



Decision

of the European Ombudsman closing the file on the Ombudsman's visit to the European Police College (CEPOL) - OI/10/2011/IJH

The background to the visit

1. In 2011, the European Ombudsman made a visit to CEPOL.
2. Following that visit, correspondence was exchanged about his findings and suggestions. All the relevant correspondence and documents are available on the Ombudsman's website.
3. The visit to CEPOL was one of three pilot visits. On the basis of the experience gained from the three pilots, a programme of visits was subsequently developed and implemented in the framework of the own-initiative inquiry power entrusted to the Ombudsman by Article 228 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Although the visit to CEPOL was not originally announced as an own-initiative inquiry, it was subsequently classified as such for administrative purposes.
4. The Ombudsman's suggestions following the visit to CEPOL and the latter's responses are summarised below, together with the Ombudsman's assessment and conclusions.

The Ombudsman's suggestions

5. The Ombudsman made the following suggestions:

(i) CEPOL should aim to make the homepage of its website, as well as information on its functions and language policy, available in all 23 Treaty languages. By greeting citizens who visit the website in their own language and explaining its functions to them, CEPOL would demonstrate clearly that it recognises that all citizens of the European Union have a legitimate interest in its work.

(ii) During his visit to the European Medicines Agency (EMA), the Ombudsman was informed that EMA has produced guidance for its staff on whistleblowing, and that its internal newsletter reminds staff twice a year of the existence of this guidance and where to find it. The Ombudsman encourages CEPOL also to give guidance to its staff on their obligations and rights in this regard and to regularly remind staff of the guidance in its own internal newsletter.



(iii) CEPOL should give high priority to appointing a legal adviser. An in-house legal adviser could provide advice more rapidly than an external legal service and ensure that CEPOL benefits fully from inter-agency co-operation through participation in the inter-agency legal network.

CEPOL's responses and the Ombudsman's assessment

6. CEPOL responded to the above suggestions in letters dated 31 May, 12 September, 15 September and 13 October 2011.

Languages on CEPOL's website

7. CEPOL informed the Ombudsman that its communication team had carried out a feasibility study to identify key areas of the website that could be translated into all Member State languages. Subsequently, CEPOL informed the Ombudsman that important information regarding CEPOL and its functioning had been translated and that a new webpage, accessible from the website's homepage and all top level pages through a banner, had been created to host these translations.

8. The Ombudsman considers this response helpful. The Ombudsman notes, however, that when visited by his services on 25 September 2013, CEPOL's homepage appeared to contain information only in English and that no banner leading to a multi-lingual page was visible.

Guidance to staff on whistleblowing

9. CEPOL informed the Ombudsman that, in response to the suggestion from the Ombudsman, its Director adopted a Decision (019/2011/DIR, 16 October 2011) on the reporting of suspected improprieties. Furthermore, CEPOL took contact with EMA, which shared documentation and procedures for the reporting of suspected improprieties. All CEPOL staff attended a meeting at which training and guidance was provided. Furthermore, the information and supporting documentation was to be made available to all staff on-line and the obligation of staff to report any suspicions of unethical practice or behaviour was to be added to the CEPOL staff induction programme.

10. The Ombudsman welcomes CEPOL's constructive responses to this suggestion.

Appointment of a legal adviser

11. The Ombudsman regrets that CEPOL did not respond to this suggestion.

C. Conclusions

Following his visit to CEPOL, the Ombudsman closes the file with the following conclusion:



The visit to CEPOL was not originally announced as an own-initiative inquiry. The Ombudsman therefore considers that it would be inappropriate to envisage any further steps in relation to the suggestions made following the visit. The Ombudsman may, however, decide to re-visit certain matters in the future, through an own-initiative inquiry.

CEPOL will be informed of this decision.

P. Nikiforos Diamandouros

Done in Strasbourg on **27 -09- 2013**