



European Ombudsman

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European Ombudsman

Speaking Engagements Policy

The European Ombudsman (EO) and her staff receive a significant number of invitations to speak at events. The following guidelines are intended to ensure that (a) the speaking engagements are in line with the Ombudsman's strategy "Towards 2019" and working principles and (b) the office treats and assesses invitations in a consistent way.

Leading principles:

- Communicate effectively with stakeholders and citizens.
- Use the Ombudsman's and staff's time in a most efficient and productive way.
- Comply with relevant ethical rules and guidelines.
- Protect the Ombudsman's independence, impartiality and reputation.

Invitations assessment item-list:

- organiser is on the EU Transparency Register or in the process of registering, if activities fall within the scope of the register (necessary requirement¹);
- organisation is transparent about its funding and membership;
- rules governing the organisation of the event²;
- possible conflict of interest or perception of conflict of interest (for example: event organised by a complainant, political affiliations of the organiser);
- possible involvement of representatives of the tobacco industry;
- topic, timeliness and added value;
- possible multiplier effect (umbrella organisations);
- composition of panel (status of other speakers) and representativeness of views;
- imposition of participation fees on event participants³;
- existence of sponsors;
- cost-benefit analysis, especially if participation implies mission costs⁴.

¹ Interinstitutional Agreement, Official Journal of the European Union, 22.07.2011. If there is uncertainty as to whether the activities of organisation X fall under the scope of the Transparency Register, the cabinet shall request the TR Secretariat for a written answer.

² It is noted that the Ombudsman's or staff's identity, affiliation and contributions to events are not restricted by Chatham rules, even if the event they participate in is held under these rules.

³ If yes, further information about the amount of the participation fee and the beneficiary(ies) shall be required.

⁴ Preference to be given to events organised in Brussels and Strasbourg, invitations to events outside Europe (EU, EEA, and candidate countries) will be accepted only if there is a specific interest for the Ombudsman institution.



Sponsoring or co-organising events

The Ombudsman does not, in principle, co-organise or sponsor events. However, the EO may co-organise events with national ombudsmen in the context of the European Network of Ombudsman. Exceptionally, the EO may also collaborate with the European Parliament or academic networks in organising events that fall within the Ombudsman's mandate and do not, in any way, jeopardise the institution's independence.

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Receiving and processing a speaking request/invitation

- The cabinet is responsible for processing all speaking requests addressed to the Ombudsman.
- Invitations to the Ombudsman received by the services will be re-directed to the cabinet. When appropriate and in collaboration with the cabinet, the Communication Unit can also be involved in handling speaking requests addressed to the Ombudsman.
- The cabinet maintains an accepted invitations list, which includes the following information: event organiser, co-host, date, place, topic, type of contribution, contact person, representation (and if so, who).
- According to the Code of Conduct for the EO, events attended by the Ombudsman are announced, to the greatest extent possible, on the EO website. Similarly, public speeches given by the Ombudsman are made available on the EO website, where a text is available.
- Any planned meetings of the Ombudsman, members of her Cabinet, or her staff with representatives of the tobacco industry (including lawyers, advisors, consultants and lobbyists acting on behalf of tobacco companies) are published on the Ombudsman's website, as are the list of participants of such meetings and the minutes drawn up after a meeting has taken place in line with the UN FCTC Article 5.3.
- Information about all speaking events attended by the Ombudsman is kept by the cabinet and shall be made available upon request.



Steps taken by the cabinet:

- check inviter's profile
- check details of event (subject matter; scale and nature of event; other invited and confirmed speakers; type of contribution and deadlines for delivering EO's speech/presentation; composition of audience and list of attendees, if possible; event location/building; presence of photographers);
- check Ombudsman's calendar and, if the Ombudsman is not available, inquire whether a representative could also be an agreeable option;
- consult with the Secretary-General and appropriate colleagues, if necessary;
- assess importance of the event and compatibility with strategic objectives and/or more topical interests;
- assess compatibility with acceptance principles (see assessment list above);
- suggest Ombudsman's participation or representation, or suggest rejection of invitation.

Positive reply - the Ombudsman participates

Steps to be taken by the cabinet:

- reply;
- co-ordinate speech writing or presentation;
- arrange mission (if applicable)⁵;
- explore possibilities for other meetings, if there is a mission involved;
- arrange who will accompany the Ombudsman⁶;
- prepare briefing note on organiser/other speakers;
- announce the event on website and add on the internal calendar of events.

Positive reply – the Ombudsman is represented by a staff member

Steps to be taken by the cabinet and the staff member:

- consult with the Secretary-General for possible options and, where appropriate, identify a representative;
- inform organiser and ask to contact the Ombudsman's representative directly for practical details;
- Ombudsman's representative ensures that the internal calendar is updated⁷;
- Ombudsman's representative co-ordinates with the Secretary-General and the cabinet about the content/main message of his/her contribution;

⁵ The Ombudsman does not accept either honorarium/fee for speaking engagements or reimbursement for travel and accommodation expenses (see Code of Conduct http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/resources/ethics_and_conduct/home.faces).

⁶ The colleague accompanying the Ombudsman collaborates with the cabinet and responsible managers for preparing the Ombudsman's participation in the event (e.g. drafting of speech, briefing notes, exchange of practical information etc.).

⁷ The purpose of this calendar is to provide comprehensive information about the Ombudsman's and staff's speaking engagements. The calendar is accessible to all colleagues and those speaking in events representing the Ombudsman are responsible for updating it.



- Ombudsman's representative hands in to the Secretary-General and cabinet a short note (evaluation, further suggestions, networking) following the event.

Criteria for deciding who will represent the Ombudsman⁸:

- expertise and professional background;
- seniority;
- availability;
- language competences;
- current workload;
- venue of event (e.g. Brussels/Strasbourg/Member State).

Declining an invitation

Steps to be taken by the cabinet:

- reply;
- explore other ways of addressing possible questions the organiser might have or addressing the audience, if this is of interest to the institution (e.g. recorded video message).

Guidelines for staff

Colleagues receiving personal invitations in their official capacity⁹

EO staff are encouraged to seek and be open to speaking engagement invitations relevant to the EO's mandate and strategy.

When undertaking speaking engagements in their official capacity, EO staff represent the Office. They remain bound by the principles of confidentiality, loyalty and impartiality. They are expected to act professionally and with respect and courtesy and to avoid any conflict of interest. Registration of the event organiser on the EU Transparency Register (or event organiser being in the process of registering) is a prerequisite for participation, if the organiser falls within the scope of the register.

Prior to accepting or rejecting an invitation, colleagues are invited to assess it against the rest of the criteria included in the above assessment check-list and to seek prior approval.

EO staff should not accept a fee for speaking. Furthermore, the office shall not pay, in principle, registration fees when a staff member is invited and participates in an event as a speaker, chair or discussant.

Steps to be taken by the EO representative:

- notify his/her manager and the Secretary-General;
- secure the agreement of their line manager and the Secretary-General for participation (also the cabinet in case of managers)¹⁰;

⁸ Not in order of significance.

⁹ Invitation to present EO's work; subject matter of event pertaining to EO's work.



- request a mission (if applicable)¹¹; no leave request is required and costs are incurred by the EO;
- update the internal calendar of events;
- consult with the line manager, the Secretary-General and cabinet on content/key message of his/her presentation;
- hand in a short note to the Secretary-General and cabinet (evaluation, further suggestions, networking) following the event.

Colleagues receiving invitations to speak in conferences/events in their private capacity

Even if EO staff members speak at conferences or events in their private capacity, they still remain bound by the principles of confidentiality, loyalty and impartiality. They are expected to act professionally and to avoid any conflict of interest. In this context, EO staff members should make it clear that they are expressing their own views, which in no way bind or prejudice the views and official position of the European Ombudsman. Any cost related to participation in conferences or events in EO staff members' private capacity is to be borne by the person concerned.

Any listing of their attendance at such events should not list their professional role.

Steps to be taken by the colleagues:

- notify their managers and the Secretary-General;
- request authorisation for external activity (if applicable);
- request leave (if applicable).

Review

The present speaking engagements policy repeals and replaces the previous speaking engagements policy adopted on 22/09/2015.

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¹⁰ If necessary, the office might suggest another EO representative from the one receiving the invitation.

¹¹ If a mission is required, the agreement of the cabinet/manager should be included in the mission request.