European Ombudsman

Annual Management Plan

Year 2014

Strasbourg
12 February 2014

EN

Contents

1. Introduction

The European Ombudsman seeks fair outcomes to complaints against European Union institutions, encourages transparency and promotes an administrative culture of service. The Ombudsman aims to build trust through dialogue between citizens and the European Union and to foster the highest standards of behaviour in the Union's institutions.

The right to complain to the Ombudsman is a fundamental right of citizenship of the Union. Residents, companies and associations also enjoy this right.

As well as providing an independent and impartial service to complainants, the Ombudsman works proactively to improve the quality of administration and encourage full respect for citizens' rights.

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 is completely independent.

The Annual Management Plan for 2014 (AMP 2014) is the last to be based on the Strategy adopted in September 2010. Section 2 below contains further information on the Strategy. As well as identifying priorities for 2014 and specific actions to achieve them, the AMP 2014 includes provision for (i) evaluation of the results of the Strategy and (ii) preparation of a new multi-annual framework

Following an explanation of the structure and organisation of the office in Section 3, Section 4 sets out the priorities on which the Ombudsman intends to focus in 2014. It identifies the actions that will be carried out for this purpose and allocates responsibility for them among the different operational entities in the Ombudsman's office.

The actions are formulated in as concrete a way as possible in order to facilitate measurement and reporting of our performance (see section 5 below).
The AMP 2014 is based on an overall budget of 9 857 002 Euro and 67 staff. Section 6 provides detailed information on the human and budgetary resources available to carry out the planned activities.

Annex 1 contains an explanation and visual representation of the key management documents of the Ombudsman's office. It explains the relationship among the various documents, including the present AMP.

Annex 2 consists of a PowerPoint presentation of the Operating Framework of the office, which explains the key processes that help deliver the Ombudsman's objectives. The Operating Framework was drawn up in the framework of the Office's on-going cooperation with the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM).

2. Multi-Annual perspective

The AMP 2014 is the fourth and last to be based on the Strategy adopted in September 2010. This announced that, by the end of 2014, we aspire to:

● measurably increase our effectiveness as an alternative means of resolving disputes with the Union institutions;
● be recognised as a driving force to put citizens at the centre of the Union's administrative culture; and
● more fully demonstrate our on-going commitment to identifying and meeting the expectations of complainants and of other stakeholders.

The strategy document translates these aspirations into five objectives, which are reflected in the graphic below:

For each of the five objectives, the strategy document identifies a number of priorities.

In establishing the priorities for 2014, due account was taken of what has been done so far and where progress still needs to be made fully to achieve the objectives set out in the strategy, with a particular emphasis on increasing visibility, impact and relevance.

The AMP 2014 provides for evaluation of the results of the Strategy and the preparation of a new multi-annual framework.

3. The organisation of the office

The organisational structure of the Ombudsman's office consists of the Ombudsman's private office (Cabinet), the Secretariat-General and two Directorates.

A table indicating the allocation of staff among the operational entities of the office is provided in section 6.1 below. This table also indicates, by reference to the Operating Framework, the main category of process that each operational entity delivers.

Cabinet

The **Cabinet** 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 Cabinet manages the Ombudsman's agenda, correspondence and records.

Secretariat-General

The **Secretariat-General (SG)** is responsible for strategic management, policy development and coordination of the activities of the Office.

The **Communication Unit (COMM)**, which reports to the Ombudsman and the SG, is responsible for informing individuals and organisations throughout the Union of the role and activities of the Ombudsman. The Unit maintains and promotes relations with the media, organises the Ombudsman's information visits and events, and liaises with other EU institutions on outreach initiatives. It drafts and produces the Ombudsman's publications and promotional material, maintains and develops the Ombudsman's websites, implements the institution's visual identity, coordinates the European Network of Ombudsmen and, more generally, is responsible for relations with ombudsman associations in Europe and beyond.

The two Directorates

Each of the two Directorates consists of three Units, two of which are Complaints and Inquiries Units. The two Directors thus share the tasks of dealing with complaints and inquiries. In addition, one of them is responsible for the Personnel, Administration and Budget Unit and the other is responsible for the Registry.

The Complaints and Inquiries Units (C&I) deal with the complaints sent to the Ombudsman. They conduct the inquiries needed to clarify possible cases of maladministration, look for solutions, and prepare proposals for friendly solutions, draft recommendations, decisions closing inquiries and special reports to the European Parliament. The Units also propose and carry out inquiries that are based on the Ombudsman's own-initiative power and deal with Queries sent by other members of the European Network of Ombudsmen.

The **Personnel, Administration and Budget Unit (PAB)** is the internal service provider of the Office. The Unit is responsible for all administrative matters related to the institution's personnel, human resources, budget and finance and represents the Ombudsman in a number of interinstitutional committees.

As regards personnel and human resources, the Unit deals with recruitment, management of individual rights, internal communication and training.

As regards other administrative matters, the Unit deals with buildings, office space and equipment and coordinates translation requests.

As regards budget and finance, the Unit prepares the budget estimates for presentation to the budget authorities and ensures that the Ombudsman's Office complies with the applicable financial rules. It guarantees that available resources are used economically and efficiently, and are protected adequately. Additionally, the Unit establishes and implements the appropriate internal control mechanisms and prepares information for the various budgetary control authorities.

The **Registry (REG)** deals with the registration, distribution and transmission of all complaint-related documents received or sent by the office. It is also responsible for dealing with the complaints that fall outside the Ombudsman's mandate. The Registry is also in charge of the Ombudsman's archives and library and the development and implementation of a public register of documents, as well as playing an important role in the handling of requests for information and access to documents. Finally, the Registry also coordinates the development and implementation of a new complaint management system for the office.

The provision of IT support for the office is coordinated by the **IT Management Group (ITMG)**, consisting of the heads of PAB, COMM and REG. The remit and tasks of the ITMG include (i) drafting and subsequently making proposals for updating an overall multi-year IT plan for the office; (ii) co-ordinating the provision of information for preparation of the annual budget, the Annual Management Plan and the Annual Activity Report, in relation to IT matters; and (iii) ensuring operational cooperation in relation to IT matters.

4. Actions for 2014

This section sets out the priorities on which the Ombudsman will focus in 2014 and the new actions that will be taken to help deliver on these priorities. The list of actions is not exhaustive and does not include all the activities, in particular routine activities, that will be carried out. Managers are encouraged, if they find it useful, to produce more comprehensive activity plans.

The priorities are presented in the order, and under the objective and numbering, in which they appear in the Strategy.

The tables below list, under each priority, the actions to be taken in 2014 and indicate the organisational entities responsible for carrying them out.

● Where an action requires co-operation between organisational entities, the lead entity is, where applicable, indicated in **bold**.
● In cases where co-operation among Complaints and Inquiries Units is required, the table indicates "C&I". The two Directors will jointly ensure the implementation of these actions.
● The tables also indicate where the Ombudsman's Cabinet and/or the SG should be directly involved in the implementation of an action.

Actions under objective 1 - **Listen**

Priority 1.1 - Obtain regular feedback from complainants on their experiences and their views about the quality of service we provide.	
● Fine-tune the web-based instruments that can be used to obtain input from complainants (e.g., feedback survey, online complaint form) and begin systematic harvesting of comments made by complainants on social media platforms.	COMM
● Develop regular internal reporting that integrates the results of the different sources of complainant feedback.	COMM
● Analyse the use made by complainants of the request for review and service complaint procedures.	SG

Priority 1.2 - Further develop contacts with EU institutions at all levels to understand better how we can help them nurture and promote a culture of service.	
● Share our experience of developing a public register with relevant EU agencies *(also under priority 3.2 below)*.	**REG**/COMM
● Follow up the invitation of the Commission's Secretary General to hold joint workshops to discuss categories of complaint.	**Directors**/SG
● Analyse the results of the programme of visits to EU agencies and develop proposals for the Ombudsman's future interaction with the agencies *(also under priority 3.4 below)*.	**SG**/Cabinet/ Directors/C&I

Priority 1.5 - Learn from the European Network of Ombudsmen about best practices in the Member States that could be adopted at EU level.	
• Provide guidance and support for EO staff to help them make better use of the Extranet for collaboration with the Network.	COMM
• Consult the members of the Network about gender equality policies in their offices with a view to identifying good practices.	**Cabinet**/COMM
• Harvest information from Network members about good practices at national level in the implementation of international human rights obligations (e.g., ECHR, UNCRPD).	**Cabinet**/COMM

Actions under objective 2 - **Deliver**

Priority 2.1 - Strengthen the capacity of the office to handle complaints even more effectively and efficiently.	
• Review the inquiry-related procedures with the aim of enhancing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of our work.	Directors/C&I
• Rethink the different kinds of complaints and inquiry documents we produce to make them better focused, clearer and written in language that is more appropriate for their intended purpose and audience (s*ee also priority 4.1 below*).	Cabinet/SG/C&I
• In light of the above, revise the templates used for inquiry documents.	**Directors**/REG/C&I
• Rethink the process of proposing friendly solutions so as to increase the rate of acceptance by institutions.	SG/Directors/C&I

Actions under objective 3 - **Persuade**

Priority 3.2 - Emphasise the Ombudsman's role as a rich resource to help institutions improve their administrative practices.	
• Share our experience of developing a Public Register with relevant EU agencies (*also under priority 1.2 above).*	REG
• Develop and promote the concept that, where appropriate, institutions should put in place their own internal complaints procedures.	SG/Directors/ C&I
• Identify potential areas in which the Ombudsman could issue guidelines on good administration and develop a process for producing and issuing such guidelines.	SG/Directors/ C&I

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" style="background-color:#7FBF00">Priority 3.4 - Focus more on systemic questions, by identifying areas of malfunctioning in the EU administration and opportunities for improvement and by using the Ombudsman's power to open own-initiative inquiries.</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Strengthen the institutional capacity of the office to analyse and tackle systemic problems effectively through own-initiative inquiries.</td><td>SG/Directors</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Analyse the results of the programme of visits to EU agencies and develop proposals for the Ombudsman's future interaction with the agencies (also under priority 1.2 above).</td><td>SG/Cabinet/ Directors/C&I</td></tr>
</table>

Actions under objective 4 - **Communicate**

Priority 4.1 - Develop a range of publications in paper and electronic format, targeted to the needs of our specific audiences..	
• Rethink the intended purpose and audience of decisions following inquiries *(also under priority 2.1 above)*.	Cabinet/SG/C&I
• Merge the annual report and the overview into a short, dynamic, reader-friendly, and interactive publication.	COMM
• Produce a legal analysis of cases as a separate publication to the annual report.	Directors/C&I
• Develop a social media optimised version of the interactive guide for potential complainants.	COMM
• Compile and regularly distribute to MEPs information on cases and on the Ombudsman's activities that could be relevant for them.	**Cabinet**/COMM

Actions under objective 5 - **Adapt**

Priority 5.2 - Consistently monitor and increase the quality of our work.	
• Review the implementation of the 2010-2014 Strategy and develop a new multi-annual framework. This should include a review of our key performance indicators.	**SG**/All
• Apply for the next level of recognition by the European Foundation for Quality Management.	**SG**/All
• Review, and where appropriate increase the use of interinstitutional cooperation to obtain administrative services.	PAB

• Revise internal rules and revisit internal policies in light of the new Staff Regulations.	PAB
• Improve the tools and processes used to monitor the expenditure cycle with a view to maximising the use of information available in the ABAC system and avoiding unnecessary duplication.	PAB
• Establish the role of information officer and review procedures for dealing with requests for public access to documents.	SG/Directors/REG
• Review the current administrative procedures related to processing acknowledgements of receipt of new complaints with an eye to increasing efficiency.	REG

Priority 5.3 - Put in place an effective, integrated IT system to manage the office's overall workflow.	
• Draw up a multi-year IT strategy, focusing on maximising integration, interoperability, and user centricity.	ITMG
• Launch the new complaint management system ensuring adequate staff training in its use.	**REG**/PAB
• Explore ways to increase interoperability between the website and relevant internal applications.	**COMM**/REG/PAB
• Cooperate with the European Commission and the European Parliament to introduce a new IT system for the management of human resources (Sysper II).	PAB

5. Measuring and reporting on our performance

Progress in achieving our objectives is measured using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). They are set out below, together with targets and reference figures for 2014.

The KPIs and the relevant targets are reviewed and, if necessary, revised on an annual basis.

Key Performance Indicators, measurement and targets for 2014

	Subject matter	Measurement / evaluation criteria	Results achieved in 2013	Targets or reference figures for 2014
KPI 1	Strategy and Governance	Assessment by the European Ombudsman's staff and external stakeholders.	72%[1] (satisfaction rate)	Reference figure: 72%
KPI 2	Complaints and inquiries	Number of inquiries closed in relation to the number of ongoing inquiries at the end of the previous exercise.	1.1[2]	1.1
		Proportion of cases in which the admissibility decision is taken within one month.	Average: 89%[3]	90%
KPI 3	Complaints and inquiries	Proportion of inquiries closed within (i) 12 and (ii) 18 months.	12-m: 73% 18-m: 81%	12-m: 75% 18-m: 90%
KPI 4	Complaints and inquiries	Relation between (i) the number of friendly solutions and draft recommendations and (ii) the number of decisions in which maladministration is found.	1.5[4]	2.5
KPI 5	Complaints and inquiries	Number of systemic own-initiative inquiries launched.	8	6

[1] KPI 1 was calculated on the basis of the replies to questions related to strategy and governance contained in a general staff survey conducted in December 2013.

[2] To obtain this figure, the number of inquiries closed is divided by the number of ongoing inquiries at the end of the previous exercise.

[3] The breakdown is as follows: (1) cases outside the mandate: 95%, (2) cases within the mandate but inadmissible: 83%, (3) no grounds cases: 69%, and (4) cases leading to an inquiry: 76%.

[4] To obtain this figure, the sum of cases in which the Ombudsman made a proposal for a friendly solution or a draft recommendation is divided by the number of cases closed with a critical remark in which the Ombudsman did not first make a proposal for a friendly solution or a draft recommendation.

	Subject matter	Measurement / evaluation criteria	Results achieved in 2013	Targets or reference figures for 2014
KPI 6	Provide our external stakeholders with timely, useful and easily accessible information	External stakeholders contacted (frequency and significance).	Press releases: 23	24
			Press cuttings: 2 016	2 100
			Events involving multipliers: 176	180
			Advice given through the Interactive Guide to contact a member of the European Network of Ombudsmen: 11 100	12 000
			Unique visitors to the website: 435 086	440 000
			Queries: 2	5
			Contributions to discussions on the European Network of Ombudsmen Extranet: 125	130
KPI 7	Support Services (HR)	Staffing levels, measured as a proportion of maximum full time equivalents (FTEs).	88.2% (based on 78 FTEs)	89.2% (based on 78 FTEs)
KPI 8	Support Services (HR)	Average professional training days per person.	4 days	4 days
KPI 9	Support Services	Degree of satisfaction of the European Ombudsman's staff.	82.4%[5]	Reference figure: 82.4%
KPI 10	Support Services (finance)	Implementation of the budget (composite indicator).	Budget implementation: 91.8%	92.8%
			Carried-over appropriations paid: 92.7%	96%
			Number of payments beyond 30 days: 18	0

Scoreboards to monitor and report on our performance against the above targets and on the basis of the KPIs will be updated periodically.

[5] KPI 9 was calculated on the basis of the score obtained in reply to a question related to overall job satisfaction in a general staff survey conducted in December 2013.

6. Resources for the implementation of the 2014 priorities
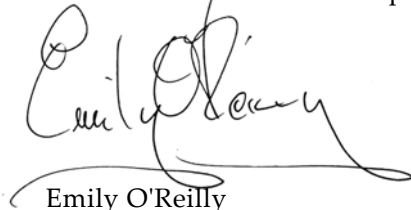
6.1. Human resources

The table below shows the allocation of human resources in the various operational entities and the categories of processes of the Operating Framework which each of these entities is predominantly involved with.

	Allocation of resources	Management processes	Core processes	Supporting processes
Ombudsman Cabinet	AD: 3 AST: 2		X	
Secretariat-General	AD: 2 AST: 1	X	X	
Directors	AD: 2 AST: 1	X	X	
Complaints and inquiries	AD: 22 Contract agent: 1 Trainees: 4		X	
Communication	AD: 3 AST: 6 Contract agent: 1		X	
Registry	AD: 1 AST: 9 Contract agents: 3		X	X
Personnel, Administration and Budget	AD: 3 AST: 10 Contract agents: 2			X

6.2. Budgetary resources by operational line

Budget Lines	Resources in Euro
A-1 6 1 2 Further training	55 000
A-1 6 3 2 Social contacts between members of staff	6 000
A-2 0 0 0 Rent	715 000
A-2 1 0 0 Purchase, servicing and maintenance of IT	83 000
A-2 1 2 Furniture	15 000
A-2 1 6 Vehicles	19 000
A-2 3 0 0 Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous	20 000
A-2 3 0 1 Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	12 000
A-2 3 0 2 Telecommunications	7 000
A-2 3 0 3 Financial charges	1 000
A-2 3 0 4 Other expenditures	4 000
A-2 3 1 Translation and interpretation	580 000
A-2 3 2 Support for activities	94 000
A-3 0 0 Staff mission expenses[6]	157 000
A-3 0 2 Entertainment and representation expenses	13 000
A-3 0 3 Meetings in general	36 000
A-3 0 4 Internal meetings	35 000
A-3 2 0 0 Documentation and library	11 500
A-3 2 0 1 Archive resources	15 000
A-3 2 1 0 Communication & publications	290 000
A-3 3 0 1 Studies	14 000
A-3 4 0 0 Miscellaneous expenses	1 500

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Annexes: 2
- Explanation and visual representation of the key management documents of the Ombudsman's office.
- The Ombudsman's Operating Framework

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[6] In order to implement the work programmes set out in the Annual Management Plan, indicative mission ceilings per unit are established at the beginning of each year. These ceilings are monitored by the Secretary-General, the Directorates and the HoUs with the support of the PAB Unit.

Annexes

Annex 1 - Explanation and visual representation of the key management documents of the Ombudsman's office

Key management documents and how they relate to one another

We produce a number of documents that serve an important internal function: they help us to guide and manage our activities in line with the mission statement, which explains the value that we add for the EU and its citizens.

They also contribute to the external accountability of the Office and are all publicly available. Some are required by law. Others the Ombudsman himself decided to produce.

The various documents can be understood as answering different questions, as shown below. (The italicised questions in parentheses are simplified versions used in the visual representation that follows).

1 The **Strategy**. What are our objectives and priorities for the period covered by the Strategy? How do we measure them through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)? (*What impacts do we aim to achieve?*)
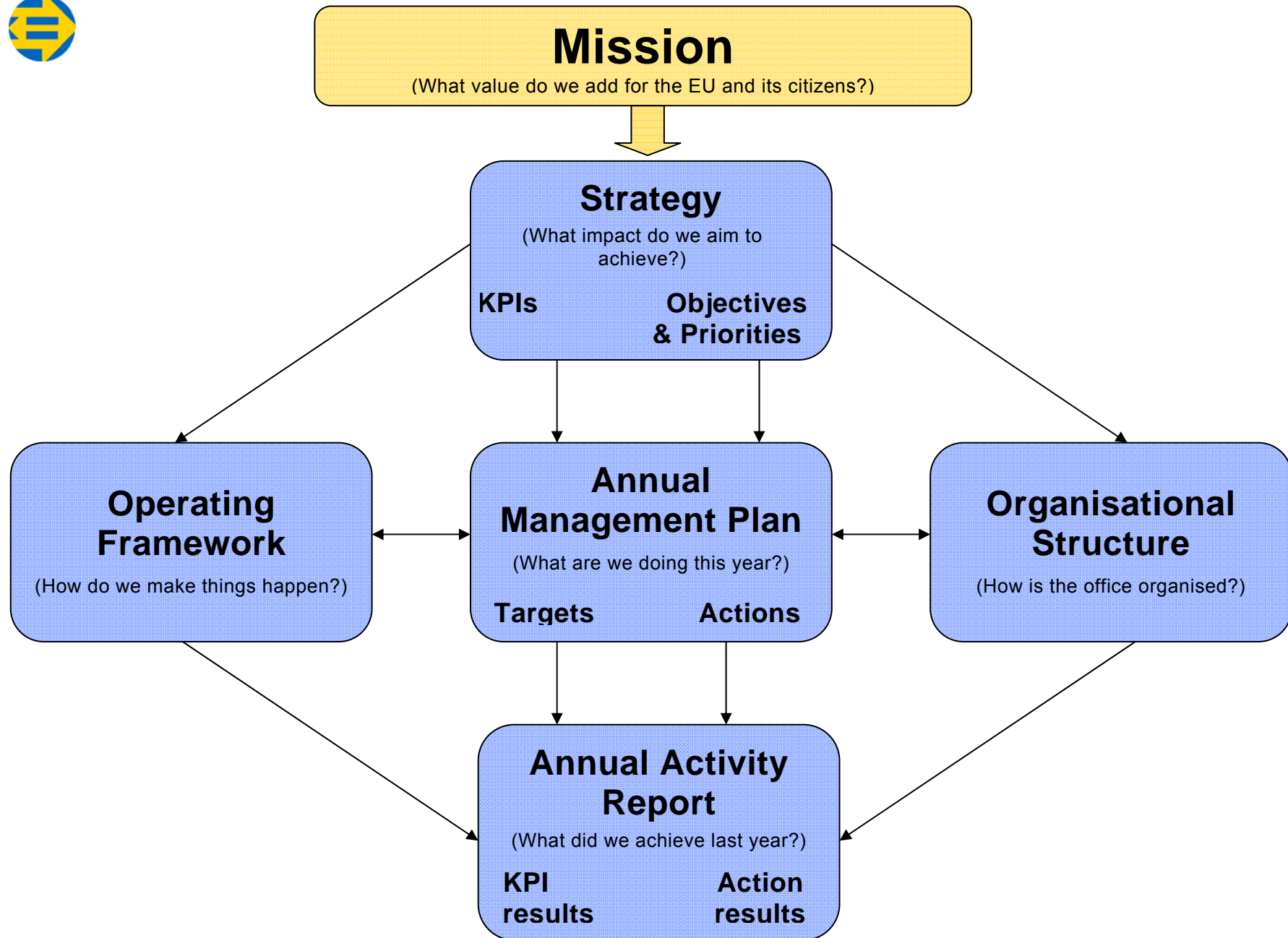
2 The **Operating Framework**. What are our key activities and processes for delivering the Strategy? (*How do we make things happen?*)

3 The **Organisational Structure** (Organigramme). How is the Office organised so as to be as effective and efficient as possible? (*How is the office organised?*)

4 The **Annual Management Plan (AMP)**. How are our resources allocated among different activities and processes this year? What are the targets for the KPIs this year? And what specific actions should have priority? (*What are we doing this year?*)

5 The **Annual Activity Report**. How well did we do in achieving the priorities and KPI targets set in the AMP? (*What did we achieve last year?*)

A visual representation of how the various documents relate to one another can be found on the next page.

Mission

(What value do we add for the EU and its citizens?)

Strategy

(What impact do we aim to achieve?)

KPIs

Objectives & Priorities

Operating Framework

(How do we make things happen?)

Annual Management Plan

(What are we doing this year?)

Targets

Actions

Organisational Structure

(How is the office organised?)

Annual Activity Report

(What did we achieve last year?)

KPI results

Action results

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Annex 2 - The Ombudsman's Operating Framework

(PowerPoint presentation)