Revenue for a specific purpose (income from foundations, subsidies, gifts and bequests) — Assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
333	Insurance payments received — Assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
338	Other revenue from administrative operations — Assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
339	Other revenue from administrative operations	p.m	-	-	-
Chapter 33	Other administrative revenue	p.m	1.774,05	1.449,05	325,00
Title 3	Administrative revenue	1.749.224	1.865.489,75	1.865.164,75	325,00
400	Revenue from investments, loans granted and bank accounts	p.m	59,47	59,47	-
Chapter 40	Revenue from investments and accounts	p.m	59,47	59,47	-
Title 4	Financial revenue, default interest and fines	p.m	59,47	59,47	-
668	Other contributions and refunds — Assigned revenue	p.m	-	-	-
Chapter 66	Other contributions and refunds	p.m	-	-	-
Title 6	Revenue, contributions and refunds related to Union policies	p.m	-	-	-
Total		1.749.224	1.865.549,22	1.865.224,22	325,00



Annex 2: Changes in appropriations for the year

in EUR

Budget Line	Initial Budget 2024	Reductions	Transfers (+/-)	Appropriations Year 2024	Carry Over by Right Y-1
Article 1 00 - Salaries, allowances and payments related to salaries	459.500	0	23.000	482.500	0
Article 1 02 - Temporary allowances	0	0	0	0	0
Article 1 03 - Pensions	0	0	0	0	0
Article 1 04 - Mission expenses	35.000	0	13.500	48.500	11.992
Article 1 05 - Language and data-processing courses	2.000	0	0	2.000	0
Article 1 08 - Allowances and expenses on entering and leaving the service	0	0	0	0	0
Chapter 10 - Members of the institution	496.500	0	36.500	533.000	11.992
12 00 Remuneration and allowances	9.648.707	0	0	9.648.707	0
12 02 Paid overtime	3.000	0	0	3.000	0
12 04 Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service	30.000	0	0	30.000	5.508
Article 1 20 - Remuneration and other entitlements	9.681.707	0	0	9.681.707	5.508
12 20 Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service	0	0	0	0	0
12 22 Allowances for staff whose service is terminated and special retirement scheme for officials and temporary staff	0	0	0	0	0
Article 1 22 - Allowances upon early termination of service	0	0	0	0	0
Chapter 12 - Officials and temporary staff	9.681.707	0	0	9.681.707	5.508
14 00 Other staff	450.500	0	0	450.500	0
14 04 Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	222.000	0	-11.900	210.100	3.172
Article 1 40 - Other staff and externals	672.500	0	-11.900	660.600	3.172
Chapter 14 - Other staff and outside services	672.500	0	-11.900	660.600	3.172
16 10 Expenditure on recruitment	3.000	0	0	3.000	2.472
16 12 Further training	90.000	0	0	90.000	22.847
Article 1 61 - Expenditure relating to staff management	93.000	0	0	93.000	25.319
16 30 Social welfare	0	0	0	0	0
16 31 Mobility	19.950	0	0	19.950	0
16 32 Social contacts between members of staff and other social measures	7.000	0	0	7.000	1.239
Article 1 63 - Measures to assist the institution's staff	26.950	0	0	26.950	1.239
16 50 European Schools	175.694	0	-7.100	168.594	0
16 51 Crèches and childcare facilities	50.000	0	0	50.000	16.588
Article 1 65 - Activities relating to all persons working with the institution	225.694	0	-7.100	218.594	16.588
Chapter 16 - Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	345.644	0	-7.100	338.544	43.146
TITLE I - EXPENDITURE RELATING TO PERSONS WORKING WITH THE INSTITUTION	11.196.351	0	17.500	11.213.851	63.819



Budget Line	Initial Budget 2024	Reductions	Transfers (+/-)	Appropriations Year 2024	Carry Over by Right Y-1
2000 Rent	1.045.620	0	-119.000	926.620	0
2001 Fitting-out and installation work	5.000	0	-5.000	0	2.784
2002 Cleaning, maintenance and energy consumption	195.969	0	100.000	295.969	0
2003 Security and surveillance of buildings	324.120	0	14.000	338.120	0
Article 2 0 0 - Buildings	1.570.709	0	-10.000	1.560.709	2.784
Chapter 2 0 - Buildings and associated costs	1.570.709	0	-10.000	1.560.709	2.784
2100 Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work	310.000	0	77.000	387.000	106.288
Article 2 1 0 - Equipment, operating costs and services relating to data processing and telecommunications	310.000	0	77.000	387.000	106.288
Article 2 1 2 - Furniture	3.000	0	0	3.000	4.310
Article 2 1 6 - Vehicles	12.000	0	0	12.000	9.649
Chapter 2 1 - Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	325.000	0	77.000	402.000	120.246
2300 Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables	3.500	0	0	3.500	453
2301 Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	2.500	0	0	2.500	1.980
2302 Telecommunications	4.500	0	0	4.500	3.300
2303 Financial charges	700	0	0	700	461
2304 Other expenditure	3.500	0	0	3.500	365
2305 Legal costs and damages	1.000	0	0	1.000	0
Article 2 3 0 - Administrative expenditure	15.700	0	0	15.700	6.559
Article 2 3 1 - Translation and interpretation	315.000	0	-108.500	206.500	8.713
Article 2 3 2 - Support for activities	179.000	0	0	179.000	18.000
Chapter 2 3 - Current administrative expenditure	509.700	0	-108.500	401.200	33.272
TITLE II - BUILDINGS, FURNITURE, EQUIPMENT AND MISCELLANEOUS OPERATING EXPENDITURE	2.405.409	0	-41.500	2.363.909	156.302



Budget Line	Initial Budget 2024	Reductions	Transfers (+/-)	Appropriations Year 2024	Carry Over by Right Y-1
Article 3 0 0 - Staff mission expenses	100.000	0	0	100.000	25.213
Article 3 0 2 - Reception and representation expenses	2.000	0	0	2.000	0
Article 3 0 3 - Meetings in general	67.000	0	-14.000	53.000	28.173
Article 3 0 4 - Internal meetings	25.000	0	8.000	33.000	689
Chapter 3 0 - Meetings and conferences	194.000	0	-6.000	188.000	54.075
3 2 0 0 Documentation and library expenditure	3.000	0	0	3.000	174
3 2 0 1 Expenditure on archive resources	6.000	0	40.000	46.000	19.217
Article 3 2 0 - Acquisition of information and expertise	9.000	0	40.000	49.000	19.391
3 2 1 0 Communication and publications	26.000	0	-10.000	16.000	10.964
Article 3 2 1 - Production and dissemination	26.000	0	-10.000	16.000	10.964
Chapter 3 2 - Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	35.000	0	30.000	65.000	30.355
3 3 0 0 Studies	10.000	0	0	10.000	0
3 3 0 1 Relations with national/regional ombudsmen and other similar bodies and support for activities of the European Network of Ombudsmen	0	0	0	0	0
Article 3 3 0 - Studies and subsidies	10.000	0	0	10.000	0
Chapter 3 3 - Studies and other subsidies	10.000	0	0	10.000	0
3 4 0 0 Miscellaneous expenses	2.400	0	0	2.400	0
Article 3 4 0 - Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	2.400	0	0	2.400	0
Chapter 3 4 - Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	2.400	0	0	2.400	0
TITLE III - EXPENDITURE RESULTING FROM GENERAL FUNCTIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE INSTITUTION	241.400	0	24.000	265.400	84.429
GRAND TOTAL	13.843.160	0	0	13.843.160	304.550



Annex 3: Use of appropriations for the year

in EUR

Budget Line	Appropriations Year 2024	Commitments	Payments	Available on Comt	Carry Over Right Y+1	Cancelled Appropriations
Article 1 0 0 - Salaries, allowances and payments related to salaries	482.500	468.482,64	468.482,64	-	-	14.017,36
Article 1 0 2 - Temporary allowances	-	-	-	-	-	-
Article 1 0 3 - Pensions	-	-	-	-	-	-
Article 1 0 4 - Mission expenses	48.500	48.500,00	36.915,32	11.584,68	11.584,68	-
Article 1 0 5 - Language and data-processing courses	2.000	-	-	-	-	2.000,00
Article 1 0 8 - Allowances and expenses on entering and leaving the service	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chapter 1 0 - Members of the institution	533.000	516.982,64	505.397,96	11.584,68	11.584,68	16.017,36
1 2 0 0 Remuneration and allowances	9.648.707	9.557.986,50	9.557.986,50	-	-	90.720,50
1 2 0 2 Paid overtime	3.000	-	-	-	-	3.000,00
1 2 0 4 Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service	30.000	6.154,73	6.154,73	-	-	23.845,27
Article 1 2 0 - Remuneration and other entitlements	9.681.707	9.564.141,23	9.564.141,23	-	-	117.565,77
1 2 2 0 Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 2 2 2 Allowances for staff whose service is terminated and special retirement scheme for officials and temporary staff	-	-	-	-	-	-
Article 1 2 2 - Allowances upon early termination of service	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chapter 1 2 - Officials and temporary staff	9.681.707	9.564.141,23	9.564.141,23	-	-	117.565,77
1 4 0 0 Other staff	450.500	442.845,56	442.845,56	-	-	7.654,44
1 4 0 4 Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	210.100	180.419,66	178.919,66	1.500,00	1.500,00	29.680,34
Article 1 4 0 - Other staff and externals	660.600	623.265,22	621.765,22	1.500,00	1.500,00	37.334,78
Chapter 1 4 - Other staff and outside services	660.600	623.265,22	621.765,22	1.500,00	1.500,00	37.334,78
1 6 1 0 Expenditure on recruitment	3.000	-	-	-	-	3.000,00
1 6 1 2 Further training	90.000	86.654,13	67.773,14	18.880,99	18.880,99	3.345,87
Article 1 6 1 - Expenditure relating to staff management	93.000	86.654,13	67.773,14	18.880,99	18.880,99	6.345,87
1 6 3 0 Social welfare	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 6 3 1 Mobility	19.950	15.006,70	15.006,70	-	-	4.943,30
1 6 3 2 Social contacts between members of staff and other social measures	7.000	6.133,56	4.997,86	1.135,70	1.135,70	866,44
Article 1 6 3 - Measures to assist the institution's staff	26.950	21.140,26	20.004,56	1.135,70	1.135,70	5.809,74
1 6 5 0 European Schools	168.594	168.584,48	168.584,48	-	-	9,52
1 6 5 1 Crèches and childcare facilities	50.000	50.000,00	13.272,00	36.728,00	36.728,00	-
Article 1 6 5 - Activities relating to all persons working with the institution	218.594	218.584,48	181.856,48	36.728,00	36.728,00	9,52
Chapter 1 6 - Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	338.544	326.378,87	269.634,18	56.744,69	56.744,69	12.165,13
TITLE I - EXPENDITURE RELATING TO PERSONS WORKING WITH THE INSTITUTION	11.213.851	11.030.767,96	10.960.938,59	69.829,37	69.829,37	183.083,04



Budget Line	Appropriations Year 2024	Commitments	Payments	Available on Comt	Carry Over Right Y+1	Cancelled Appropriations
2 0 0 Rent	926.620	925.906,33	925.906,33	-	-	713,67
2 0 1 Fitting-out and installation work	-	-	-	-	-	0,00
2 0 2 Cleaning, maintenance and energy consumption	295.969	295.346,62	295.346,62	-	-	622,38
2 0 3 Security and surveillance of buildings	338.120	337.146,00	337.146,00	-	-	974,00
Article 2 0 0 - Buildings	1.560.709	1.558.398,95	1.558.398,95	-	-	2.310,05
Chapter 2 0 - Buildings and associated costs	1.560.709	1.558.398,95	1.558.398,95	-	0,00	2.310,05
2 1 0 Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work	387.000	386.283,57	198.759,29	187.524,28	187.524,28	716,43
Article 2 1 0 - Equipment, operating costs and services relating to data processing and telecommunications	387.000	386.283,57	198.759,29	187.524,28	187.524,28	716,43
Article 2 1 2 - Furniture	3.000	1.584,50	847,00	737,50	737,50	1.415,50
Article 2 1 6 - Vehicles	12.000	12.000,00	1.347,71	10.652,29	10.652,29	-
Chapter 2 1 - Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	402.000	399.868,07	200.954,00	198.914,07	198.914,07	2.131,93
2 3 0 Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables	3.500	3.104,51	2.559,44	545,07	545,07	395,49
2 3 0 1 Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	2.500	2.500,00	1.563,98	936,02	936,02	-
2 3 0 2 Telecommunications	4.500	2.811,98	1.686,98	1.125,00	1.125,00	1.688,02
2 3 0 3 Financial charges	700	700,00	48,00	652,00	652,00	-
2 3 0 4 Other expenditure	3.500	2.356,40	2.151,40	205,00	205,00	1.143,60
2 3 0 5 Legal costs and damages	1.000	-	-	-	-	1.000,00
Article 2 3 0 - Administrative expenditure	15.700	11.472,89	8.009,80	3.463,09	3.463,09	4.227,11
Article 2 3 1 - Translation and interpretation	206.500	104.500,00	84.253,50	20.246,50	20.246,50	102.000,00
Article 2 3 2 - Support for activities	179.000	169.413,00	137.547,00	31.866,00	31.866,00	9.587,00
Chapter 2 3 - Current administrative expenditure	401.200	285.385,89	229.810,30	55.575,59	55.575,59	115.814,11
TITLE II - BUILDINGS, FURNITURE, EQUIPMENT AND MISCELLANEOUS OPERATING EXPENDITURE	2.363.909	2.243.652,91	1.989.163,25	254.489,66	254.489,66	120.256,09



Budget Line	Appropriations Year 2024	Commitments	Payments	Available on Comt	Carry Over Right Y+1	Cancelled Appropriations
Article 3 0 0 - Staff mission expenses	100.000	96.746,38	72.042,36	24.704,02	24.704,02	3.253,62
Article 3 0 2 - Reception and representation expenses	2.000	241,50	241,50	-	-	1.758,50
Article 3 0 3 - Meetings in general	53.000	44.410,23	44.410,23	-	-	8.589,77
Article 3 0 4 - Internal meetings	33.000	29.543,85	26.275,96	3.267,89	3.267,89	3.456,15
Chapter 3 0 - Meetings and conferences	188.000	170.941,96	142.970,05	27.971,91	27.971,91	17.058,04
3 2 0 0 Documentation and library expenditure	3.000	300,00	23,91	276,09	276,09	2.700,00
3 2 0 1 Expenditure on archive resources	46.000	45.310,20	5.015,00	40.295,20	40.295,20	689,80
Article 3 2 0 - Acquisition of information and expertise	49.000	45.610,20	5.038,91	40.571,29	40.571,29	3.389,80
3 2 1 0 Communication and publications	16.000	10.880,19	9.075,24	1.804,95	1.804,95	5.119,81
Article 3 2 1 - Production and dissemination	16.000	10.880,19	9.075,24	1.804,95	1.804,95	5.119,81
Chapter 3 2 - Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	65.000	56.490,39	14.114,15	42.376,24	42.376,24	8.509,61
3 3 0 0 Studies	10.000	-	-	-	-	10.000,00
3 3 0 1 Relations with national/regional ombudsmen and other similar bodies and support for activities of the European Network of Ombudsmen	-	-	-	-	-	-
Article 3 3 0 - Studies and subsidies	10.000	-	-	-	-	10.000,00
Chapter 3 3 - Studies and other subsidies	10.000	0	0	-	-	10.000,00
3 4 0 0 Miscellaneous expenses	2.400	2.150,00	2.150,00	-	-	250,00
Article 3 4 0 - Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	2.400	2.150,00	2.150,00	-	-	250,00
Chapter 3 4 - Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	2.400	2.150,00	2.150,00	-	-	250,00
TITLE III - EXPENDITURE RESULTING FROM GENERAL FUNCTIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE INSTITUTION	265.400	229.582,35	159.234,20	70.348,15	70.348,15	35.817,65
GRAND TOTAL	13.843.160	13.504.003,22	13.109.336,04	394.667,18	394.667,18	339.156,78



Annex 4: Use of appropriations carried-over from 2023

in EUR

Budget Line	CARRY OVER BY RIGHT		CANCELLED APPROPRIATIONS
	Carry over by right	Payments CO Right	
Article 1 0 4 - Mission expenses	11.992,26	5.257,68	6.734,58
Chapter 1 0 - Members of the institution	11.992,26	5.257,68	6.734,58
1 2 0 4 Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service	5.507,55	5.507,55	-
Article 1 2 0 - Remuneration and other entitlements	5.507,55	5.507,55	-
Chapter 1 2 - Officials and temporary staff	5.507,55	5.507,55	-
1 4 0 4 Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	3.172,40	202,44	2.969,96
Article 1 4 0 - Other staff and externals	3.172,40	202,44	2.969,96
Chapter 1 4 - Other staff and outside services	3.172,40	202,44	2.969,96
1 6 1 0 Expenditure on recruitment	2.472,40	137,08	2.335,32
1 6 1 2 Further training	22.846,60	15.365,57	7.481,03
Article 1 6 1 - Expenditure relating to staff management	25.319,00	15.502,65	9.816,35
1 6 3 2 Social contact between members of staff and and other social measures	1.239,29	1.085,70	153,59
Article 1 6 3 - Measures to assist the institution's staff	1.239,29	1.085,70	153,59
1 6 5 1 Crèches and childcare facilities	16.588,00	-	16.588,00
Article 1 6 5 - Measures to assist the institution's staff	16.588,00	-	16.588,00
Chapter 1 6 - Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	43.146,29	16.588,35	26.557,94
TITLE I - EXPENDITURE RELATING TO PERSONS WORKING WITH THE INSTITUTION	63.818,50	27.556,02	36.262,48

Budget Line	CARRY OVER BY RIGHT		CANCELLED APPROPRIATIONS
	Carry over by right	Payments CO Right	
2 0 0 1 Fitting-out and installation work	2.783,90	1.915,00	868,90
Article 2 0 0 - Buildings	2.783,90	1.915,00	868,90
Chapter 2 0 - Buildings and associated costs	2.783,90	1.915,00	868,90
2 1 0 0 Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work	106.287,56	105.893,24	394,32
Article 2 1 0 - Equipment, operating costs and services relating to data processing and telecommunications	106.287,56	105.893,24	394,32
Article 2 1 2 - Furniture	4.310,21	4.270,21	40,00
Article 2 1 6 - Vehicles	9.648,60	2.799,25	6.849,35
Chapter 2 1 - Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	120.246,37	112.962,70	7.283,67
2 3 0 0 Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables	452,50	236,26	216,24
2 3 0 1 Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	1.980,00	240,45	1.739,55
2 3 0 2 Telecommunications	3.300,00	939,23	2.360,77
2 3 0 3 Financial charges	461,00	215,00	246,00
2 3 0 4 Other expenditure	365,00	186,60	178,40
Article 2 3 0 - Administrative expenditure	6.558,50	1.817,54	4.740,96
Article 2 3 1 - Translation and interpretation	8.713,09	7.476,99	1.236,10
Article 2 3 2 - Support for activities	18.000,00	13.066,25	4.933,75
Chapter 2 3 - Current administrative expenditure	33.271,59	22.360,78	10.910,81
TITLE II - BUILDINGS, FURNITURE, EQUIPMENT AND MISCELLANEOUS OPERATING EXPENDITURE	156.301,86	137.238,48	19.063,38



Budget Line	CARRY OVER BY RIGHT		CANCELLED APPROPRIATIONS
	Carry over by right	Payments CO Right	
Article 3 0 0 - Staff mission expenses	25.212,85	11.528,26	13.684,59
Article 3 0 3 - Meetings in general	28.172,72	27.034,41	1.138,31
Article 3 0 4 - Internal meetings	689,00	487,76	201,24
Chapter 3 0 - Meetings and conferences	54.074,57	39.050,43	15.024,14
3 2 0 0 Documentation and library expenditure	173,58	72,00	101,58
3 2 0 1 Expenditure on archive resources	19.217,20	19.067,20	150,00
Article 3 2 0 - Acquisition of information and expertise	19.390,78	19.139,20	251,58
3 2 1 0 Communication and publications	10.963,81	10.270,50	693,31
Article 3 2 1 - Production and dissemination	10.963,81	10.270,50	693,31
Chapter 3 2 - Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	30.354,59	29.409,700	944,89
TITLE III - EXPENDITURE RESULTING FROM GENERAL FUNCTIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE INSTITUTION	84.429,16	68.460,13	15.969,03
GRAND TOTAL	304.549,52	233.254,63	71.294,89

European Ombudsman Annual Report 2024

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1. Introduction

1. Introduction

I am honoured to have taken up the position of European Ombudsman in February 2025 and it is my pleasure to present the Annual Report of the European Ombudsman for 2024, which covers a full year of activities led by my predecessor.

The EU institutions, bodies, offices, and agencies are the public face of the EU. It is crucial for them to maintain accountability, a service-oriented approach, and transparency to foster citizen trust, meaningful engagement, and a robust democratic culture amidst the complexities of the European and global landscape.

In 2024, the European Ombudsman conducted inquiries into a wide range of issues, including the transparency of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council, the Regulatory Scrutiny Board's interactions with lobbyists, Frontex's handling of maritime emergencies, and the Council of the EU's assessment of potential conflicts of interest related to the commercial sponsorship of its rotating presidency.

Requests for public access to documents held by EU institutions, bodies, offices, and agencies continued to account for a significant proportion of inquiries. The European Ombudsman also benefitted from the Parliament's support in early 2024, which endorsed the conclusions of the Ombudsman regarding the need for the European Commission to comply with legal deadlines for processing these requests.

The Office continued to focus on key emerging areas, such as artificial intelligence, which has the potential to enhance the efficiency of the EU public administration but requires rigorous human oversight.

As the newly elected European Ombudsman, I am committed to ensuring that the EU administration maintains a strong citizen-oriented approach to its work. I will uphold the principles of integrity, openness, and dedication, striving to empower every citizen to engage with the EU institutions with confidence that their concerns will be addressed fairly and transparently.

It is an honour for me to begin this new chapter, building on the work of my predecessors and the Ombudsman staff. I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge all those who have held this public responsibility over the past 30 years, from the inaugural Ombudsman, Jacob Söderman, to Nikiforos Diamandouros, and especially Emily O'Reilly and her team for their efforts in ensuring a smooth transition.

I look forward to cooperating with all EU institutions, agencies, offices, and bodies to continue the important mission of this office.

Teresa Anjinho

2. 2024 at a glance

2. 2024 at a glance

01 January

[EU personnel office asked to improve recruitment testing for new EU staff](#)

02 February

[Ombudsman calls for changes to EU search and rescue rules and a public inquiry into deaths in Mediterranean](#)

03 March

[Parliament unanimously approves Ombudsman special report on access to documents](#)

04 April

[Panel debate on how public administrations can be both resilient and responsive in a volatile and polarised political environment](#)

05 May

[Ombudsman delivers a keynote speech at the 13th International Ombudsman Institute World Conference](#)

06 June

[Ombudsman makes proposals to improve transparency of EU-US Trade and Technology Council](#)

07 July

[Ombudsman examines delays in Commission's handling of infringement complaints](#)

08 August

[Communication campaign on improved ethics standards in the EU administration](#)

09 September

[Council encouraged to assess risks around use of sponsorship by rotating presidency](#)

10 October

[Ombudsman finds that Commission delays concerning decisions on dangerous chemicals is maladministration](#)

11 November

[Ombudsman criticises Commission failure to identify documents related to meeting between its President and President of Tunisia](#)

12 December

[Teresa Anjinho elected European Ombudsman by the European Parliament](#)

3. Key topics

3. Key topics

The Ombudsman helps people, businesses, and organisations facing problems with the EU administration. These can include a lack of transparency in decision making, delays or refusals in providing access to documents, ethical concerns, violations of fundamental rights, and contractual issues. The following sections provide an overview of key inquiries related to particular areas.

3.1. Accountability in decision making

With ongoing rapid developments in artificial intelligence (AI) posing challenges when it comes to accuracy, potential bias, explainability, and human oversight in public administration, the Ombudsman [examined](#) how the European Commission decides on and uses artificial intelligence (AI) in its decision making. The Ombudsman welcomed that the Commission has publicly set out its approach to using AI as well as taken measures to ensure its use of AI systems complies with the recently-adopted AI Act. At the same time, the Ombudsman asked the Commission to consider adopting a voluntary code of conduct for systems not deemed 'high risk' to ensure their use is in line with the principles of good administration. The Ombudsman also proposed that public officials responsible for human oversight of AI receive adequate training on the risks and errors produced by AI systems and on how to critically examine and verify AI-produced results. In addition, the Ombudsman encouraged the Commission to reflect on what information it will make publicly available around future AI projects and to consider carrying out public consultations on the possible adoption or development of powerful new AI tools.

Post 8. AI OI - Decision (Social Media platform: Threads)

https://www.threads.net/@euombudsman/post/DDZHYfaouu0?xmt=AQGzvdo4GVuk1fV_tmoozt8T37R1LsNgl0iX-VPBsXhF8A

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/197000>

Following an [inquiry](#), the Ombudsman criticised the Commission for its persistent failure to meet the legal deadlines for preparing authorisation decisions concerning dangerous chemicals. The inquiry found that it takes the Commission an average of 14.5 months to prepare draft decisions even though the deadline for doing so is three months. The Ombudsman noted that these delays represent a threat to human health and the environment because most companies can continue to use the chemical substances during the authorisation process. As a significant cause of these delays may be the lack of sufficient information in many companies' applications, the Ombudsman called on the Commission to ensure companies submit applications that contain all the necessary information and prioritise the rejection of applications that do not. To improve the public's ability to follow progress on each authorisation file as well as understand outstanding issues and reasons for delays, the Ombudsman also asked the Commission to publish more substantial summaries of the committee meetings where national representatives vote on authorisation.

The Ombudsman [encouraged](#) the Council of the European Union to assess whether its guidance for corporate sponsorship of its rotating presidency is effective at mitigating potential conflicts of interest and reputational risks for the EU, and to explore possible measures to help mitigate these risks. The Ombudsman commended the Council for adopting the guidance following an earlier inquiry in 2019 and for taking steps to ensure Member States are aware of it, but said that the Council had still not fully addressed public concerns around the use of corporate sponsorship. In particular, there continues to be a lack of transparency around the

3. Key topics

identity of sponsors, the nature of their support, and what they gain in return. In addition, although the Council had prohibited the use of its own logo, sponsors were still able to use the presidency logo for commercial purposes.

Post 9. Corporate sponsorship of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Social Media platform: X)

<https://x.com/EUombudsman/status/1833778872342786095>

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/192317>

The Ombudsman [welcomed](#) measures taken by the Commission to reduce delays in its handling of complaints alleging infringements of EU law, improve how it communicates with individual complainants, and better communicate information of interest for the public on its dedicated infringements website. Noting that the handling of infringement complaints is a matter of significant public importance, the Ombudsman encouraged the Commission to continue to make improvements in this area.

The Ombudsman also welcomed the Commission's decision to follow the solution proposal to verify whether the information it used to revise the risk classification of brain stimulation devices for non-medical purposes is representative of the most recent scientific evidence. The Ombudsman had opened an [inquiry](#) into the issue after receiving several complaints concerning the decision to reclassify these devices to the highest risk class within the Medical Devices Regulation.

Post 10. The risk management of dangerous chemical substances by the European Commission (Social media platform: Threads)

https://www.threads.net/@euombudsman/post/DBYV8iGIIKp?xmt=AQGzE16ZBSDbisRPbMrAOljZsukU-4Wen_neaLK38VpXXQ

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/194266>

3.2. Participation in decision making

A number of Ombudsman inquiries in 2024 concerned how the EU administration ensures its decision making reflects a diversity of views, including from civil society, various economic sectors, and citizens.

For example, the Ombudsman [asked](#) the European Commission to do more to ensure the composition of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board – a body that reviews and issues opinions on draft impact assessments that accompany proposals for new EU legislation or evaluations of existing legislation – includes sufficient expertise in macro- and microeconomics, social policy, and environmental policy. This diversity of expertise corresponds to requirements set out in a Commission communication on the Board published in 2015. As part of meeting this goal, the Ombudsman suggested the Commission clearly describe the criteria it applies for selecting Board members.

Post 12. The composition of the European Commission's Regulatory Scrutiny Board and how it interacts with interest representatives (Social media platform: X)

<https://x.com/EUombudsman/status/1835954723322462651>

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/192602>

Following a complaint from two non-governmental organisations, the Ombudsman [urged](#) the Commission to reflect on whether the composition and mandate of the EU Energy Platform Industry Advisory Group are appropriate given its current tasks. The Ombudsman also asked the Commission to ensure that where expert groups contain only corporate members for

3. Key topics

justifiable reasons, other interested stakeholders are granted observer status whenever possible. In a different [inquiry](#), the Ombudsman suggested the Commission ensure all relevant stakeholders in the area of pesticides have the opportunity to provide their views on topics that are discussed with industry. The Ombudsman also suggested the Commission develop a dedicated webpage to publish information and documents about all upcoming events it organises on pesticides as soon as they become available.

The Ombudsman welcomed the Commission's creation of a complaint mechanism through which people can raise concerns about the activities and functioning of European Reference Networks (ERNs) – virtual networks that help patients with complex or rare diseases by facilitating discussions between healthcare providers from across Europe. The move to create the complaint mechanism followed an Ombudsman [inquiry](#) into how the Commission handled concerns about guidelines developed by an ERN for Pierre Robin sequence – a rare condition affecting a baby's jaw and mouth.

After environmental organisations raised concerns about how the Commission prepared a proposal to amend the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the Ombudsman opened an [inquiry](#) into how the Commission works on 'urgent' legislative proposals. The organisations questioned whether the public had been appropriately consulted on the proposal as well as whether the Commission had sufficiently examined whether the changes to the CAP affected the long-term environmental sustainability of EU agriculture. The Ombudsman asked the Commission whether it has internal procedures for deciding on whether to bypass impact assessment requirements for urgent legislative proposals and how it observes the principle of evidence-based decision-making in these circumstances.

Post 11. How the European Commission prepared a proposal to amend legislation related to the Common Agriculture Policy (Social media platform: X)

<https://x.com/EUombudsman/status/1837042766553174115>

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/192778>

Following a complaint from a non-governmental organisation, the Ombudsman opened an [inquiry](#) into how the Commission complied with its rules regarding public and stakeholder consultations when it carried out what it calls a 'targeted data collection' on the impact of the wolf population in the EU. In particular, the Ombudsman asked the Commission to clarify the nature and procedural framework of the targeted data collection as well as why it had departed from its Better Regulation Guidelines on stakeholder consultations in this case.

3.3. Fundamental rights

The Ombudsman concluded her [own-initiative inquiry](#) into how the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) meets its fundamental rights obligations when it comes to search and rescue. The inquiry was launched following the drowning of hundreds of people off the coast of Greece when the boat *Adriana* sank in June 2023. The Ombudsman found that current EU search and rescue rules leave Frontex reliant on the actions of Member States when it comes to saving lives at sea. During the *Adriana* incident, Frontex had offered to provide aerial surveillance of the boat to Greek authorities on four separate occasions, but received no response. The Ombudsman called on the EU legislators to consider revising EU rules on search and rescue.

Based on the results of the inquiry, the Ombudsman made a number of suggestions to Frontex. In particular, the Ombudsman suggested that if Frontex's Fundamental Rights Officer identifies persistent violations of fundamental rights by a Member State in responding to

3. Key topics

maritime emergencies or if the agency itself becomes aware of serious violations following formal inquiries or court judgements, it should consider terminating or suspending its activities with that country. The Ombudsman also suggested Frontex develop internal guidelines on issuing emergency signals such as Mayday calls and ensure its fundamental rights monitors are sufficiently involved in decision making on maritime emergencies. In a reply to the Ombudsman, Frontex said it had increased the capacity of the Fundamental Rights Officer team assigned to monitor aerial surveillance and introduced new measures such as a stand-by duty system to improve coverage during specific periods.

Post 4. How the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) complies with its fundamental rights obligations in the context of its search and rescue activities (Social media platform: X)

<https://x.com/EUombudsman/status/1762765156214243443>

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/press-release/182676>

In another migration-related [inquiry](#), the Ombudsman criticised the Commission's failure to inform the public how it assessed human rights risks before signing the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU includes provisions related to combating irregular migration as well as EU financial support for the provision of equipment, for training and technical support for Tunisian border management, for combatting anti-smuggling operations, and for reinforcing control of borders.

Post 5. How the European Commission intends to guarantee respect for human rights in the context of the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding (Social media platform: LinkedIn)

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7254826381065297921/>

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/194322>

The Ombudsman found that despite repeated claims that it was not required to conduct an explicit human rights impact assessment (HRIA) before signing the agreement, the Commission had in fact completed a similar assessment exercise. A formal HRIA would have been preferable as these are normally made public, which can increase the effectiveness of mitigating measures against potential human rights problems.

The Ombudsman called on the Commission to publish a summary of the assessment exercise it conducted. In addition, the Ombudsman asked the Commission to set out and publish concrete criteria for when it would suspend EU funding to projects in Tunisia due to human rights violations. The Ombudsman also asked it to encourage its implementing partners to set up complaint mechanisms where individuals can report alleged violations of their human rights in the implementation of the funds.

3.4. Access to documents

Access to documents continued to be a major topic of inquiries with a new [Ombudsman report](#) on work in this area showing a marked increase in the number of public access complaints in recent years, rising from 95 in 2021 to 167 in 2023. In 2024, the number of complaints rose once again to 212.

One particular problem often encountered by those requesting documents is long delays in the time it takes to have an initial access decision reviewed. In March 2024, the European Parliament unanimously approved the Ombudsman's [special report](#) calling on the European Commission to urgently deal with systemic delays in its handling of access requests. This

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report followed a 2023 inquiry in which the Ombudsman found that the Commission misses the legal deadlines for reviewing initial access decisions in 85% of cases.

The Ombudsman concluded an [own-initiative inquiry](#) into how the Council of the European Union and the Commission handle public access requests for legislative documents. The inquiry revealed that while the two institutions disclosed a large amount of legislative documents, in many instances they applied the exceptions under the EU access to documents law too broadly. For example, when using the protection of ongoing decision-making processes as a reason for refusing access to documents, both institutions relied on arguments that were vague, abstract, and unsubstantiated. Their reasoning, including that disclosure would result in external pressure or public misinterpretation, has also already been dismissed by the European Court of Justice. The Ombudsman asked the institutions to promptly disclose legislative documents, to refuse access only in truly exceptional circumstances, and to inform third parties making submissions during the law-making process that their submissions may be disclosed.

There were also a number of complaint-based inquiries concerning legislative documents. For instance, the Ombudsman [criticised](#) the Commission's refusal to grant access to documents concerning the revision of EU rules on food information to consumers. She also [criticised](#) the same institution's refusal to provide access to stakeholder and Member State input concerning the EU 'Nature Restoration Law'. While the Commission did eventually grant wide access to the documents, it did so only after the law had been adopted, effectively preventing the complainant from using the documents to participate in the decision-making process.

Post 3. The European Commission's refusal to give public access to documents concerning an impact assessment on the revision of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation

(Social media platform: Threads)

https://www.threads.net/@euombudsman/post/DA0NuogolPt?xmt=AQGzE16ZBSDbisRPbMrAOljZsukU-4Wen_neaLK38VpXXQ

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/case/65697>

In another [inquiry](#) concerning legislative documents, the Ombudsman found it regrettable that the Commission had not followed her recommendation to give greater access to documents related to a legislative proposal to combat online child sexual abuse. The Ombudsman found that the Commission should have disclosed the documents to enable the public to scrutinise how stakeholder input had informed its legislative proposal and to verify that it had acted independently and exclusively in the public interest.

Post 1. The European Commission's refusal to give public access to documents concerning meetings with an organisation that works on fighting child sexual abuse

(Social media platform: X)

<https://x.com/EUombudsman/status/1813132276475077092>

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/189565>

In a [positive development](#), the Ombudsman welcomed the European Union Agency for Asylum's (EUAA) decision to follow her solution proposal and grant wide access to documents related to reception conditions in Greek migration management facilities. Noting that under EU access to documents rules, what matters is the content of a document and not its form, the Ombudsman also commended the EUAA's thorough identification of documents for this access request, in particular its email exchanges.

Post 2. How the European Union Agency for Asylum dealt with a request for public access to documents related to reception conditions in several Greek migration management facilities

(Social media platform: Threads)

3. Key topics

https://www.threads.net/@euombudsman/post/DCENDISI7PV?xmt=AQGzE16ZBSDbisRPbMrAOljZsukU-4Wen_neaLK38VpXXO

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/case/66199>

The Ombudsman [asked](#) the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) to provide lists of documents it identifies as falling within the scope of access requests, arguing that failing to do so undermines the right of people asking for access to submit informed requests for review. While Frontex said it would provide lists in the future, the Ombudsman remained dissatisfied that it would only do so 'where deemed necessary' and 'on a case-by-case basis'. She said she would monitor Frontex's new practice and may revisit the matter based on future possible complaints.

In another [inquiry](#) related to the identification of documents, the Ombudsman criticised the Commission's failure to identify any documents covering exchanges with Member States or internal exchanges concerning the preparation of a meeting between its President, the Italian and Dutch Prime Ministers, and the President of Tunisia on an important Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). She noted that holding such a high-level meeting would have required prior exchanges between different departments in the Commission, as well as with Member States. Despite this, none of the 13 documents the Commission identified concerned these types of exchanges and the Commission did not provide any reasonable explanation for their absence.

3.5. Transparency

The Ombudsman made a [series of proposals](#) to the European Commission to improve transparency and stakeholder participation in the EU-US Trade and Technology Council (EU-US TTC) – a platform for transatlantic coordination on regulatory issues such as the digital economy, supply chain resilience, and artificial intelligence. In particular, the Commission should make public agendas ahead of ministerial and working group meetings, as well as provide guidance to its departments so that they can ensure publicly available information is consistent across the various working groups. The Ombudsman also asked the Commission to do more to ensure it obtains sufficiently inclusive and diverse input from interested parties and clearly communicate how the EU-US TTC considers this input. In addition to the EU-US TTC, the Ombudsman encouraged the Commission to apply these suggestions to other trade and technology councils, such as the one launched with India in 2023.

Post 13. The European Commission and transparency in the context of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council (TTC) (Social media platform: X)

<https://x.com/EUombudsman/status/1805880375371341991>

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/188532>

The Ombudsman opened an [own-initiative inquiry](#) into how the Commission applies rules meant to ensure transparency and stakeholder participation when it comes to the nearly 1 100 expert groups that provide it with specialised advice. While the Commission revised its rules on the creation and operation of expert groups in 2016 following a previous Ombudsman inquiry, civil society and academics have raised concerns about how the Commission is applying these new rules. The Ombudsman's questions to the Commission focus on issues such as how it ensures public information about expert groups is meaningful and up-to-date as well as how individual expert groups decide whether their deliberations should be public.

While acknowledging that the Commission has a duty to protect its staff from undue influence, the Ombudsman found that it should have more proactively and comprehensively explained

3. Key topics

its decision to restrict the publication of contact details in its 'Whoiswho' online EU staff directory. The Ombudsman had opened an [inquiry](#) into the issue after an organisation representing civil society organisations from across Europe complained that the Commission's decision to limit publication to managers undermined transparency and made it more difficult for the public to interact with it.

Post 14. How the European Commission applies the rules governing expert groups and other similar entities, notably as regards the transparency of the membership and deliberations of the groups (Social media platform: X)

<https://x.com/EUombudsman/status/1808437581366833365>

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/188925>

3.6. Ethics

The Ombudsman welcomed the European Commission's decision to start obliging staff moving to the private sector to mention that restrictions were imposed on them in public communications about their future position. The Commission implemented the new policy after the Ombudsman [asked](#) it about the move of a director in its competition department to the Brussels office of a US law firm. To make the new policy more effective, the Ombudsman suggested the Commission require staff to describe these restrictions accurately and meaningfully.

In another revolving doors case, the Ombudsman opened an [inquiry](#) concerning how the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) dealt with the moves of two former staff members to positions related to combatting online child sexual abuse, a subject they allegedly worked on at Europol. The complainant in this case was concerned with how the agency assessed the risk of potential conflicts of interest before approving the two staff members' post-service activity requests.

To improve transparency and public scrutiny around the Commission's ability to ensure the post mandate activities of former commissioners are compatible with their obligations, the Ombudsman [suggested](#) the Commission make public all future opinions adopted by the Independent Ethics Committee concerning these activities. Former commissioners are required to give the Commission two months' notice when they intend to pursue a professional activity during the two years following their departure. The Commission then examines whether the intended activity is compatible with their post service obligations, consulting with the Independent Ethics Committee in cases where it is related to the former commissioner's portfolio. Under current practices, if a commissioner withdraws an approval request following a negative opinion from the ethics committee, the Commission does not publish the committee's opinion.

Post 7. The European Commission's guidance for outgoing commissioners (Social media platform: LinkedIn)

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7255491042970415104>

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/194467>

Following an [inquiry](#), the Ombudsman asked the EU Transparency Register's Secretariat to carry out more thorough and meaningful investigations when it comes to public complaints concerning alleged breaches of the code of conduct by registered organisations. In particular, the Ombudsman suggested that the Secretariat seek to verify information that is doubtful or uncertain through independent sources as well as ask registrants for additional information when needed. In addition, the Secretariat should ensure clear guidance when it comes to

3. Key topics

determining whether different organisations have links with each other. The Ombudsman had opened the inquiry following a complaint about how the Secretariat had handled claims that two organisations had failed to disclose their links with the food industry and with each other, as well as the sources of their funding.

Post 6. How the Secretariat of the EU Transparency Register handled complaints concerning the information provided by two entities on the Register (Social media platform: X)

<https://x.com/EUombudsman/status/1755881222436184495>

<https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/news-document/181772>

The Ombudsman [found](#) that the Commission did not properly assess conflict of interest allegations concerning its Agriculture Commissioner. An organisation had lodged an infringement complaint with the Commission concerning Polish agricultural legislation. The complaint was assigned to the Commission's agriculture department, after which the organisation alerted the Commission that the Agricultural Commissioner's brother was among the members of the Polish Parliament who had proposed the legislation at issue. The Ombudsman found that the manner in which the Commission assessed the potential conflict of interest was flawed and asked it to review its decision making on the infringement complaint. The Ombudsman also suggested that, in future similar cases, the Commission should suspend relevant decision making until it has established whether there is a conflict of interest.

The Ombudsman concluded an [own-initiative inquiry](#) into how the Commission ensures experts evaluating European Defence Fund (EDF) proposals do not have conflicts of interest. Contrary to the general practice for the evaluation of proposals meant to receive EU funding, the Commission is not required to make public the names of the experts it consults for EDF-backed projects. The Ombudsman found that the Commission largely relies on the information submitted by candidates in its assessment and encouraged it to proactively look for additional information that may indicate conflicts of interest. The inquiry also showed that there is no systematic review of the financial interests of experts. To help remedy this, the Ombudsman suggested the Commission ask candidates to complete a detailed declaration of interests.

Building on an earlier initiative, the Ombudsman conducted an own-initiative [inquiry](#) into how the Commission deals with third parties paying for work travel and hospitality for its senior staff. The inquiry revealed shortcomings in how the Commission records its assessment of potential conflicts of interest in these cases. To rectify this, the Ombudsman suggested the Commission record its substantive conflict of interest assessment of requests as well as the nature and value of third party contributions to work travel.

3.7. Recruitment

The Ombudsman carried out several complaint-based inquiries related to the use of remote testing by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO). The inquiries concerned how EPSO had treated candidates' concerns related to problems they had encountered during remote tests administered by EPSO's contractor, including technical problems in launching tests, a lack of or improperly working tools on the testing platform, and excessively long waiting times before a supervisor was available.

In six inquiries, the Ombudsman found maladministration. In particular, the Ombudsman noted that EPSO had failed to properly address the complainants' arguments, had demonstrated a lack of flexibility in doing so, or had taken unreasonable decisions. She also criticised EPSO for often providing complainants with contradictory information concerning

3. Key topics

how to prove they had faced problems and for rejecting complaints even when candidates had followed the instructions for reporting technical issues.

Following the Ombudsman's decisions, EPSO decided to give four complainants an opportunity to redo the tests. In addition to the cases that were closed with a finding of maladministration, EPSO also settled two other cases during the Ombudsman's inquiry by deciding to invite the complainants to retake the tests. In response to a suggestion and remarks by the Ombudsman, EPSO said it would ensure it is possible to retroactively review the functionality of tools used by candidates during the tests and make it possible in the future to automatically provide candidates with a copy of their answers and the correct answers after testing.

3.8.Grants and contracts

During the course of an Ombudsman [inquiry](#), the European Commission agreed to cancel a debit notice for ineligible costs issued to the coordinator of a consortium that carried out an EU-funded project supporting networks of young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors. Instead, it said it would recover from each project partner the ineligible costs attributable to them. The Commission had originally argued it was not possible to recover the costs directly from project partners but reassessed the case after the Ombudsman opened an inquiry. In another [inquiry](#) into a similar issue, the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) agreed to reverse its decision to recover certain illegible costs from an Austrian research and educational institution related to a grant agreement under the Trans-European Mobility Programme for University Studies (Tempus programme). Among other things, the Austrian institution had taken issue with EACEA's decision to issue the debit note to it and not to specific beneficiaries and to consider ineligible the costs of Ukrainian staff.

The Commission also said it would cancel a debit notice to a non-governmental organisation (NGO) involved in an EU-funded project in Burkina Faso. The NGO argued that the Commission was wrong in finding that certain costs related to the project were ineligible for the funding. During the Ombudsman's [inquiry](#) into the issue, the Commission reassessed the matter and found that the costs could in fact be considered eligible under the grant agreement.

The Ombudsman [welcomed](#) the Commission's decision to follow her solution proposal to reimburse nearly EUR 10 000 in staff costs claimed by an NGO for one of its staff members who participated in an EU programme for supporting higher education in the ASEAN region. Even though external auditors had concluded that the staff costs were reasonable, the Commission originally argued that the employment contract for the staff member did not meet the minimum requirements for such contracts. It reversed its decision after the Ombudsman found certain issues in its assessment.

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

The European Ombudsman helps people, businesses, and organisations facing problems with the EU's administration by dealing with the complaints they submit, as well as by seeking to promote good administrative practices by proactively identifying broader systemic issues within the EU institutions.

The Ombudsman is committed to continuously improving its procedures to ensure inquiries are handled in the most efficient and effective manner, providing complainants with an optimal experience. In 2024, the Ombudsman took steps to refine its online complaint form, incorporating intuitive guidelines that assist complainants in submitting comprehensive and well-documented complaints that fall within the Ombudsman's mandate. This improvement helps the Office quickly initiate the complaint-handling process upon receipt. Additionally, the Ombudsman introduced machine translation of online complaints to facilitate the swift assignment of complaints to case handlers.

The Office's diverse team of case handlers and the multilingual website reflect the Ombudsman's commitment to helping those seeking assistance in all 24 official languages of the EU.

While the Ombudsman is not always in a position to inquire into all complaints received, the Office nonetheless tries to help all those who seek assistance, for example by providing advice on other possibilities for redress.

4.1. Type and source of complaints

4.1.1. Overview of complaints and strategic inquiries

The Ombudsman may open an inquiry only into complaints that are within the mandate and have fulfilled the necessary 'admissibility criteria', such as the complainant having previously tried to resolve the matter directly with the institution involved.

The themes of the Office's work derive from the Ombudsman's mandate and the complaints received, which account for most cases. However, in addition to the core work on complaints, the Ombudsman also conducts wider strategic inquiries and initiatives into systemic issues in the EU institutions.

1 - Advice and complaints in 2024

17 770	People helped
14 782	Advice given through the Interactive Guide on the Ombudsman's website
2 264	New complaints handled
724	Requests for information replied to by the Ombudsman's services

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

2 - Inquiries by the European Ombudsman in 2024

415	Inquiries opened
411	complaint-based
4	own-initiative
427	Inquiries closed
421	complaint-based
6	own-initiative

3 - Topics of strategic inquiries in 2024

Ongoing

- The risk management of dangerous chemical substances by the European Commission
- How the European Commission deals with third parties paying for work travel and hospitality for its staff members and assessed potential conflicts of interest
- How the European Commission applies the rules governing expert groups and other similar entities, notably as regards the transparency of the membership and deliberations of the groups
- How the European Commission dealt with the use and publication of a study produced under an EU-funded contract

Closed

- The time taken by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) to deal with requests for public access to documents
- The use by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) of remote testing in selection procedures to recruit EU civil servants
- How the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) complies with its fundamental rights obligations in the context of its search and rescue activities
- How the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission handle requests for public access to legislative documents
- How the European Commission intends to guarantee respect for human rights in the context of the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding
- How the European Commission ensures that there are no conflicts of interest with external experts who assist it in evaluating projects under the European Defence Fund

4 - Topics of strategic initiatives in 2024 (requests for clarification, not formal inquiries)

Ongoing

- How the European Commission ensures that the revised rules governing the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme (JSIS) for EU staff guarantee comprehensive coverage for disability-related health needs

Closed

- The European Commission and transparency in the context of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council (TTC)
- How the European Commission intends to guarantee respect for human rights in the context of the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding
- Sponsorship of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union
- How the European Commission handles revolving door moves by senior staff members from its Directorate-General for Competition to corporate law firms
- The European Commission's ethics rules for outgoing commissioners and post-mandate employment

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

- How the European Commission decides on and uses artificial intelligence
- The time taken by the European Commission to deal with complaints about infringements of EU law and how it communicates about infringement procedures

5 - National origin of complaints registered and inquiries opened by the European Ombudsman in 2024

Country	Number of complaints registered	Number of inquiries opened
Spain	358	39
Germany	227	51
Belgium	223	79
Italy	125	34
Poland	124	7
France	114	18
Netherlands	85	32
Portugal	83	6
Ireland	82	21
Romania	62	7
Greece	58	16
Bulgaria	56	9
Austria	50	15
Czechia	38	17
Hungary	38	6
Sweden	33	6
Finland	32	5
Cyprus	29	5
Luxembourg	25	4
Denmark	23	3
Slovakia	22	4
Croatia	20	2
Malta	17	1
Latvia	13	3
Lithuania	12	1
Slovenia	8	1
Estonia	7	1
Other country	298	18
Not Known	5	0
Total	2 267	411

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

4.1.2. Complaints outside the Ombudsman's mandate (OMCs)

In 2024, the European Ombudsman processed nearly 1 400 complaints that did not fall within her mandate, mostly because they did not concern the work of the EU administration. Nearly 36% of these complaints came from Spain, Germany, and Poland. Spain alone accounted for 19%, with the two other countries accounting for 10% and 7% respectively.

People mostly turned to the Ombudsman with issues concerning equal treatment or discrimination, consumer protection, court cases, corruption, and employment. More than half of these out of mandate complaints primarily arose from citizens' dissatisfaction with their dealings with national, regional or local public authorities, governments and public service bodies, and national or international courts (such as the European Court of Human Rights). Citizens directed at least 20% of complaints to private entities, including banks, online businesses and platforms, airlines, and institutions of learning.

Other out of mandate complaints the Ombudsman received concerned the political or legislative work of EU institutions. The ongoing humanitarian crises in Ukraine and in the Middle East also generated a number of complaints.

The Ombudsman replied to all those seeking help in the language of their complaint or of their preference. The replies clarified the Ombudsman's mandate and, as far as possible, advised complainants to turn to other bodies that could help. While these were usually national and regional ombudsman institutions, the Ombudsman also guided complainants to citizens' advice bureaux and other consumer protection organisations in the Member States.

When appropriate, complainants were advised to contact EU institutions (mostly the European Commission and the European Parliament), or networks, such as SOLVIT and the European Consumer Centres.

Where complainants were unhappy with specific EU legislation, the Ombudsman generally advised them to turn to the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions. She referred those who raised issues relating to the implementation of EU law to national or regional ombudsmen, or to EU networks such as Europe Direct.

The continued use in 2024 of streamlined templates for handling out of mandate complaints, first introduced in 2022, further increased the speed at which the Ombudsman's staff replied to these complaints.

6 - Number of complaints 2020-2024

	Complaints outside the mandate of the European Ombudsman	Complaints inside the mandate of the European Ombudsman	Total
2020	1 420	728	2 148
2021	1 437	729	2 166
2022	1 483	755	2 238
2023	1 506	886	2 392
2024	1 389	875	2 264

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

4.2. Against whom?

7 - Inquiries conducted by the European Ombudsman in 2024 concerned the following institutions

Inquiries	Own initiatives Inquiries	415 inquiries opened (411 + 4 OIs included)		
266	4	European Commission	270	65.0%
27		European Personnel Selection Office	27	6.5%
16		European External Action Service	16	3.9%
14		European Border and Coast Guard Agency	14	3.4%
11		European Anti-Fraud Office	11	2.6%
9		European Parliament	9	2.2%
8		European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol)	8	1.9%
8		European Investment Bank	8	1.9%
5		European Union Agency for Asylum	5	1.2%
14		Other EU Institutions or bodies ⁽¹⁾	14	3.4%
33		Other EU Agencies ⁽²⁾	33	8.0%
411	4		415	100.00%

(1) Council of the EU (3), ECB (3), EDPB (2), EDPS (1), APPF (1), CJEU (1), EU Council (1), CoR (1) and EuroHPC JU (1)

(2) ENISA (4), EUIPO (4), REA (3), ERA (3), EACEA (3), eu-LISA (2), CEPOL (2), EIOPA (2), HADEA (2), CdT (1), EUSPA (1), EIT (1), EMA (1), ELA (1), CINEA (1), EFSA (1) and Eurofound (1)

4.3. About what?

8 - Subject matter of inquiries closed by the European Ombudsman in 2024

Transparency, accountability (38.2%+4%)	180	42.2%
Culture of service	74	17.3%
Recruitment	60	14.1%
Proper management of infringement procedures	35	8.2%
Good management of personnel issues	34	8.0%
Proper use of discretion (including in infringement procedures)	30	7.0%
Respect for procedural rights	29	6.8%
Grants, procurement, contracts	19	4.4%
Respect for fundamental rights	17	4.0%
Ethics	9	2.1%
Other	8	1.9%
Public participation in EU decision-making	6	1.4%
Sound financial management	4	0.9%
Whistleblowing	1	0.2%

Note: In some cases, the Ombudsman closed inquiries with two or more subject matters. The above percentages therefore total more than 100%.

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

4.4. Results achieved

9 - Action taken by the European Ombudsman on new complaints dealt with in 2024

1 195	Advice given or case transferred to another complaints body	52.8%
658	Reply sent to inform the complainant that no further advice could be given	29.1%
411	Inquiry opened	18.1%

10 - Evolution in the number of complaint-based and own-initiative inquiries by the European Ombudsman

Year	Inquiries opened	Inquiries closed
2015	261	277
2016	245	291
2017	447	363
2018	490	545
2019	458	560
2020	370	394
2021	338	305
2022	348	330
2023	398	372
2024	415	427

11 - Results of inquiries closed by the European Ombudsman in 2024

Settled by the institution, solution achieved, solution partly achieved	261	61.1%
No further inquiries justified	67	15.7%
No maladministration	66	15.5%
Maladministration found	34	8.0%
Dealt with by a Court (Art. 2.7)	8	1.9%
Dropped by the complainant	1	0.2%

Note: In some cases, the Ombudsman closed inquiries on two or more grounds. The above percentages therefore total more than 100%.

12 - Length of inquiries closed by the European Ombudsman

in 2013 (13 months on average)	in 2024 (less than 6 months on average)	
101(22%)	212(50%)	Cases closed within 3 months
171(37%)	152(36%)	Cases closed within 3 to 12 months
65 (14%)	44 (10%)	Cases closed within 12 to 18 months
124(27%)	19 (4%)	Cases closed after more than 18 months ¹

¹ Some complex cases require several rounds of consultations with the complainant and the institution concerned.

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

4.5. Impact and achievements

One of the overarching goals of the European Ombudsman is to achieve tangible improvements for complainants and the public in the EU administration. The Ombudsman does this by making proposals in the form of solutions, recommendations, and suggestions. The Ombudsman can also promote improvement through strategic initiatives, which are not formal inquiries. In addition, the Ombudsman may prompt an institution to settle a matter even before a formal solution proposal or recommendation is made.

4.5.1. Acceptance rate

The acceptance rate is the percentage of positive replies to the total number of proposals (solutions, recommendations, and suggestions) made by the Ombudsman. As the Ombudsman gives institutions up to six months to follow up on suggestions made in her decisions closing inquiries, the acceptance rate for 2024 covers cases closed in 2023.

In 2023, the EU institutions cooperated satisfactorily with the Ombudsman in 82% of instances. Of the 92 proposals the Ombudsman made to correct or improve their administrative practices, the EU institutions reacted positively to 75 of them.

13 - Acceptance rate

The acceptance rate is the percentage of positive replies to the total number of proposals (solutions, recommendations and suggestions) made by the Ombudsman.	
2019	79%
2020	81%
2021	79%
2022	81%
2023	82%

4.5.2. Broader impact

The acceptance rate captures responses from the institutions to proposals at a particular point in time and does not fully capture the long-term impact of the Ombudsman's work.

For example, the European Commission published dedicated guidelines in 2024 regarding the participation of commissioners in national election campaigns. The publication of the guidelines follows [letters](#) from the Ombudsman to the Commission and the European Parliament in 2020 seeking to clarify how the Code of Conduct for Commissioners is applied in the context of national election campaigns. In its reply to the Ombudsman, the Commission said it would draw up guidelines on this issue.

The Commission also provided the Ombudsman with some preliminary information regarding its assessment of the exposure of its departments to lobbying by the tobacco industry. This

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

assessment follows an Ombudsman [finding of maladministration](#) in 2023 for the Commission's failure to ensure all its departments proactively publish details of all meetings with tobacco lobbyists as well as its failure to keep minutes of all meetings. The Ombudsman is looking forward to the Commission's conclusions of this exercise as well as information about what further measures it intends to take to deal with the risk of undue influence on EU decision making from the tobacco industry.

In early 2024, the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency (EISMEA) informed the Ombudsman that it had issued new guidelines on how staff should handle situations where a change during a Horizon 2020 or Horizon Europe project is likely to lead to the termination of the grant agreement. The new guidelines follow an earlier Ombudsman [inquiry](#) into how it terminated a grant agreement because the funding recipient had lost its status as a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) after being taken over by another company. In that inquiry, the Ombudsman issued suggestions for improvement after finding that, while EISMEA's decision to terminate the grant was reasonable, delays and communication problems in the termination process itself constituted maladministration.

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5. Communication and cooperation

5.1. Communication

Ensuring visibility is an important element of the Ombudsman's work to reach stakeholders, the EU administration, and civil society. The communication activities of the Ombudsman are not only focused on the office's inquiries, but also generally on the promotion of transparency, ethics, and accountability in the EU administration.

In the course of 2024, key inquiry documents were made more easily accessible through the addition of a dynamic section on the website homepage displaying recent updates. Several improvements to the website navigation were also implemented to make finding content more straightforward.

At the annual press conference held in March, the Ombudsman presented the annual report for 2023 and discussed key inquiries and developments concerning ethics, access to documents, and fundamental rights. An [Ombudsman event in April](#) focused on how public administrations can be both resilient and responsive in a volatile and polarised political environment. The event featured a discussion with Lord Kim Darroch, former British Ambassador to the United States, as well as a panel discussion with the Ombudsman, European Commissioner for Budget and Administration Johannes Hahn, and Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Professor of Comparative Public Policy at LUISS Guido Carli in Rome.



Caption 2 - The event "Guarding the guardians – the survival of independent public administrations in volatile and polarised times", at the European Ombudsman's Office.

In September, the Ombudsman held the year's main event for stakeholders, including national and regional ombudsmen, Members of European Parliament (MEPs), civil society, academics, and journalists. The event acknowledged the contribution of stakeholders in strengthening the reach and impact of the Office and included speeches by the Vice-President of the European Parliament Katarina Barley, Commission Executive Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, and Commission Vice President Věra Jourová.

5. Communication and cooperation



Caption 3 - Emily O'Reilly during her speech at the Concert Noble.

To promote and celebrate good administration, previous winners of the Ombudsman's Award for Good Administration were the subject of an [online web story](#) published by the office. Another web story published during the year highlighted [ethics standards in the EU administration](#). These web stories were supported by social media campaigns.

The Ombudsman attended and gave speeches at several events organised by EU and international institutions, non-governmental organisations, and universities. These included the [Institute of International and European Affairs](#), the European Parliament's [Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs](#), the [International Ombudsman Institute](#), [Maastricht University](#), as well as the [Italian National Anti-Corruption Authority and the European Network for Public Ethics](#). During a workshop organised on tobacco lobbying by the World Health Organisation, the Norwegian Cancer Society, and the McCabe Centre for Law & Cancer, the Ombudsman [gave a speech](#) on the importance of ensuring transparency and preventing undue influence on EU policies.

In terms of press coverage of the Ombudsman's work in 2024, there were around 5 000 media articles mentioning or directly reporting on the Ombudsman's activities, with 66% of all coverage coming from EU countries.

In 2024, the Ombudsman's number of social media followers kept rising, with particularly high growth seen on LinkedIn and Instagram. Increased and more targeted profile activity, as well as a growing number of users looking for EU-related content on these two platforms, were important factors that influenced positive performance. The Ombudsman's Instagram account saw about 33% growth in total followers (4 513 new followers). On LinkedIn, the number of followers increased by nearly 25% (+ 3 659). On X, the number of followers reached 37 200 in December 2024, which represented a 2.8% increase (+ 1 014).

In 2024, the Office opened accounts on Threads and Bluesky to expand its audience and further diversify its social media coverage.

5. Communication and cooperation

The Ombudsman and staff members also continued their outreach activities by giving interviews to the press, attending academic conferences, and speaking to visitor groups.

5.2. Relations with the EU

5.2.1. European Parliament

The European Ombudsman is accountable to the European Parliament, which elects the head of the office every five years. In 2024, following the European elections in June, the Parliament elected a new European Ombudsman in December.

To encourage citizens to vote in the June elections, the Ombudsman collaborated with Parliament's Directorate-General for Communication and also organised a common statement signed by Members of the European Network of Ombudsmen.



Caption 4 - Handover of the Annual Report to President Metsola in Strasbourg.

The Ombudsman's annual meeting with the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, took place in March, right after the Parliament gave its unanimous support in plenary to the Ombudsman's special report on access to documents. The vote was a testament to the excellent cooperation between both institutions in holding the EU administration to account.

The Ombudsman continued to present the findings in key inquiries to the relevant parliamentary committees such as to the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and to the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI). The Office also participated in hearings linked to the annual budgetary procedures in the Budget (BUDG) and Budgetary Control (CONT) committees. The Ombudsman continued to work with Members of European Parliament (MEPs) from across the political spectrum to ensure smooth cooperation and to make sure newly elected MEPs better understand the role of the Office.

5. Communication and cooperation



Caption 5 - Vice President Barley during her speech at the Concert Noble.

At the Ombudsman's stakeholder reception in September, Parliament's Vice President Katarina Barley gave the opening speech.

5.2.2. Committee on Petitions

The Committee on Petitions (PETI) and the European Ombudsman share the common goal of ensuring that the EU institutions uphold citizens' fundamental rights. In 2024, their cooperation continued to make sure people's concerns are considered at EU level, including on matters related to the rights of persons with disabilities.

Following the EU elections, the Ombudsman met with the newly appointed PETI Chair Bogdan Rzońca and the Head of the Committee Secretariat, as well as with the whole PETI Committee in its new configuration. This was particularly important given that PETI was the committee in charge of organising the public hearings ahead of the election of the new European Ombudsman. These meetings showed the interest and commitment of many MEPs to ensuring a fair and transparent Ombudsman election and their recognition of the work of the current Ombudsman.

5.2.3. European Commission

The European Commission is the largest EU institution and its work affects all EU citizens. For this reason, a high percentage of the complaints received by the Ombudsman concern the Commission's work.

The Ombudsman's Office retained a good working relationship with the Commission throughout the year. Commission Executive Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič and Vice President Věra Jourová spoke at the Ombudsman's stakeholder reception in September. The Ombudsman

5. Communication and cooperation

also met with the Commission's Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General to discuss the institution's challenges concerning access to EU documents. At staff level, close contacts were maintained between the Ombudsman's Office and the Commission to ensure complainants' concerns could be addressed as effectively as possible.



Caption 6 - Commission Executive Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič and Ombudsman O'Reilly in Strasbourg.

5.2.4. Other institutions, agencies, and organisations



Caption 7 - The Ombudsman and members of her Cabinet with Acting Executive Director Uri and other members of EFSA's Operational management.

5. Communication and cooperation

It is important for the Ombudsman to maintain close relations with other EU institutions, bodies, offices, and agencies. In 2024, the Ombudsman met with a Member of the European Court of Auditors and spoke at a conference on the transparency of EU recovery funds organised by the Court of Auditors. The Ombudsman also had meetings with the heads and staff of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Training Foundation. In addition, there were meetings with the Director-General of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and with the Members of OLAF's Supervisory Committee, as well as with the Members of the European Central Bank's Ethics Committee.

Good relations with different parts of the EU administration are an integral part of the Ombudsman's strategy 'Towards 2024'. Through close cooperation, the Ombudsman can help achieve a long-lasting and positive impact on the EU administration.

5.2.5. UN Disability Rights Convention

The European Union is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), a binding international human rights instrument to 'promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity'.

Compliance with the UN CRPD in the EU is monitored by the [EU Framework for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), which was chaired by the European Disability Forum in 2024. As a member of this framework, the Ombudsman pays close attention to the EU administration's implementation of the UN CRPD. The Framework prepared an updated contribution, which included input from the Ombudsman, for the UN CRPD Committee to help ensure the Committee can complete in 2025 its periodic review of the EU's performance in relation to the Convention.

Post 15. Speech at PETI Committee - Annual workshop on the rights of people with disabilities (Social media platform: Instagram)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DDFPdEotcP4/>

The Ombudsman dealt with a number of inquiries in 2024 related to the rights of persons with disabilities. In two decisions ([125/2023/VS](#) and [173/2023/VS](#)), the Ombudsman found issues with how the EU administration provided reasonable accommodation to persons with disabilities applying for a job. The Ombudsman underlined that, as a party to the UN CRPD, the EU should lead by example in complying with UN CRPD standards. The Ombudsman emphasised that reasonable accommodation should be considered at every step of selection and recruitment procedures and that EU institutions should have in place safeguards to ensure that reasonable accommodation measures are provided on the day of tests and irrespective of whether they or a contractor is in charge of organising them.

Following the Ombudsman's findings in a 2023 [inquiry](#), the European Commission initiated a process in 2024 for the whole EU administration and revised the applicable rules to ensure a fair individual assessment of all applications for an allowance aimed at assisting staff taking care of children with disabilities.

The Ombudsman's Office also presented its work related to the rights of persons with disabilities at several events throughout the year.

5. Communication and cooperation

5.3. European Network of Ombudsmen

The European Network of Ombudsmen (ENO) is an informal network coordinated by the European Ombudsman, consisting of over 95 offices of ombudsmen and similar bodies from across Europe, as well as the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions.

In 2024, the European Ombudsman organised an ENO webinar on two topics: the implementation of the EU Whistleblower Directive and problems linked to free movement. It featured presentations from the Federal Ombudsmen of Belgium and the Deputy Ombudswoman of Croatia, as well as from representatives of the Office of the Austrian Ombudsman Board, of the Czech Ombudsman, and of the Slovak Public Defender of Rights.

An important ENO tool is the queries procedure. Through this procedure, ENO members are able to ask questions about EU law that arise during the course of their inquiries, with the European Ombudsman obtaining expert replies for them from the EU institutions. Query topics dealt with in 2024 concerned the European Health Insurance Card, restrictions to the free movement of people between EU Member States, EU insurance rules, and mutual recognition of judgments in criminal matters.

14 - Complainants advised to contact other institutions and bodies by the European Ombudsman in 2024 and complaints transferred (1 195)

Member of the European Network of Ombudsmen	178	15%
National or regional ombudsman or similar body	166	14%
European Parliament's Committee on Petitions	12	1%
National administrations and other organisations	953	79%
European Commission	34	3%
SOLVIT	10	1%
Other EU institutions, bodies or agencies	20	2%

5.4. Ombudsman's visit to Italy

As part of the regular visits to EU Member States and the offices of EU agencies, the Ombudsman visited Italy in 2024.

During the visit, the European Parliament's local office in Milan hosted a public event to showcase the work of the Ombudsman Office. The Ombudsman gave a [speech](#) and took questions from an audience that included representatives from civil society and consumer associations as well as university students and journalists.

At the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in Parma, the Ombudsman held meetings with the agency's acting Executive Director Bernhard Url, the management team, and staff. Topics of discussion included how EFSA works to implement the Ombudsman's proposals, notably on access to documents, and the measures it has in place to deal with potentially problematic moves by its staff to the private sector. EFSA also presented a pilot project that uses artificial intelligence to handle access to documents requests, with the aim of increasing efficiency and ensuring those requesting documents are kept informed of the status of their applications.

5. Communication and cooperation

During a visit to the European Training Foundation in Turin, the Ombudsman met with the agency's Director Pilvi Torsti and her management team. Director Torsti outlined her plans for reorganisation of the agency and she and the Ombudsman discussed the challenges faced by smaller institutions in efficiently managing their human and financial resources. The Ombudsman also presented the work of the Office to the European Training Foundation's staff.

Post 16. Mission to Italy (Social media platform: Instagram)

https://www.instagram.com/p/DBqa_7DOUir/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWF1ZA%3D%3D

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6. Resources

6.1. Budget

The Ombudsman's budget is an independent section of the EU budget. It is divided into three titles. Title 1 covers salaries, allowances, and other expenditure related to staff. Title 2 covers buildings, furniture, equipment, and miscellaneous operating expenditure. Title 3 covers the expenditure resulting from general functions that the institution carries out. In 2024, budgeted appropriations amounted to EUR 13 843 160.

To ensure the effective management of resources, the Ombudsman's internal auditor regularly checks the internal control systems and the financial operations that the Office carries out. As is the case with other institutions, the Ombudsman is also subject to the European Court of Auditors' review, which did not identify any specific issues in the context of its external audit work.

6.2. Use of resources

Every year, the Ombudsman adopts an [Annual Management Plan](#), which identifies specific actions that the office expects to take to meet the objectives and priorities of the Ombudsman's five-year strategy '[Towards 2024](#)'. The 2024 Annual Management Plan is the fourth one based on this strategy.

The Ombudsman has a highly qualified multilingual staff. This ensures that the Office can deal with complaints in the 24 official EU languages and raise awareness about the Ombudsman's work throughout the EU. The Office's hybrid work policy, which is results-oriented and trust-based, supports the Ombudsman's ambition to promote a modern, digital, and flexible work environment.

In 2024, there were 75 posts in the Ombudsman's establishment plan, in addition to which, there was an average of 7 contract agents working with the Office. 19 trainees also gained work experience at the Ombudsman's Office over the course of the year.

Detailed information on the structure of the Ombudsman's Office and the tasks of the various units is available on the [Ombudsman's website](#).

7. How to contact the European Ombudsman

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7. How to contact the European Ombudsman

If you require a large print version of this publication, please contact the European Ombudsman's office.

This *Annual Report* is published on the Internet at:

www.ombudsman.europa.eu

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