

Annual Activity Report of the Authorising Officer by Delegation

Year 2022

30 March 2023



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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 2022 and focuses on the organisational, administrative, budgetary and financial aspects of the Office's activities in 2022. 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 2022 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 2022, which includes a section on how the EU institutions responded to the Ombudsman's recommendations, solution proposals and suggestions made in 2021, is annexed to this report (annex 4).



Highlights of the year

Main achievements in 2022

Real-life relevance and Impact

1. Published a set of practical recommendations for the EU administration on the recording of work-related text and instant messages;
2. Worked with Frontex to improve its accountability in the context of how it complies with fundamental rights obligations under its expanded mandate;
3. Made suggestions to the European Investment bank to strengthen how it assesses moves by members of its Management Committee to the private sector;
4. Launched a public consultation on the transparency of EU environmental decision making;
5. Opened 344 new inquiries on the basis of complaints and closed 325 complaint-based inquiries;
6. Opened 4 own-initiative inquiries and 7 strategic initiatives, including on how the Commission intends to ensure transparency and accountability in relation to the use of EU funds meant to help Member States recover from the pandemic;
7. Achieved an overall acceptance rate of 79%;
8. Hosted an academic seminar with the European University Institute's Department of Law and School of Transnational Governance in Florence on the evolving role of the European Ombudsman;

Citizens' awareness

9. Produced a series of videos to present an overview of the Office's work and to explain some of the key areas of work;
10. Launched a new logo and visual identity;
11. Published a detailed guide on the right of public access to EU documents;
12. Hosted the annual ENO conference which focused on 'the role ombudsmen can play in times of crisis';
13. Launched the fourth 'Award for Good Administration';
14. Saw a further rise of followers on all social media platforms;

Efficiency

15. Reached or exceeded the internal targets for two of the three complaint-handling KPIs;
16. Launched a process to further streamline the complaint-handling processes;
17. Successfully implemented the new hybrid working policy;
18. Achieved a budget implementation rate of 97%;
19. Revised the Office's Records Management Decision;
20. Took steps to become a depositing institution at the European University Institute in Florence.



1. The structure and organisation of the Office

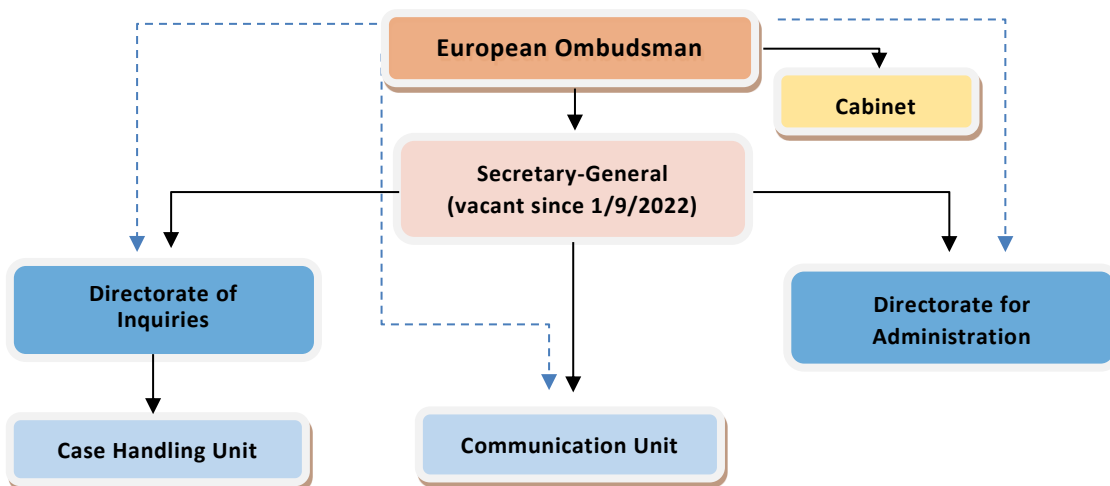
The **Cabinet (CAB)** works under the direct instruction of the Ombudsman. It advises and assists the Ombudsman to help ensure implementation of her vision, strategy and objectives. Cabinet members also liaise and represent the Ombudsman externally and draft speeches and articles on behalf of the Ombudsman.

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.

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 2022

The tables and the scoreboard below show the results achieved in 2022 based on the priorities, actions and Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets set out in the Annual Management Plan (AMP) for 2022.

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

2.1 Implementation of AMP 2022 actions

The table below lists the actions under the five themes identified in the AMP 2022 and describes the state of implementation of each action.

Theme 1 - Enhancing the Ombudsman's impact in key areas			
Actions		Owner(s)	State of play
1	Finalise and adopt new implementing provisions (IPs).	DoI/CAB	The draft IPs were sent to the Commission, Council and Parliament, for consultation. The EP's Committee on Constitutional Affairs put forward a draft resolution on them, which the EP adopted in February 2023. The EO thus intends to adopt the IPs later in 2023.
2	Commission a study on the active publication of environmental information by international financing entities.	DoA/DoI	Work continued on this in late 2022; we are relying on the EPRS to move the process forward.
3	Contribute to the review of the EU's implementation of the CRPD by drafting the EO's contribution and following how the Commission delivers its Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-30.	DoI	The EO submitted its contribution. Monitoring of, and liaison with, the Commission is ongoing.
4	Create a user-friendly online portal on access to documents, as a resource for experts and potential complainants, including promotion to raise awareness.	DoI COMM DoA (ICT)	The new access to documents guide was finalised in December 2022 and published online : https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/document/en/163352



			The communication campaign around it has started: https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/news-document/en/164966
5	Conduct a review of the Fast-Track procedure at the end of the year 2022.	DoI	A preliminary review was completed in December 2022; to be finalised in Q2/2023 with 2020-2022 statistics and following feedback from stakeholders.
6	Focus on transparency in EU environmental decision making through strategic inquiries and initiatives.	DoI	As a preliminary action, the EO launched a public consultation in September 2022 to understand better the issues that the public faces when it comes to the transparency of and participation in EU decision-making in environmental matters. The consultation period concluded in December 2022. The results of this consultation will feed into the EO's further actions in this area.
7	Draw up and implement a work plan for strategic work 2022-24.	DoI	The plan is under implementation
8	Complete guidance notes on thematic areas of work of the Office and publish on the website tailored content on the Office's thematic areas of work.	DoI COMM DoA (ICT)	(a) Action on guidance notes and internal tools for knowledge management on teams' work is completed. (b) Action concerning the thematic presentation of Ombudsman areas of work is completed and published on the website: https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/areas-of-work

Theme 2 - Engaging with stakeholders

Actions	Owner(s)	State of play
9 Organise, jointly with the French Ombudsman, an ENO conference on the digital divide and the potentially exclusionary effect of online administrations on vulnerable groups, such as elderly people.	COMM/ DoI (ICT support)	A conference of the ENO, organised jointly with the French Ombudsman, was held on 27-28 April 2022 in Strasbourg. The first session was dedicated to sharing best practices for helping Ukrainian refugees and the second focused on how citizens' access to rights have been affected by the digitalisation of public administrations. The Conference was a hybrid event with more than 150 participants present in person and around 200 attending remotely.
10 Organise a strategic event with external stakeholders.	COMM	The first day of the April conference in Strasbourg was open to external stakeholders.



11	Organise an academic conference on the evolving role of the European Ombudsman.	DoI COMM DoA	An academic conference took place in Florence on 17&18 November 2022, in cooperation with the EUI and the School of Transnational Governance. Work on a book publication with the speakers' contributions is ongoing.
12	Organise online seminars for experts from ENO offices, including one to define the level of web accessibility for persons with disabilities and identify possible improvements.	COMM DoI	A hybrid ENO seminar on web accessibility and queries took place on 12 October 2022 in Brussels.
13	Strengthen cooperation with international organisations, such as the OECD.	DoI COMM	The OECD and EO finalised a joint project "Towards good practice principles for government transparency in the use of recovery funds" in November 2022 (https://www.oecd.org/publications/towards-good-practice-principles-for-government-transparency-in-the-use-of-recovery-funds-0d0f2c90-en.htm). A session with the OECD was part of the April conference in Strasbourg where ENO members were invited to give their input. The DoI also hosted the Aarhus Convention Secretariat and the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee, which gave presentations on their work on transparency in environmental decision-making.

Theme 3 - Ensuring dynamic and relevant communications and outreach

Actions		Owner(s)	State of play
14	Implement the Office's new logo.	COMM All	The new logo was launched on 18 May 2022 and has been implemented across the Office.
15	Expand the video production to increase the visibility of the Office.	COMM	A series of videos was produced to present an overview of the Office's work, and to explain three key areas of work – transparency of EU decision making, public access to EU documents, and upholding ethics standards
16	Publish the EOexpress report on the Office's activities on the website.	COMM DoA (ICT)	The EOexpress newsletter is now systematically published in the News section of the website and sent to external subscribers.



17	Launch a new website section that lays out the impact of the EO's work, including promotion to raise awareness.	COMM	An overview of the EO's impact over time was finalised and published online in time for the Florence conference in November 2022.
18	Provide a timeline of key steps in inquiries within the complainants' account online.	DoI/DoA (ICT)	A detailed timeline is now available in the complainant's account online and a more general one on the Website for all inquiries opened since October 2022.
Theme 4 - Improving the management and the security of documents, information and data			
Actions		Owner(s)	State of play
19	Review internal policies on records management and internal public access policies to ensure they are up to date and reflect technological advances.	DoA DoI DPO	The revised Records Management Decision including a Common Retention List was adopted on 28/6/2022.
20	General training and continuous awareness raising on document management requirements.	DoA	Ongoing actions include (i) raising awareness on Decision on records and document management during induction days; (ii) continuous support helpdesk on questions related to document and records management; (iii) individual hands-on training/refresher sessions with DMO regarding Ares and document management in general.
21	Acquire the Q-sign functionality in ARES to certify signatures in our document management system.	DoA	The solution was acquired and tested. Implementation started in November 2022.
22	Put in place measures and processes to implement the Office's EUCI decision.	DoA	This action was completed with the adoption of implementing guidelines and the appointment of a Security Officer. Authorisations to access EUCI were issued to several staff members. A session on EUCI is now also included in the induction training.
23	Adopt an Information policy and an ICT Security policy.	DoA	Work on this is ongoing.
24	Enable interaction with the complainant through the online account throughout the life of the complaint.	DoA	Action 18 is a first step in that direction. More resources are required to make progress. Existing staff were trained on MS Dynamics



			CRM to supervise work when resources become available.
Theme 5 - Strengthening efficiency and resilience			
Actions		Owner(s)	State of play
25	Review and, where necessary, revise the Office's internal rules and policies.	DoA	A gap analysis was carried out and policies that have to be drafted or revised were identified. The following policies have been drafted/revised in 2022: (i) Decision of the EO on leave in the interest of the service in accordance with Article 42c of the Staff Regulation; (ii) Decision of the EO laying down general implementing provisions on the conduct of administrative inquiries and disciplinary proceedings; (iii) Decision of the EO on internal rules concerning disclosure in the public interest ('whistleblowing').
26	Consolidate the use of already obtained SYSPER tools (doc engine & personal files).	DoA-HR (ICT support)	Personal files of staff recruited in 2021 and 2022 have become available to them through NPD. Checking and gradual publishing of the files of the rest of the staff is ongoing. Established timeline is respected. Doc engine is used by all staff. Improvements are requested ad hoc when glitches are identified.
27	Complete the mapping of jobs/functions of the Office; identify core competences and skills & finalise the drafting of the Office's learning and development policy.	DoA (& all managers)	The job descriptions and identification of competencies for the DoA, DoI and Communication Unit staff members are done. Drafts of the Learning and Development Decision and Learning and Development Guide are ready.
28	Reorganise the work of the IT team with focus on versatility, resilience, increase of backup capacities and collaboration with external contractors.	DoA	This action is ongoing. Training takes place continuously to ensure versatility and backup capacities. Collaboration with external contractors is hampered by recruitment difficulties in the IT domain.
29	Further develop peer to peer and line manager and team meeting structures to increase efficiency and knowledge management.	DoI	Changes were made to the public access and strategic team meetings in September 2022 to explore how best to organise them on a weekly basis.



30	Enhance the functionalities of CMS to better support the work of users.	DoA DoI	DoI made a range of important suggestions ('CMS wish list'), some of which are examined by a working group. A consultancy project ('Lean') was launched in the meantime to evaluate and identify ways to optimise our case-handling processes, which includes suggestions to enhance CMS. A proposed enhanced process for dealing with 'Failure to reply' inquiries was presented to management in January 2023.
31	Further simplify the handling of information requests and of outside the mandate and failure to reply complaints.	DoA DoI	The simplified procedure for outside the mandate complaints was rolled out. A simplified procedure for failure to reply complaints is being analysed in the framework of the Lean project, which is expected to have reached a significant level of implementation by May 2023. Solutions to simplify the registration and processing of information requests using either ARES or CMS to be analysed in the first semester of 2023.



2.2 Scoreboard 2022

KPI	Measurement	Owner	Targets 2022	Results 2022	Results 2021
KPI 1	Percentage of complaints within the mandate	Process Management	35%	34%	34%
KPI 2	Number of inquiries opened in cases of public importance (complaints, strategic inquiries and strategic initiatives)	Process Management	50	60 (49+4+7)	56 (43+6+7)
KPI 3	Acceptance rate (previous year's results – composite indicator)	DoI			
	3a - Overall acceptance rate		80%	79%	81%
	3b - Acceptance rate in cases of public importance		80%	76%	77%
	3c - Acceptance rate in Covid-19 related cases (for as long as relevant)		80%	86%	N/A ¹
KPI 4	Perception of our key stakeholders (rate of positive evaluation)	DoI	> 3.12 out of 5	3.06	3.12
KPI 5	Web activities (composite indicator)	ICT			
	5a - Visitors to the website		600 000	624 032	614 030
	5b - Advice given through the interactive guide to contact a member of the ENO		10 000	8 740	10 917
KPI 6	Social media activities (composite indicator)	COMM			
	6a - Increase of followers on social media				
	Twitter		+5%	+9.86% (3 089)	+7.33% (2140)
	LinkedIn		+15%	+49.96% (2 990)	+23.73% (1148)
	Instagram		+25%	+91.95% (3 472)	+46.3% (1195)
	6b - Number of visits to the website through links posted on our social media channels		3 500	8 125	7 939
KPI 7	Handling of complaints and inquiries (composite indicator)	Process Management			
	7a - Proportion of cases in which the admissibility decision is taken in one month		95%	96%	98%
	7b - Average duration of inquiries		150 days	166 days	113 days
	7c - Clearance rate (cases closed compared to new cases registered in the reference period)		100%	100%	98%
KPI 8	Budget implementation (composite indicator)	FIN			
	8a - Rate of budget implementation		92%	97%	88.8%
	8b - Proportion of payments made within 30 days		100%	99.7%	99.8%

¹ None of the Covid-19 related inquiries closed in 2020 gave rise to recommendations or suggestions.



KPI	Measurement	Owner	Targets 2022	Results 2022	Results 2021
KPI 9	Management of Human Resources (composite indicator)	HR			
	9a -Occupation rate of establishment plan posts		95%	91.8%	93.3%
	9b - Percentage of workforce dedicated to core activities		65%	68.5% (with trainees) 66.2% (without trainees)	66.7% (with trainees) 64.2% (without trainees)
	9c - Average number of training days per staff member		5	3.5 (without language training) 4.7 (with language training)	3.4 (without language training) 4.6 (with 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 2022, 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 2022, the Ombudsman dealt with seven strategic inquiries and ten strategic initiatives on a diverse range of issues. Detailed information on the strategic inquiries and initiatives can be found in section 3 and in section 4.1.1 of the Ombudsman's Draft Annual Report for 2022 (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 2022, query topics included EU energy efficiency rules, maternity leave in relation to EU funded projects, and the issuing of EU digital COVID certificates to people not vaccinated against COVID-19 due to medical reasons.

The Ombudsman hosted the annual ENO conference and organised an ENO webinar on improving web accessibility and on the queries procedure.

Detailed information on the ENO-related work is available in section 6.4 of the Ombudsman's draft Annual Report 2022 (annex 4).

2.3.2 Complaint handling

(i) Caseload and KPI results

The overall number of complaints registered in 2022 was 2 223 (compared to 2 192 in 2021). The overall number of new complaints dealt with in 2022 was 2 238, of which 755 were within the mandate. This compares to 2 166 complaints dealt with in 2021, of which 729 were within the mandate.

With a score of 34%, the result of KPI 1 - proportion of complaints within the mandate - was the same as in 2021, thus slightly below the target of 35%.

In 2022, the Ombudsman opened and closed more complaint-based inquiries than in 2021, i.e. 344 inquiries were opened (332 in 2021) and 325 inquiries were closed (300 in 2021).

With 60 inquiries opened in cases of public importance, the result for KPI 2 remains above 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 96% (the target is 95%) and the clearance rate reached the target of 100%. Only the average duration of inquiries, which was 166 days, did not reach the target of maximum 150 days. This reflects the fact that, in 2022, we closed several inquiries that took longer than expected 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 2022 (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 2022, the Office received 121 complaints in the area of public access to documents, the highest number recorded within a year. The Ombudsman opened inquiries into 90



complaints², out of which 23 were dealt with under the Fast-Track procedure. It closed 83 inquiries³, out of which 23 were Fast-Track inquiries.

Despite the significantly higher number of complaints in this area, the cases opened in 2022 were handled swiftly, with an average of 46 working days until the closure of the case. With respect to inquiries only, the average time until closure of the case was 67 working days.

Despite the increase in the number of cases, the share of Fast-Track inquiries was only 28% of all public access to documents inquiries, compared to 58% in 2021. This is because the institution concerned had often not yet adopted a confirmatory decision when the complaint to the Ombudsman was made, so that its final position was unknown. In such cases, the Ombudsman cannot deal with the case through the Fast-Track procedure. As many of the cases brought to the Ombudsman's attention were still being processed by the institution concerned (in some, there was not even an initial decision), the majority of public access complaints could not be categorised as Fast-Track.

Under the Fast-Track procedure, the Ombudsman endeavours to open inquiries within 5 working days and have a decision or outcome (such as a solution proposal or recommendation) within 40 working days. In 86% of the inquiries opened in 2022 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 41% of all cases opened and closed in 2022 and within 60 working days in 53% of the cases. Overall, the average time to reach an outcome was 73 working days.

As regards findings, in 2022 the Office made a proposal for a solution in seven cases and recommendations in six cases. The institutions concerned accepted one of the solutions proposed and two of the recommendations, which thus led to wider public access. Four solutions and four recommendation were not accepted, and for two solutions proposed, a reply has not yet been received.

(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 2022 (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. The acceptance rate helps measure the extent to which, on an annual basis, the institutions follow up the Ombudsman proposals. The analysis of how the EU institutions responded to the Ombudsman in 2021 shows that the acceptance rate was 79% overall compared to 81% in the previous year (target for KPI 3 is 80%). The institutions reacted positively to 26 out of the 33 proposals that the Ombudsman made to correct or improve their behaviour in cases closed in 2021. The acceptance rate in cases of public importance reached 76%.

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 Out of the 90 inquiries opened in 2022, 6 inquiries were based on complaints received at the end of 2021 and 84 inquiries were based on complaints received in 2022.

³ Out of the 83 inquiries closed in 2022, 5 were opened in 2020, 22 in 2021 and 56 in 2022



Moreover, an overview of the impact of the European Ombudsman's work from 2013 to 2022 is available on the website⁴.

(iv) Revised Statute and Implementing Provisions

In August 2021, the Ombudsman's new Statute⁵ came into force, strengthening the Ombudsman's legal basis. The work on updating the Ombudsman's implementing provisions began immediately, aiming at further improving procedural efficiency as well as ensuring even greater impact. The Ombudsman consulted the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission on its revised draft, upon which the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs drew up a draft resolution. The European Ombudsman will adopt its revised implementing provisions in 2023 following adoption by the European Parliament of its resolution.

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.

The sections below provide a summary of the communication and outreach activities. Further information is available in Section 6 of the draft Annual Report for 2022 (annex 4).

(i) Media and social media activities

There was an increase of 60% in the total number of press articles compared to 2021, with 72% of the media coverage coming from EU countries.

In 2022, the growth in social media followers was considerably higher than in past years. The Ombudsman's Instagram account saw a 92% growth in total followers (3 472 new followers compared to the 1 195 followers gained in 2021). On LinkedIn, the number of followers increased by 50% (+ 2 990 compared to the 1 148 new followers in 2021). On Twitter, where the Ombudsman has the largest audience amongst the social media channels, the number of followers reached 34 431 in December 2022, which represented a 10% increase (+ 3 089).

(ii) Outreach activities and events

In 2022, the European Ombudsman and the European University Institute's Department of Law and School of Transnational Governance held a conference in Florence, Italy to examine how the European Ombudsman has evolved in its role of ensuring an independent, transparent, and accountable EU administration. The event brought together diverse perspectives from academia, civil society, the EU administration, and the European Ombudsman's office itself. A report of the event was published on the Ombudsman's website.

The European Ombudsman organised a conference for members of the European Network of Ombudsmen (ENO) on 'the role ombudsmen can play in times of crisis.' The first session focused on exchanging experiences and best practice for helping refugees. The

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https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/document/en/161700?utm_source=print_EO&utm_medium=report&utm_campaign=AR2022

⁵ <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/legal-basis/statute/en>



conference also included a session on the effect that the digitalisation of public services has had on citizens' rights.

The Office also organised a webinar at expert level for ENO members on improving web accessibility and on the queries procedure. The latter allows ENO members to ask questions about EU law that arise during the course of their inquiries.

In 2022, the Ombudsman and staff members continued their outreach activities by giving interviews to the press, speaking at major academic and legal conferences and speaking to visitor groups. The annual press conference took place in May and covered major inquiry developments in areas such as revolving doors, lobbying, and transparency.

(iii) Website

The Ombudsman introduced further improvements to how inquiries are published online to make them easier for the public to follow. Inquiries are now presented by theme or topic, meaning visitors to the website can easily find all the inquiries related to a specific area of work. The webpages also contain an explanation of the Ombudsman's role and powers in each area, so that potential complainants have more information about how complaints are handled.

The Ombudsman also continued to promote the Office's work as a redress mechanism for those seeking public access to documents. Building on the Office's expertise in this area, the Ombudsman published a detailed guide on the right of public access to EU documents. The guide provides comprehensive information on the practical and legal aspects of the right of public access.

In terms of KPI results, the number of unique visitors to the website (624 032) is beyond the target (600 000) while the number of persons who received advice through the interactive guide to contact a member of the European Network of Ombudsmen (8 740) is below the target of 10 000 (increased in 2022 from 8 000 in 2021).

(iv) Publications and audio-visual output

In May 2022, the Ombudsman launched a new logo and visual identity. The logo resembles a bird in flight, while its vantage point signifies the view the Ombudsman has over the EU administration. The presence of the EU flag makes it clear that the Ombudsman is part of the community of EU institutions and bodies.

To help further understanding of the Ombudsman's role, a series of videos was produced to present an overview of the office's work, and to explain three key areas of work – transparency of EU decision-making, public access to EU documents, and upholding ethics standards.

2.4 Management Processes

On 22 February 2022, the Ombudsman issued the 2022 Annual Management Plan.

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

Meetings of the management team were held weekly. After the retirement of the Secretary-General on 1 September, the Ombudsman took over the chairing of these meetings.



The Secretary-General also met regularly with the Staff Committee, the Data Protection officers and the trainees. As of September, these meetings were taken over by the Director for Administration.

Throughout 2022, management 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.

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 Inquiries Director 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 Directorate for Administration.

Applications for access to documents

In 2022, the Transparency Officers dealt with 25 requests for public access to documents held by the institution. There were 22 requests for access to complaint-related files and three requests for access to other administrative documents. In most cases, partial access was granted. The Ombudsman also received three consultations from other institutions on the possible disclosure of documents originating from the Office. The Ombudsman agreed that wide partial access could be granted.

Data protection

In 2022, 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 provided assistance to the Office in the context of seven non severe data breaches that occurred during the year.

In 2022, the DPO collaborated with the Internal Auditor in the context of its review of the Institution's Data Protection Framework and ensured implementation of the agreed actions with due dates in 2022 (see details in section 3.2.1).



The DPO was also involved in responding to inquiries and matters raised by the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS).

At the date of this report, the Office is not aware of any complaints submitted to the EDPS against the Ombudsman.

2.5.2. Process management, business continuity, infrastructure and ICT

(i) Process management

Several important projects were concluded in the field of process management in 2022.

One related to reinforcing the capabilities of the Office to inspect EU classified information. An internal structure was put in place to manage security clearances and by the end of 2022, more than 10% of the Ombudsman's staff, mainly Inquiries Officers, had been granted a Personal Security Clearance.

A second project aimed at granting the possibility to ten staff members to obtain a certified electronic signature to facilitate paperless working without affecting the legal validity of documents.

The third project constitutes a first step towards better online interaction with complainants and improved transparency of the inquiry process. Thanks to the publication of a timeline containing both actual and future steps in the process, complainants can now visualise progress made in processing their complaint. In the case of inquiries, a similar timeline is also available to the public.

Two projects relating to the processing of complaints were launched in 2022 and will be concluded in 2023. One aims at reviewing how we deal with complaints that are outside the mandate, in order to accelerate the process substantially by reducing the number of actors involved. The second one aims at reviewing the inquiry procedure for approximately one third of the Office's inquiries. With external guidance, a cross-institution team is working on eliminating unnecessary steps in the procedure. Again, the purpose is to provide a quicker response to the complainant and to save resources where possible.

Finally, the Ombudsman adopted a new records management decision in 2022 and the Secretary-General of the Ombudsman announced that the Office would become a depositing institution at the European Union Historical Archives. Preparations of a first batch of documents relating to the mandates of the first Ombudsman are underway and a first deposit is expected in 2023.

(ii) The Ombudsman's offices in Brussels and Strasbourg

The Ombudsman's Brussels office moved to new premises made available by the European Parliament in October 2021. During 2022, the installation of material and the organisation of the workspace was further improved to ensure optimal working conditions. The new building is organised as a collaborative workspace with very few individual offices and flexible collaborative meeting facilities.

In Strasbourg, the European Ombudsman returned a number of offices to Parliament following its request. This resulted in a 20.5% reduction of the surfaces rented from Parliament. The expenditure on rent for premises in Strasbourg was reduced accordingly.



(iii) Efforts to reduce the environmental footprint

The European Ombudsman rents office space in buildings of the European Parliament and uses the infrastructure, including the IT infrastructure and canteens of the European Parliament. To a large extent, the Ombudsman's environmental management is therefore directly linked to, and benefits from, the efforts made by Parliament in this area.

The Office actively promotes digitalisation to reduce the use of paper and facilitate the exchange and storage of documents; it extensively uses the videoconference systems available in the two places of work to avoid missions; and it encourages the use of public transportation by providing financial support for yearly subscriptions and by limiting available car parking spaces.

(iv) ICT activities

Throughout 2022, the Office's ICT activities continued to focus on facilitating the business continuity of all areas of work of the office in the context of the post-pandemic arrangements. This involved ensuring support for remote and hybrid activities for the daily work of staff and internal meetings as well as for external events.

Further ICT activities in 2022 included the purchase and installation of new equipment and the maintenance and development of internal tools such as the Case Management System and the Recruitment System as well as of the European Ombudsman's website, extranet and intranet.

In relation to ICT matters, the Office relies on and collaborates closely with the European Parliament, including regarding IT and cyber security, and the European Commission for the integration and maintenance of all EU corporate tools used by the European Ombudsman and for the use of Inter-institutional IT framework contracts. Regarding cybersecurity, the Office also follows the work done at the interinstitutional level.

The Office uses and promotes the use of open-source software whenever possible. The European Ombudsman's website, for example, uses only open-source software.

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. Our recruitment policy follows the general principles and employment conditions of the EU institutions and seeks to respond with agility to emerging needs.

In 2022, the Ombudsman's establishment plan comprised 73 posts, in addition to which, there was an average of six contract agents working with the Office. Eighteen trainees also gained work experience at the Ombudsman's Office during the year.

With 18 EU nationalities represented among staff and four nationalities represented among the five managers, the Office continued to achieve a balanced geographical distribution in 2022, taking into account its small size (see details in Annex 1).

To anticipate the turnover of temporary staff, we launched a call for expressions of interest during the year with a view to establishing a reserve list. This call attracted more than 850 applications.



Following the 2020 and 2021 Office reorganisation, assistants are increasingly involved in the handling of complaints outside the Ombudsman's mandate (OMCs). The initial positive results were consolidated in 2022, with the assistants continuing to handle more than one third of all OMCs. The performance gains are twofold: 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 better work experience.

We acquired new corporate solutions (SYSPER modules) and consolidated the use of existing ones. The use of (i) the NDP (Nouveau Dossier Personnel) for the management of personal files; (ii) the JIS (Job Information System) for creating job descriptions for posts; and (iii) the DOC-Engine module for the automatic creation of certificates and documents freed resources previously allocated to repetitive administrative tasks. The incorporation in 2022 of SYSPER's ethics module is expected to streamline several internal procedures including on conflict of interest matters. It will allow us to record and monitor authorisations, and generate relevant statistics.

(ii) Ethics and good conduct

As reported in previous Annual Activity Reports, the Ombudsman adopted a number of policies, guidelines and internal measures to ensure that staff conduct is in line with the highest ethical standards.

In 2022, we revised the forms for the declarations of conflicts of interest, external activities, publications, and exercising an occupational activity after leaving the EU public service to ensure consistent application of the Staff Regulations and our internal rules. Besides the intranet page dedicated to ethics and good conduct, which has increased the visibility of the Office's rules on these matters, we organised a lunchtime session on conflicts of interest, in February 2022, to sensitise existing and new staff to these matters.

The Internal Auditor's work programme for 2022 included an audit on the Office's ethical framework, which was launched towards the end of the year. The outcome of this audit, expected in 2023, will be taken into account to further improve practices in this area (see also point above on SYSPER's ethics module).

Our two ethics correspondents continue to serve as a point of information on issues related to ethics. Along with the administration, they assist staff in finding solutions to potential problems, identifying the best reporting channel and relevant procedure. They also play an important role in familiarizing 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.

In line with the Office's anti-harassment policy, we organised a training for all staff on *Creating a harassment-free environment*, which focused on how staff should react when they witness situations and behaviours that fall short of the Office's standards. Recognising the important role of leadership in these matters, we organised two specific trainings for managers.

(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, we continued to provide staff with IT equipment and furniture (mainly ergonomic chairs and large screens) upon request.

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. After the challenging COVID years, in 2022, we focused on bringing staff and teams together physically to reinforce team spirit, facilitate the integration of staff recruited during Covid and improve communication. Staff were involved in trainings/events on multiculturalism, building resilience, working together and getting to know our colleagues.

2.5.4 Budget and Finance

(i) Implementation of the 2022 budget

The appropriations available in the Ombudsman's budget for 2022 amounted to EUR 12 222 108 and included 73 establishment plan posts. Title 1 (Expenditure relating to persons working for the institution) amounted to EUR 9 507 008. Title 2 (Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure) amounted to EUR 2 412 700 and Title 3 (Expenditure resulting from special functions carried out by the institution) to EUR 302 400.

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

The following table shows expenditure in 2022 in terms of appropriations committed and paid (in Euros).

Title	Initial budget 2022	Final budget 2022⁶	Committed	Paid
Title 1	9 507 008	9 507 008	9 236 308.06	9 121 296.26
Title 2	2 412 700	2 396 300	2 370 083.47	2 170 306.84
Title 3	302 400	318 800	245 372.13	117 951.82
Total	12 222 108	12 222 108	11 851 763.66	11 409 554.92

The implementation rate (including appropriations carried over from 2022 to 2023) is 96.97% (compared to 88.84% in 2021). Of the total appropriations, 93.35% were paid (compared to 75.5% in 2021).

The amount of appropriations carried over from 2022 to 2023 is EUR 442 208.74, i.e. 3.6% of the 2022 budget (compared to EUR 1 668 366 carried over from 2021 to 2022, i.e. 13.3% of the 2021 budget).

⁶ After transfers.



Furthermore, 92.59% of the appropriations carried over to 2022 from 2021 were used (compared to 85.39 % in 2020).

In the following table, all totals are cumulative.

Indicators	Target 2022	Q1	Q1+Q2	Q1-Q3	2022	(2021)
F1: Percentage of budget implementation	Total : 92%	28.3%	42.9%	70.1%	96.97%	(88.8 %)
F2: Proportion of payments made within 30 days	Total : 100%	99.5%	99.4%	99.6%	99.7%	(99.8%)

The average time for payment of invoices from private providers of goods and services was 13 days (11.36 days in 2021).

(ii) Transfers

During 2022, one modification of the establishment plan and six 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 344 460 (2.82 % of the total appropriations for 2022).

(iii) Procurement

Two very low-value contracts not exceeding EUR 15 000 and one low value contract not exceeding EUR 60 000 were awarded following a procurement procedure launched in 2022.

(iv) The 2023 Estimates

The estimates for the year 2023 were sent to the Commission, Parliament and the Council on 25 March 2022.

Total appropriations for 2023 are EUR 13 212 447, which represents an increase of EUR 990 339 or 8.1 % compared to the budget for 2022. Title 1 (Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution) amounts to EUR 10 652 347. Title 2 (Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure) amounts to EUR 2 264 700. Title 3 (Expenditure resulting from general functions carried out by the institution) amounts to EUR 295 400.



(v) Detailed list of the Ombudsman's missions in 2022 (as published on the website)

Start date	End date	Destination	Purpose	Accompanying Persons	Daily Allowance*	Accommodation	Transport	TOTAL
24/01/2022	27/01/2022	Brussels	Internal and external meetings	n/a	€0,00	€406,72	€270,00	€676,72
07/02/2022	09/02/2022	Brussels	Internal and external meetings	n/a	€0,00	€225,00	€223,00	€448,00
02/03/2022	04/03/2022	Brussels	Meetings	n/a	€0,00	€400,48	€381,80	€782,28
08/03/2022	09/03/2022	Brussels	Meetings	n/a	€0,00	€227,08	€359,80	€586,88
14/03/2022	17/03/2022	Basque country	Mission to the Basque country to meet with the Basque Ombudsman and others.	Head of Communication and Policy Adviser	€219,45	€675,00	€423,90	€1.318,35
29/03/2022	31/03/2022	Brussels	Meeting with Ukrainian Ombudsman and internal meetings	n/a	€0,00	€782,08	€477,60	€1.259,68
21/04/2022	22/04/2022	Brussels	LIBE committee	n/a	€0,00	€540,00	€225,00	€765,00
02/05/2022	06/05/2022	Copenhagen, Stockholm	Meetings with Swedish and Danish Ombudsmen and others related to the European Ombudsman's work.	Head of Cabinet and Policy Adviser	€384,47	€765,81	€769,31	€1.919,59
15/05/2022	18/05/2022	Brussels	Annual press conference and meetings	n/a	€0,00	€796,91	€396,80	€1.193,71
31/05/2022	02/06/2022	Brussels	Staff retreat	n/a	€0,00	€465,00	€371,80	€836,80
08/06/2022	09/06/2022	Paris	Participating in a conference hosted by HATVP	PA	€107,10	€337,88	€273,60	€718,58
30/08/2022	01/09/2022	Brussels	Meetings	n/a	€0,00	€700,00	€371,80	€1.071,80
05/09/2022	09/09/2022	Brussels	Internal meetings, attending EP committee meetings and events and external speaking event.	n/a	€0,00	€1.100,00	€363,80	€1.463,80
25/09/2022	30/09/2022	Washington DC	Meetings and exchange of views with stakeholders, representatives of the Justice Department, Congress and Senate.	Head of Cabinet & Policy Adviser	€416,50	€1.370,16	€7.605,01	€9.391,67
24/10/2022	28/10/2022	Brussels	Meetings and events	n/a	€0,00	€825,00	€127,00	€952,00
15/11/2022	18/11/2022	Florence	Florence conference	Several members of staff. Conference was organised by the office of the European Ombudsman.	€351,58	€390,81	€433,90	€1.176,29
28/11/2022	02/12/2022	Brussels	Meetings and EPC event	n/a	€0,00	€1.400,00	€127,00	€1.527,00
					TOTAL DAILY ALLOWANCE	TOTAL HOTEL	TOTAL TRANSPORT	TOTAL
					€1.479,10	€11.407,93	€13.201,12	€26.088,15

*The Ombudsman does not accept the daily allowance when on mission in Brussels or in Dublin.



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 2022, compared to 2021, the Ombudsman managed to make savings amounting to EUR 438 436. Costs were cut, namely, by 3.15% on the appropriations for salaries of officials and temporary agents (from EUR 8 501 161 to 8 233 111); by 30.8% on those for training (from EUR 130 000 to EUR 90 000); by 11% on those for staff missions (from EUR 135 000 to EUR 120 000); by 44% on those for meetings (from EUR 45 000 to EUR 25 000); and by 11% on those for communication activities (from EUR 124 000 to EUR 110 000).

The 2023 budget, prepared in 2022, makes thorough reductions for an overall amount of EUR 374 000 in discretionary expenditure under Titles II and III of the Ombudsman's budget. In spite of the significant weight the increase of salaries and allowances (12.5% increase of the Title I compared to 2022) has on the Ombudsman's budget, the overall increase is limited to 8.1% compared to 2022.

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

Title II	Budget 2022	APB 2023	+/- in €/2022	+/- in %/2022
A- 2 0 0 0 Rent	1 030.000	942.000	-88.000	-8.54%
A- 2 0 0 1 Fitting-out and installation work	178.000	0	-178.000	-100.00%
A-2 3 0 2 Telecommunications	7.000	5.000	-2.000	-27.57%
Total A-2	1 215.000	947.000	-268.000	-22.06%

Title III	Budget 2022	APB 2023	+/- in €/2022	+/- in %/2022
B-3 0 0 Staff mission expenses	120.000	100.000	-20.000	-16.67%
B- 3 2 0 0 Documentation and library expenditure	5.000	4.000	-1.000	-20.00%
A- 3 2 1 0 Communication and publications	110.000	25.000	-85.000	-77.27%
Total A-3	235.000	129.000	-106.000	-45.11%

3.2 Management and follow-up of controls

3.2.1 Recommendations from the Internal Auditor in 2022

Internal Audit Report 21/02 - Transversal follow-up of open actions from internal audit reports

In its report, the Internal auditor acknowledged the measures already taken but considered that the completion of five of the twelve open actions will require additional time. These related to Business Continuity Management and the application of the general



implementing provisions concerning the criteria applicable to classification in grade and step on appointment or engagement or change in status of staff members.

Actions taken since the report was issued have enabled Internal Audit to close four of the five above open actions in the meantime.

Internal Audit Report 21/03 - Review of the Institution's Data Protection Framework

The audit found that, despite the challenges that the Ombudsman experienced in implementing processes and procedures under the new Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 as well as the multiple initiatives already taken, there remains scope for completing the implementation of the Regulation and for further enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the processing of personal data.

To address the related issues, Internal Audit agreed a five-point action plan with management with implementation due-dates ranging from 31/12/2022 to 31/12/2023.

Four of these actions were completed in 2022. Implementation included the adoption of a revised decision that expands the scope of the Data Protection Officer's (DPO) tasks, duties, and powers and includes a description of the controllers and data protection coordinators' functions, a procedure to inform the DPO of new personal data processing, and the Office's obligations when working with external processors and joint controllers. Furthermore, data protection training was added to the list of mandatory training programmes and staff were reminded of the essential aspects of the data breach handling procedure.

Internal Audit Report 22/01 - The Internal Auditor's Annual Report for 2021

The Internal Auditor's annual report concluded that, based on the assurance and consulting work carried out in the Institution of the European Ombudsman 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.

3.2.2 Observations from the Court of Auditors

In the framework of the Statement of Assurance audits (SoA) 2021, the Court of Auditors indicated in its annual report that it did not identify any specific issues concerning the European Ombudsman.

In 2022, 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. So far, the Office has reinforced its process for assessing risks and evaluating sensitive posts, put in place a structured evaluation of the internal control standards and implemented the cross-checking of transactions. Work to ensure implementation of other open actions is ongoing, including as regards defining the liability of the Internal Auditor, improving exception reporting and ex-post controls, and the revision of internal rules and procedures to align them to the latest update of the Financial Regulation.



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

(i) 2020 discharge

On 4 May 2022, the European Parliament adopted the discharge decision for the 2020 budget⁷. The Ombudsman sent its detailed follow-up report to Parliament on 12 July 2022⁸.

(ii) 2021 discharge

On 13 October 2022, the Ombudsman sent its replies⁹ to the 2021 discharge questionnaire. The related hearing took place at the European Parliament on 24 October 2022.

At the time of writing this report, the decision on the discharge procedure for the 2021 budget had 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 2022 identified a number of actions to reinforce the effectiveness of our internal control standards. These actions and their outcome are reflected in the table below.

Actions to reinforce our internal control standards		
ICS and related action	Owner(s)	Implementation
ICS 2 - Ethical values Further refine the Office’s policies on ethics and good conduct & obtain the SYSPER module on ethics	DoA/Ethics correspondents	The Office obtained the SYSPER ethics module. Staff will start using it in early 2023. Declaration forms for staff/trainees on conflicts of interest, external activities, publications, holding of public office have been revised and put on the office’s intranet.
ICS 4 - Staff appraisal Finalise the drafting of the L&D policy.	DoA	Drafts of the Learning and Development Decision and Learning and Development Guide are ready.
ICS 8 - Processes and procedures Review the financial policies, the charters of financial actors and the exception register to ensure alignment with the Financial Regulation.	DoA	Work on this is ongoing.
ICS 10 - Business continuity	DoA/All	A new BCP decision was adopted by the EO on 25/5/2022 and the BC handbook

⁷ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0151_EN.html

⁸ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/251612/2020-Discharge-Follow-up-Report-2022-07-12.pdf>

⁹

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/255170/2021%20Discharge_Replies%20to%20Questionnaire_Ombudsman.pdf



Review the business continuity process from the beginning in line with BCI guidelines and align it with the EP's approach.		was revised. Work to ensure effective implementation is ongoing (Alternative processes, awareness raising and training plans)
ICS 11 - Document management (i) Organise general training and continuous awareness raising on document management requirements. (see also actions 19&20 above) (ii) Ensure implementation of the EUCI decision. (see also action 22 above)	DoA	(i) Ongoing actions include raising awareness during induction days; continuous helpdesk support; and individual hands-on training/refresher sessions with the DMO regarding Ares and document management in general. (ii) Guidelines to implement the EUCI decision were adopted and a Security Officer was appointed. Authorisations to access EUCI were issued to several staff members.
ICS 13 - Assessment of internal control systems Evaluate the feasibility of outsourcing the accounting activities.	DoA	Initial contacts were not successful. Other options need to be explored in 2023.

3.2.5 Management of risks

The annual risk assessment exercise did not identify any critical risks. Actions to mitigate risks evaluated as high (in the area of business continuity and ICT) are in the process of being implemented. 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 which support the assurance on the achievement of the internal control objectives¹⁰.

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

¹⁰ 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 fraud and irregularities; and e) adequate management of risks relating to the legality and regularity of underlying transactions.



control)¹¹, (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.

Type of controls	Indicator	2020	2021	2022
Ex-ante and ex-post controls on financial operations and procurement procedures	Number of errors prevented (<i>ex-ante</i>)	18	22	18
	% of errors (<i>ex-ante</i>)	3.24%	3.9%	2.31%
	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 2022 did not reveal any mistakes of a substantial nature but rather clerical ones, such as typos.

Ex-post controls in 2022 resulted in no financial errors detected. For procurement procedures, the ex-post controller concluded that the procedures foreseen by the Financial Regulations were followed rigorously. However, one point for improvement would be to identify, for each signed document the authors and their responsibilities. This applies to both the contracting authority and the tenderer/supplier to ensure in all circumstances that the signatories are authorised to sign the documents. In this respect, the use of electronic signatures is recommended. Moreover, in one of two procurement procedures selected for verification, it was recommended that better account should be taken of the prior analysis of the needs of the contract when signing and implementing the latter.

The analysis of the registry of overrides and non-compliance events in 2022 did not reveal any non-compliance event.

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 2022 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%).

¹¹ Number of errors prevented divided by the number of authorised payments.



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 2022, a total of 755 payments amounting to EUR 12.95 million were made. Out of these, 99.7% were executed on time, with an average payment time of 13 days, thus significantly below the maximum of 30 days allowed.

There are still areas to be improved such as the review of procurement procedures, updating the checklists and implementing the e-invoicing module.

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 62 367 and represents 0.48% of the payments made in 2022 (0.56% in 2021 and 0.44% in 2020).

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	53.928	12.954.218	0,42%	4 weeks per year	8.440	394.852	2,14%	62.367	0,48%

⁽¹⁾ Funds managed = payments made



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 have been achieved on time. They provide a reasonable assurance that the European Ombudsman's 2022 budget has been implemented effectively, on time and in compliance with the rules.

3.4 Whistleblowing and investigations by OLAF

In 2022, OLAF closed an investigation opened in 2020, which concerned alleged harassment, with no findings.

The Director for Administration is not aware of any other OLAF investigation or of any member of staff providing information under article 22(a) of the Staff Regulations in 2022.

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 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 ('AOS') bases his or her 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 244 442.16.

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 view¹².

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.

Brussels, 30/03/2022

Marie-Pierre Darchy
Director for Administration

¹² 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 2022

Annex 4: The European Ombudsman's draft Annual Report for 2022



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 new *“Inter-institutional job screening methodology”* developed by the European Commission. The new methodology maintains the classification into three main types of organisational categories but no longer includes trainees.

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 increasing the proportion of jobs dedicated to operations.

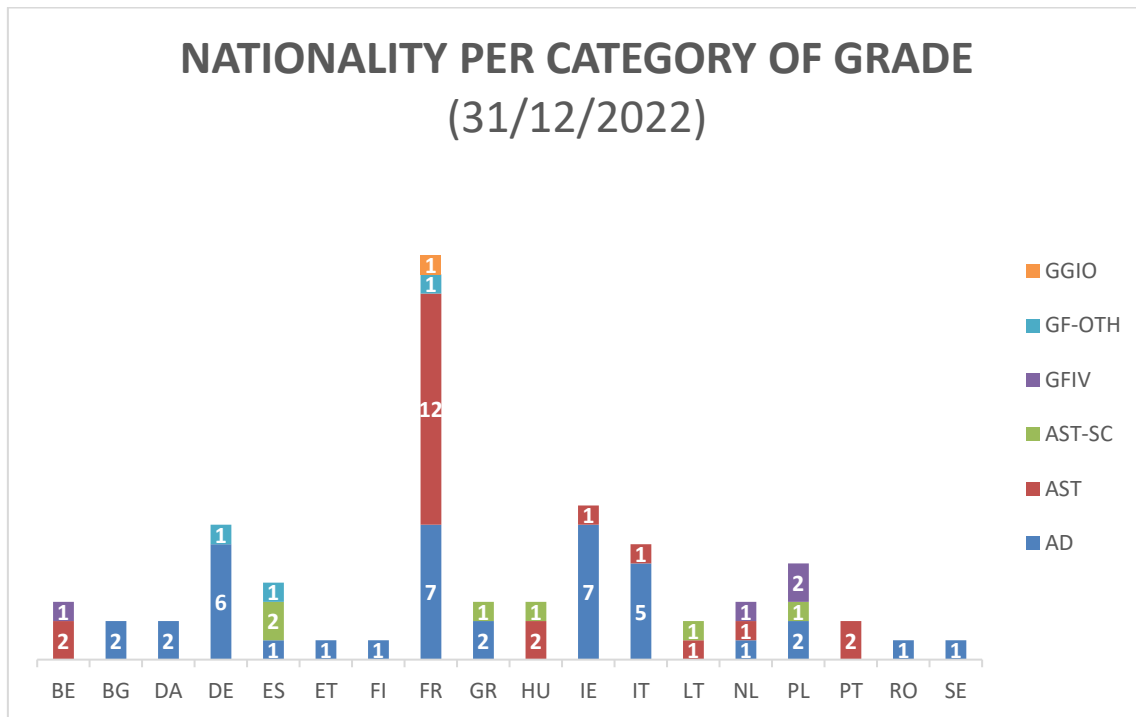
In December 2022, the categorisation of jobs in the Ombudsman’s Office resulted in the following figures. For comparison with previous years, results including trainees are also included in brackets for year N and N-1.

Job-Type category	Year N (%)	Year N-1 (%)	Year N-2 (%)
Support and coordination (including trainees)	22 (20.9)	22.9 (21.5)	28
Operations (including trainees)	66.2 (68.5)	64.2 (66.7)	65.5
Compliance (including trainees)	11.8 (10.6)	12.4 (11.8)	6.5

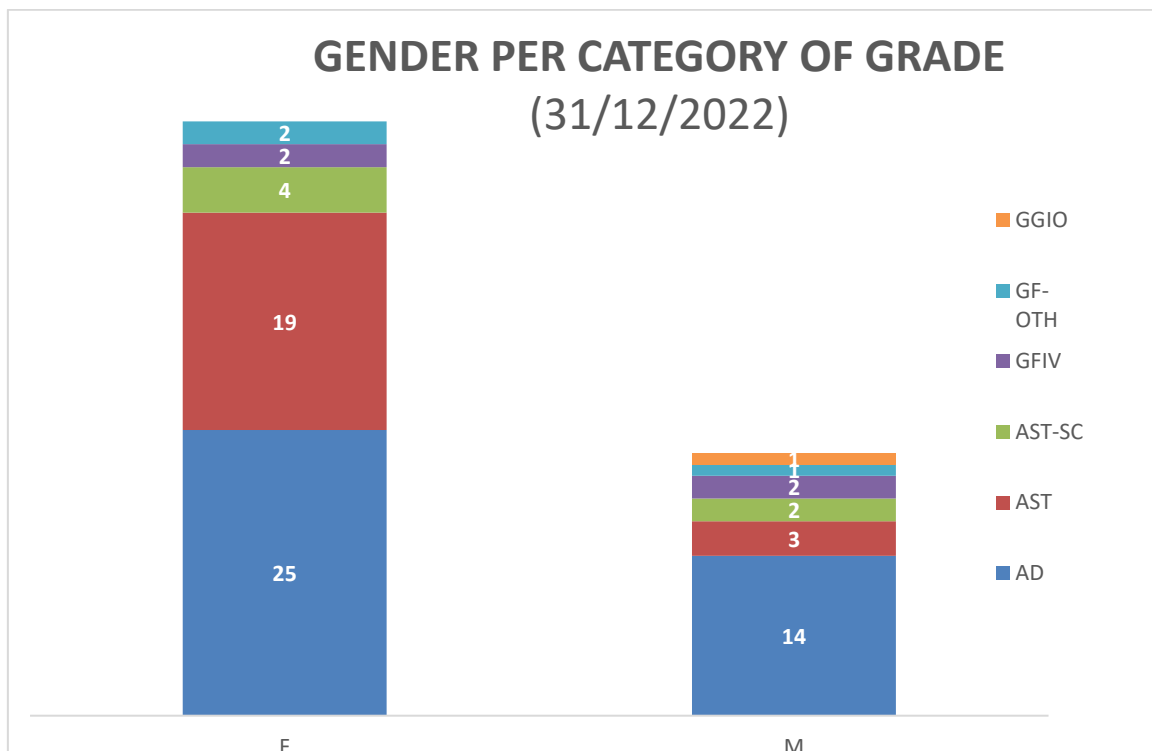
The three graphs below show the breakdown of staff respectively by nationality per category of grade, by gender per category and by gender and nationality among managers.



Graph 1 - Nationality per category of grade: snapshot on 31 December 2022¹³



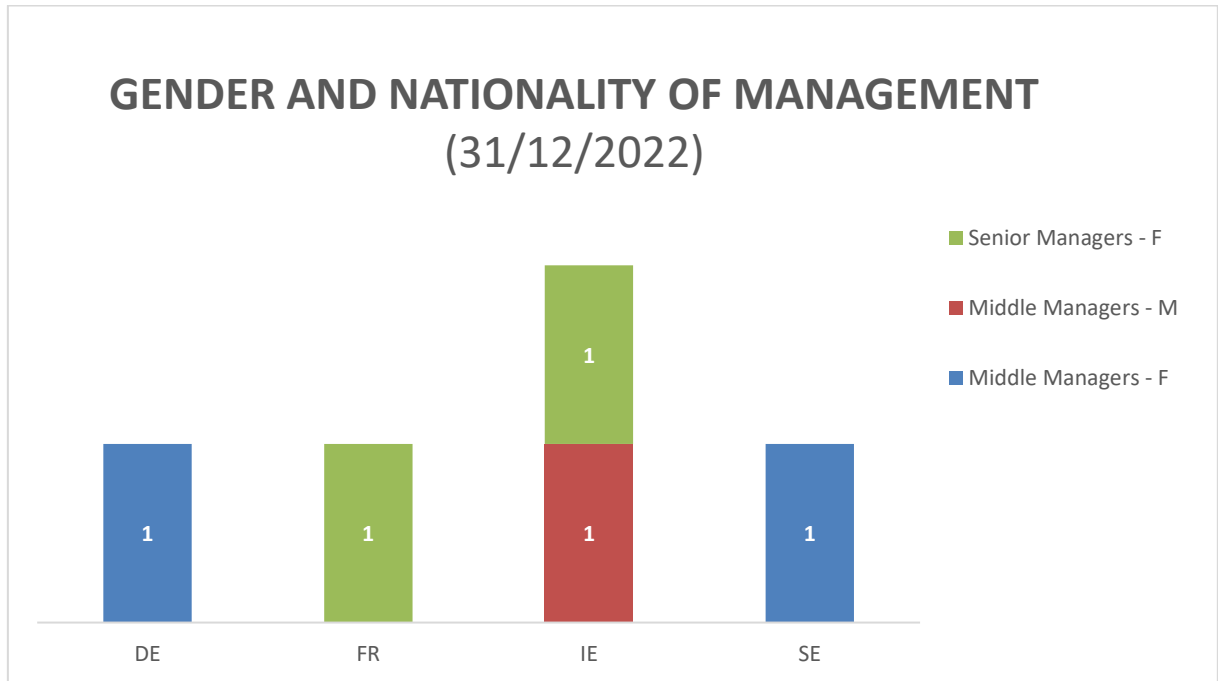
Graph 2 - Gender per category of grade: snapshot on 31 December 2022



¹³ GGIO refers to an official placed at the disposal by another institution



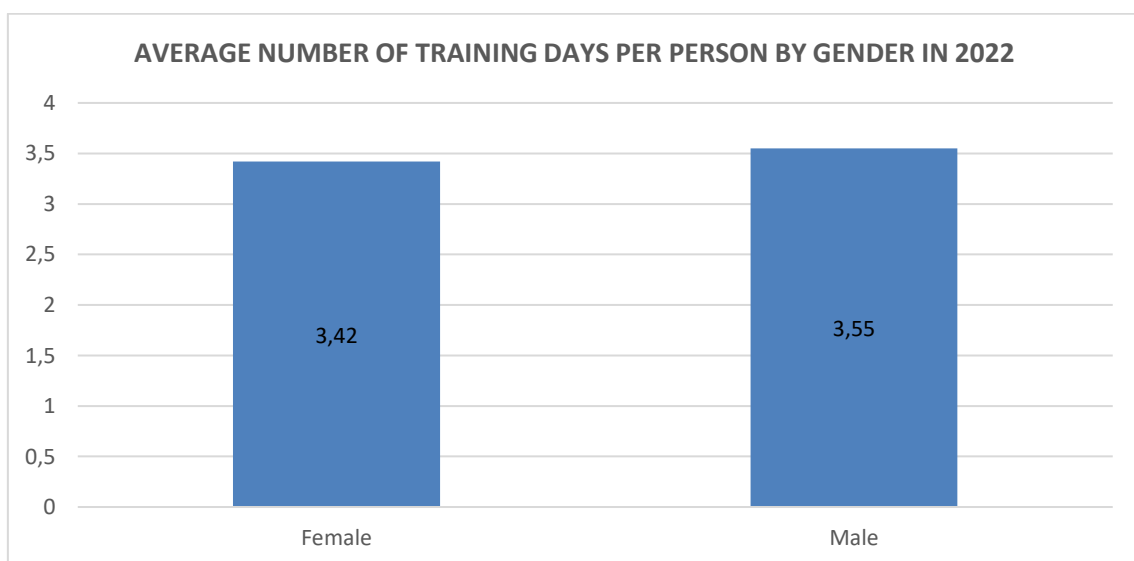
Graph 3 - Gender and nationality among managers: Snapshot on 31 December 2022



B. Number of days of professional training in 2022

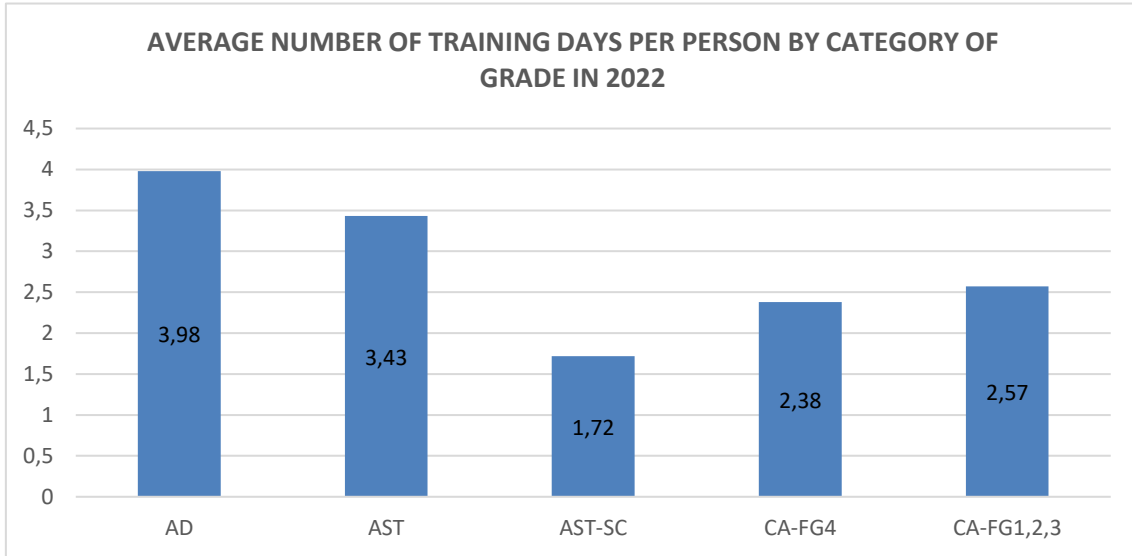
The average number of training days per staff member was 3.5, excluding language training. Graphs 4 and 5 below provide the breakdown of training days by gender and by category of grade. Graph 6 provides a breakdown of staff enrolled in language classes.

Graph 4 - Training days per person (without language training)



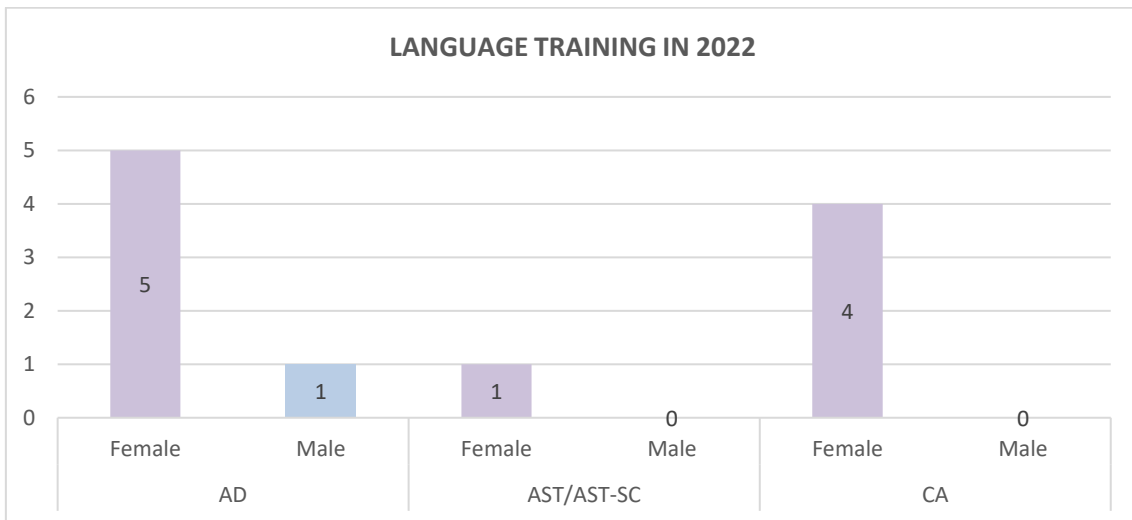


Graph 5- Training days by category of grade (without language training)



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

In 2022, a total of 11 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 2022

Annex 4: Draft Annual Report 2022 of the European Ombudsman

The Ombudsman shall submit to the European Parliament a report on the outcome of his/her inquiries every year. The Annual Report of the European Ombudsman for 2022 will be presented officially to the European Parliament later in 2022. A draft version is attached to the present report.

The report will subsequently be made available in all languages in the following section of the Ombudsman's website:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/activities/annualreports.faces>



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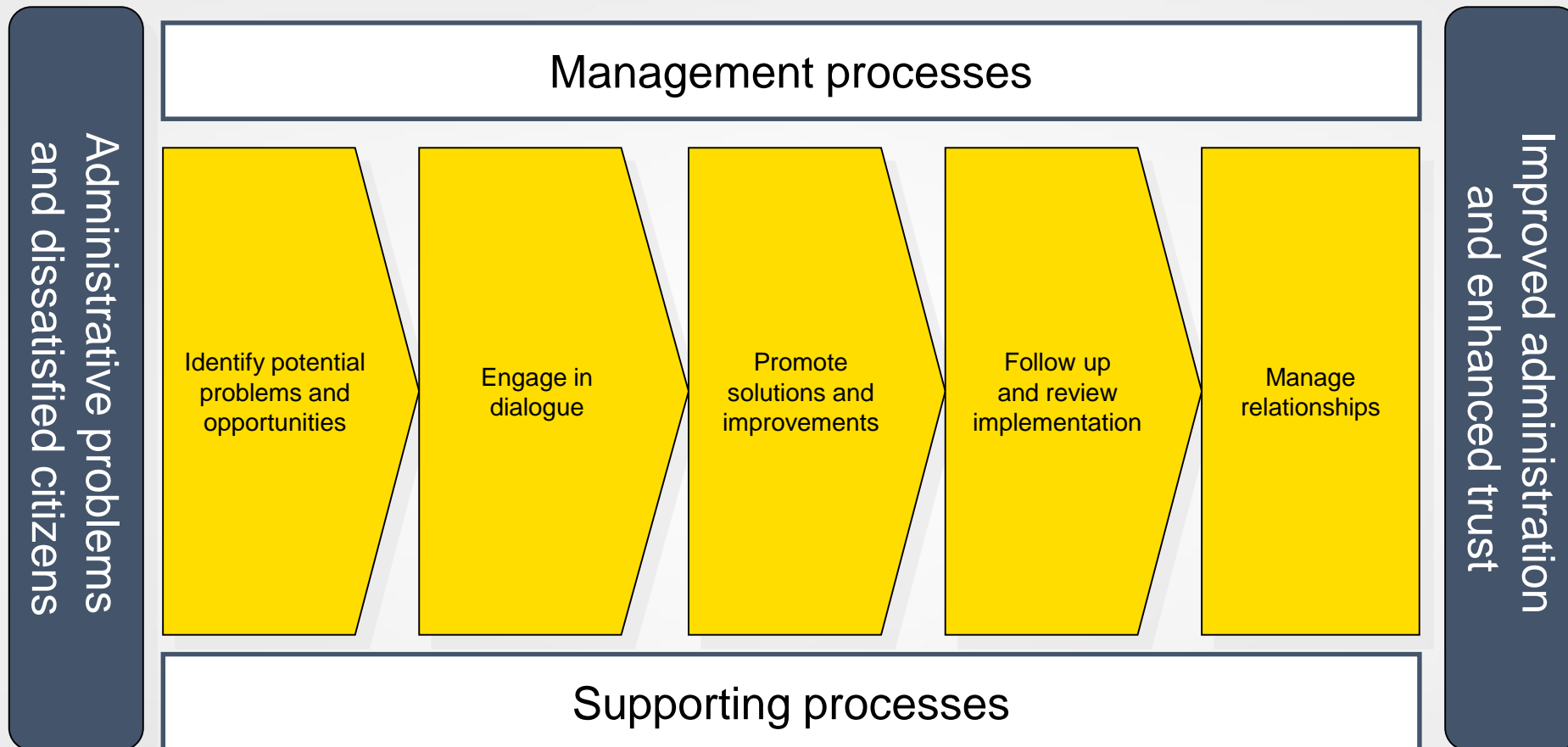
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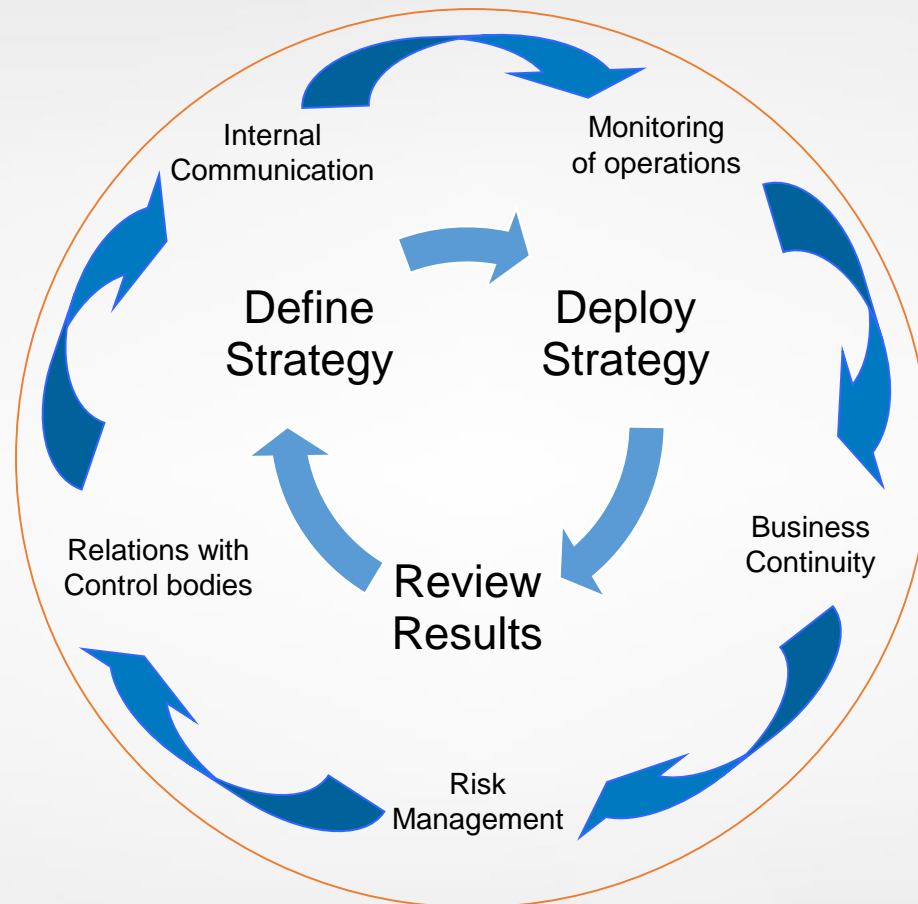
OPERATING FRAMEWORK AND KEY PROCESSES

V12 – February 2023

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

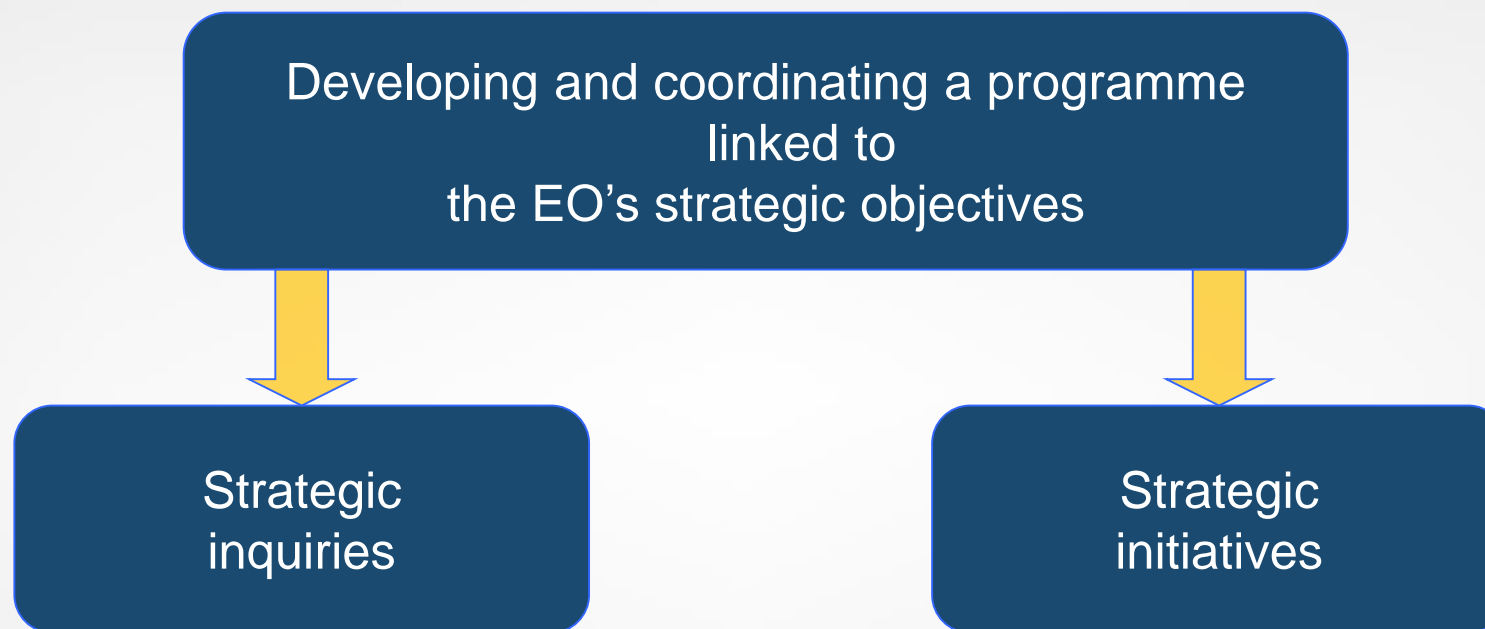
2.1 Proactive identification of systemic issues in the EO's fields of activity

2.2 Complaints

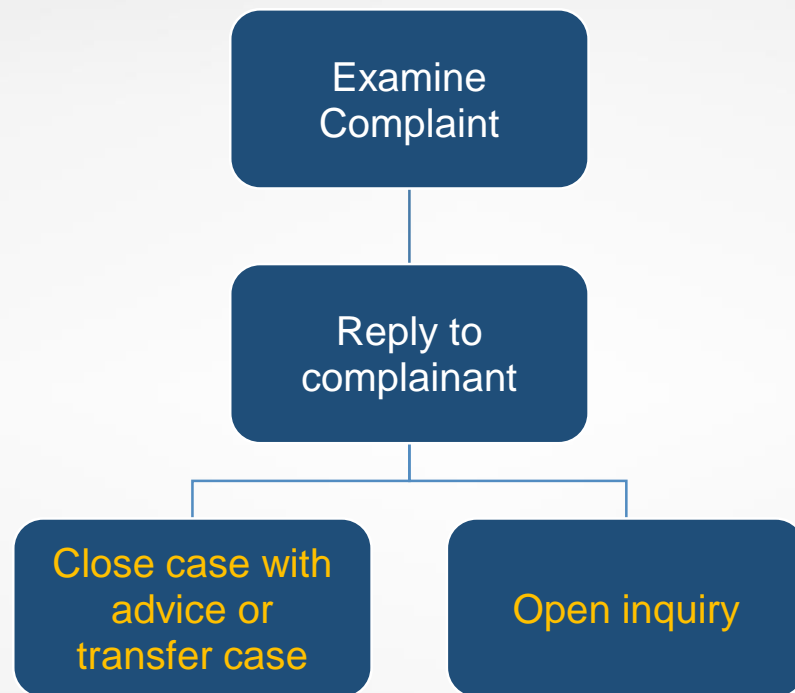
2.3 Other stakeholder input



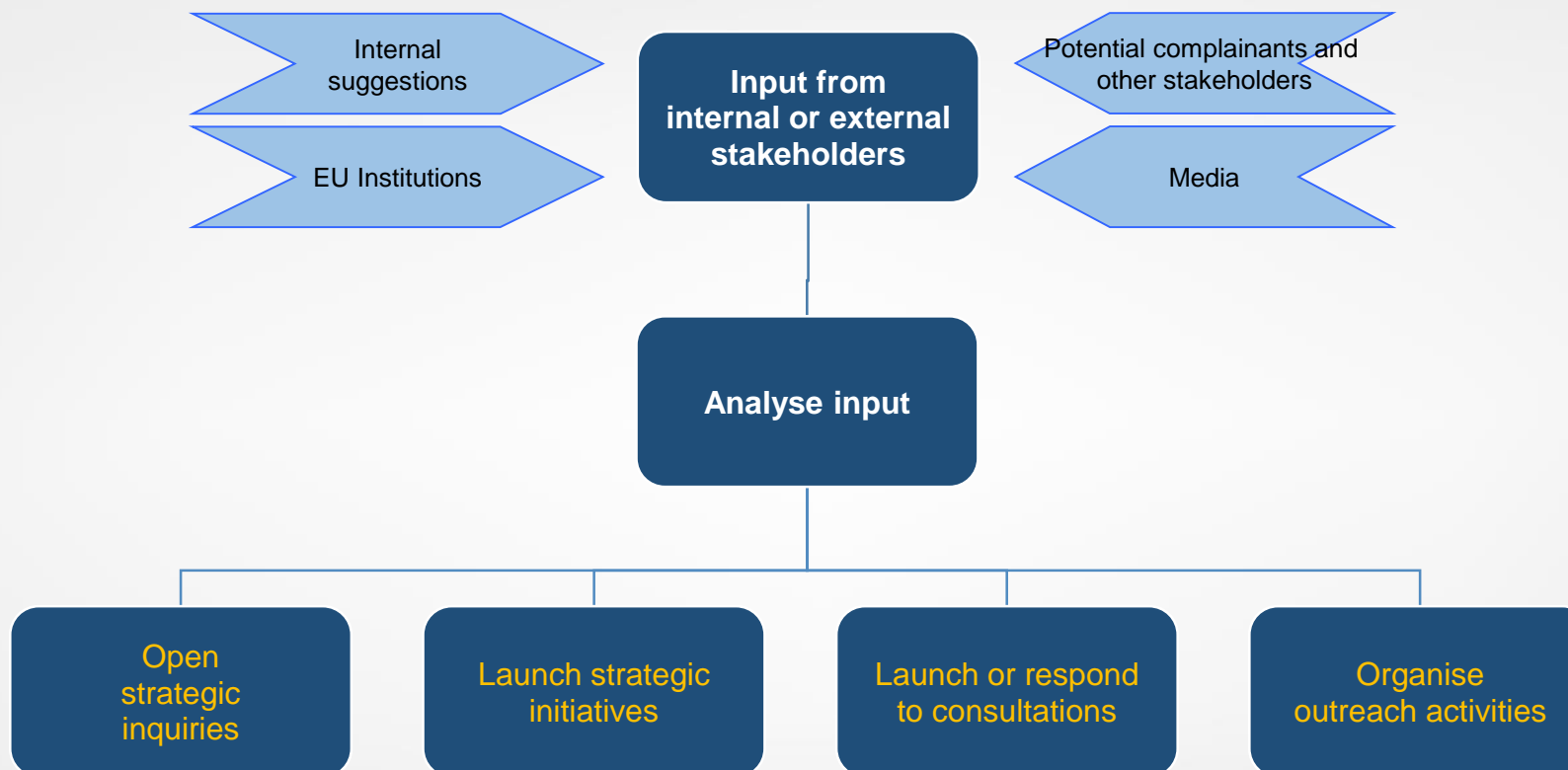
2.1 Proactive identification of systemic issues in the EO's fields of activity



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

Fast-Track inquiries
(Regulation 1049/2001)

Inquiries of
public importance

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



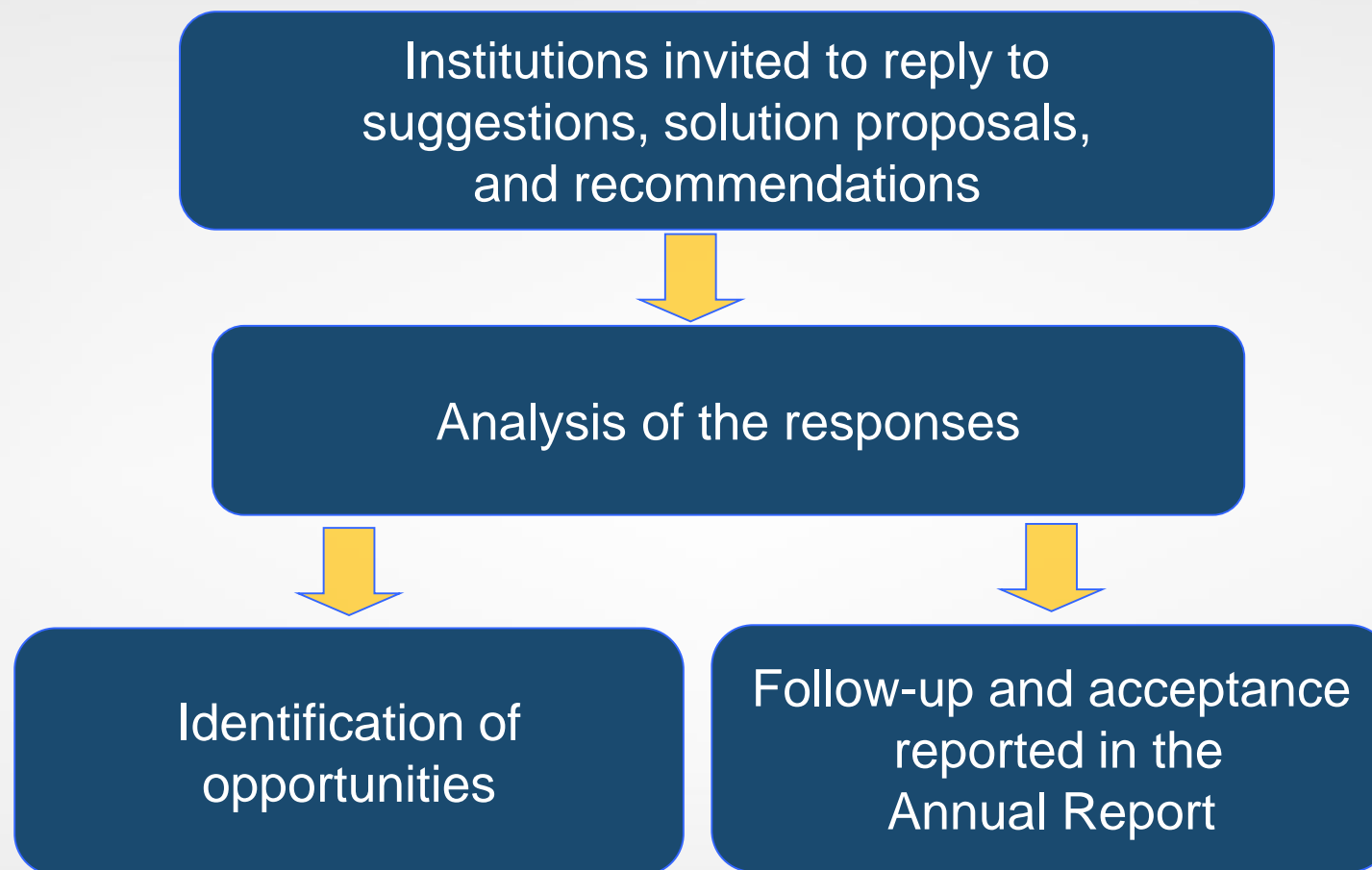
5. Follow-up and review implementation

[5.1 Acceptance analysis](#)

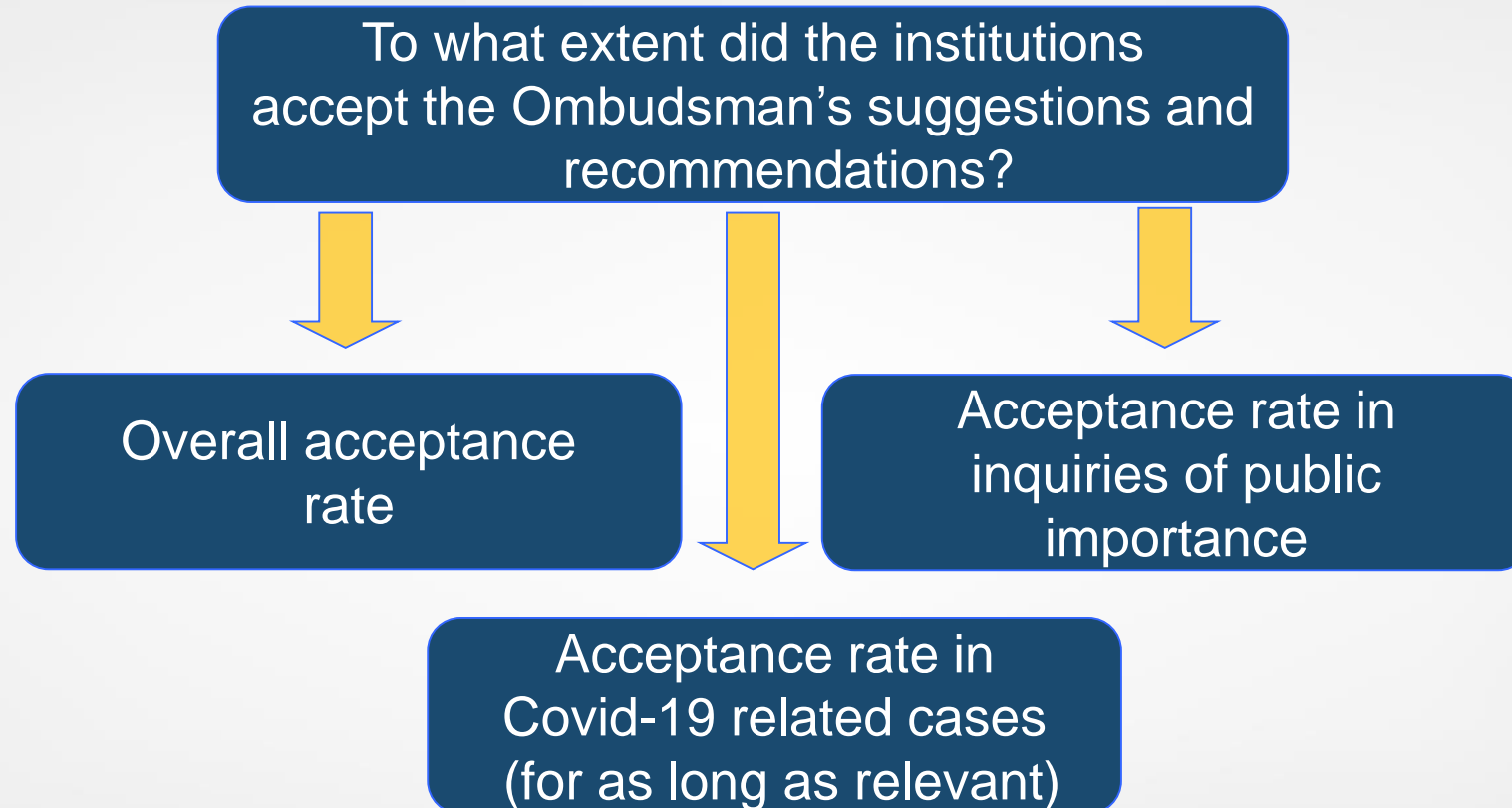
[5.2 Acceptance rate](#)



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

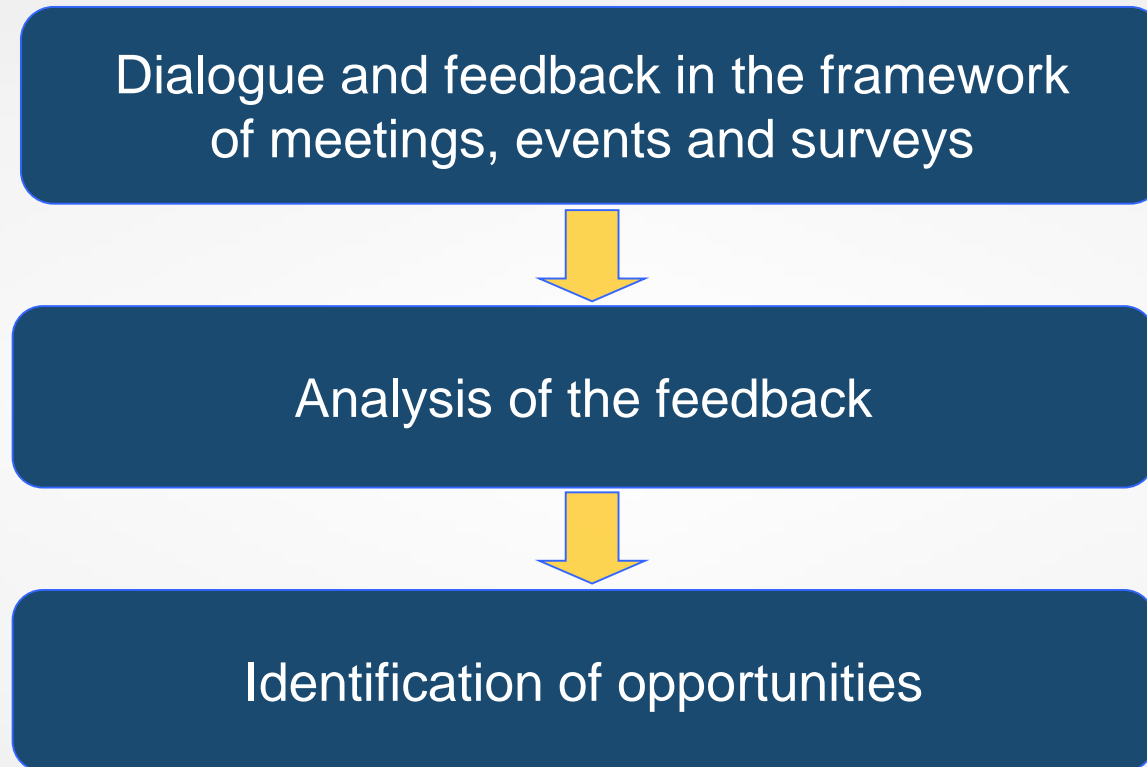
Electronic discussion forum and news
service

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



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 the HR Framework and
related 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 and updating
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, translation, ...)

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

Translation Centre





European
Ombudsman

REPORT ON BUDGETARY AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

European Ombudsman

Financial year 2022



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Introduction

This report has been drawn up in accordance with Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 2018/1046 of 18 July 2018 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the Union, and in particular Article 249 thereof.

The report summarises the European Ombudsman's budgetary and financial management during 2022 and outlines the institution's financial situation, budget evolution and main events having an impact on the budgetary performance.

The 2022 budget implementation shows the following patterns:

- The implementation rate for commitments and payments is higher compared to the previous year. The utilisation rate of appropriations amounts to 96,97% and payments represent 96,27% of total commitments, compared to respectively 88,84% and 84,97% in 2021. Appropriations carried-over to 2023 represent 3,03% of total commitments (11,16% in 2021).
- Six transfers were organised during the year for a total amount of € 344 460 in order to reallocate funds to finance specific needs. In particular, the budgetary authorities authorised the transfer of unused appropriations to increase mainly the following budget lines:
 - Crèches and childcare facilities – to enable the payment of the European Ombudsman's contribution to the cost of the Early Childhood Centre and other crèches and childcare facilities, which was higher than expected.
 - Studies – to use consultancy services to analyse and suggest improvements to the Ombudsman's complaint and inquiry handling process.
 - Expenditure on archive resources - to prepare a first batch of documents to be deposited at the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence.



1 - Revenue

Established entitlements for the financial year 2022 totalled € 1 454 439,57. They represent 104,13 % of the estimated revenue of € 1 396 726 (Table 1), compared to 107;30% in 2021.

The total revenue recovered as at 31 December 2022 (€ 1 454 439,57) represents 100% of the entitlements established in 2022.

The detailed table can be found in Annex I.

Table 1 - Established entitled 2022

(EUR)

Title	Estimated revenue 2022	Established entitlements 2022	Total recovered 2022	% in total
3 - Administrative revenue	1.396.726	1.454.411,64	1.454.411,64	100%
4- Financial revenue, default interest and fines	-	27,93	27,93	100%
6- Revenue, contributions and refunds related to Union policies	-	-	-	0%
Total	1.396.726	1.454.439,57	1.454.439,57	100%

Of the € 1 454 439,57 in revenue recovered, € 1 452 043,11 (99,84%) 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 € 2 396,46 mainly related to recoveries on insurance, telephone costs for private use, organisational costs of a conference and bank interests. By way of comparison, in 2021, deductions made from the salaries of Members and staff (taxes and special levies on remuneration and pensions) amounted to € 1 337 860,31 and other revenue for the financial year amounted to € 253,46.

2 - Expenditure

2.1 Final appropriations available, commitments and payments by title

Total appropriations available for 2022, appropriations committed, payments made during the year and the remaining amount to be carried over to 2023 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

Title	Final appropriations	Appropriations committed	%
Title I - Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	9.507.008	9.236.308	97,15%
Title II - Buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure	2.396.300	2.370.083	98,91%
Title III - Expenditure resulting from general functions carried out by the institution	318.800	245.372	76,97%
Titles I, II and III - Total	12.222.108	11.851.764	96,97%

Table 3 - Commitments and payments by title

(EUR)

Title	Commitments	Payments	%	Carry-over	%
Title I - Expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	9.236.308	9.121.296	98,75%	115.012	1,25%
Title II - Buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure	2.370.083	2.170.307	91,57%	199.777	8,43%
Title III - Expenditure resulting from general functions carried out by the institution	245.372	117.952	48,07%	127.420	51,93%
Titles I, II and III - Total	11.851.764	11.409.555	96,27%	442.209	3,73%



2.2 Budget transfers

During the financial year, the European Ombudsman made six budgetary transfers totalling € 344 460 (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 2022

(EUR)		
Type de transfert	Number of transfers in 2022	Total amount transferred
Title to title	1	16.400
Chapter to chapter	1	153.100
Article to Article	1	13.000
Item to item	3	161.960
Total	6	344.460

The main budget lines impacted were the following :

Reductions:

- Fitting-out and installation work: -96,69%
- Communication and publications: -11,82%

Increases:

- Crèches and childcare facilities: +404,67%
- Studies: +184%
- Furniture: +113,33%
- Expenditure on archive resources: +433,33%

The reinforcement of the budget lines for crèches and childcare facilities, studies, furniture, expenditure on archive resources and rent was possible thanks to the savings resulting from unused appropriations for fitting out and installation work and for communication and publications. As the European Ombudsman agreed with Parliament on the anticipated payment of all costs of the fitting-out works in the Froissart Building through the 2021 budget, the appropriations available for 'Fitting-out and installation work' (item 2001) were not used in their entirety and allowed the transfer of appropriations from this budget line.

Appropriations were transferred to budget line 1651 'Crèches and childcare facilities' to enable the payment of the European Ombudsman's contribution to the cost of the Early Childhood Centre and other crèches and childcare facilities. This contribution, which is paid to the Commission, was higher in 2022 than expected when preparing the budget estimates for 2022.



For the budget line 3300 'Studies', a consultancy project could be launched in order to analyse and suggest improvements to the Ombudsman's complaint and inquiry handling process. The aim of this project is to seek efficiency gains in order to reduce resources dedicated to administrative processes.

Appropriations were also transferred to budget line 212 'Furniture' in order to cover the supply and the maintenance of plants in the Ombudsman's Brussels building.

In July 2022, the European Ombudsman announced the Office's intention to become a depositing institution at the Historical Archives of the European Union in Florence. The transfer of appropriations to budget line 3201 'expenditure on archive resources' was needed in order to prepare the first batch of documents to be deposited.

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 2022 in Title I.

Table 5 - Final appropriations available and commitments in Title I

(EUR)			
Chapters	Final appropriations	Appropriations committed	%
10- Members of the institution	494.700	481.811	97,39%
12- Officials and temporary staff	8.118.411	7.933.005	97,72%
14- Other staff and outside services	578.500	516.021	89,20%
16- Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	315.397	305.472	96,85%
Titles I - Total	9.507.008	9.236.308	97,15%

In 2022, the utilisation rate of appropriations under Title I was 97,15% (in 2021, this rate was 90,15%).

Appropriations in Chapter 10 (Members of the institution) were used in 2022 at a rate of 97,39% (in 2021, the figure was 93,76%).



The utilisation rate for Chapter 12 (Officials and temporary staff) was 97,72% compared to 89,59% in 2021.

The utilisation rate for Chapter 14 (Other staff and outside services) was 89,20% compared to 93,59% in 2021.

Appropriations in Chapter 16 (Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution) were used in 2022 at a rate of 96,85% compared to 94,16% in 2021.

Table 6 - Commitments and payments in Title I

(EUR)					
Chapters	Commitments	Payments	%	Carry-over	%
10- Members of the institution	481.811	473.026	98,18%	8.785	1,82%
12- Officials and temporary staff	7.933.005	7.933.005	100,00%		0,00%
14- Other staff and outside services	516.021	514.813	99,77%	1.207	0,23%
16- Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	305.472	200.452	65,62%	105.020	34,38%
Title I - Total	9.236.308	9.121.296	98,75%	115.012	1,25%

In 2022, for Title I, payments totalled € 9 121 296, i.e. 95,94% of the final appropriations and 98,75% of the total commitments (in 2021, these rates were 89,29% and 99,05% respectively).

Commitments carried over automatically to 2023 in accordance with Article 12 of the Financial Regulation amounted to € 115 012, i.e. 1,21% of the final appropriations and 1,25% of the total commitments (in 2021, these rates were 0,85% and 0,95% respectively).

The largest proportion of the carry-over regarding Chapter 16 concerned staff training (€ 29 627) and the Crèches and childcare facilities (€ 75 093) 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 2022 in Title II.

Table 7 - Final appropriations available and commitments in Title II

(EUR)

Chapters	Final appropriations	Appropriations committed	%
20- Buildings and associated costs	1.622.200	1.620.764	99,91%
21- Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	278.400	274.984	98,77%
23-Current administrative expenditure	495.700	474.335	95,69%
Title II - Total	2.396.300	2.370.083	98,91%

The utilisation rate for appropriations in Title II reached 98,91% in 2022 (compared to 91,93% in 2021).

Table 8 - Commitments and payments in Title II

(EUR)

Chapters	Commitments	Payments	%	Carry-over	%
20- Buildings and associated costs	1.620.764	1.615.449	99,67%	5.315	0,33%
21- Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	274.984	137.377	49,96%	137.608	50,04%
23-Current administrative expenditure	474.335	417.481	88,01%	56.854	11,99%
Title II - Total	2.370.083	2.170.307	91,57%	199.777	8,43%

Payments totalled € 2 170 307, equivalent to 90,57% of the final appropriations and 91,57% of the commitments (in 2021, these rates were 25,87% and 28,14% respectively). Commitments carried over to 2023 in accordance with Article 12 of the Financial Regulation amounted to € 199 777, i.e 8,34% of the final appropriations and 8,43% of the commitments (in 2021, these rates were 66,06% and 71,86% respectively).



The budget line which accounts for most of the carry-over of € 137 608 under Chapter 21 is budget item 2100 'Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work', with € 124 345, mainly for the order of IT equipment (laptops, screens, headsets...) and for the development and maintenance of the EO's websites.

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 2022 in Title III.

Table 9 - Final appropriations available and commitments in Title III

(EUR)

Chapters	Final appropriations	Appropriations committed	%
30- Meetings and conferences	170.000	149.831	88,14%
32- Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	118.000	74.892	63,47%
33- Studies and other subsidies	28.400	18.250	64,26%
34- Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	2.400	2.400	100,00%
Title III - Total	318.800	245.372	76,97%

In 2022, the utilisation rate of appropriations under Title III was 76,97% (in 2021, this rate was 33,46%).

Table 10 - Commitments and payments in Title III

(EUR)

Chapters	Commitments	Payments	%	Carry-over	%
30- Meetings and conferences	149.831	95.782	63,93%	54.049	36,07%
32- Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	74.892	19.770	26,40%	55.121	73,60%
33- Studies and other subsidies	18.250	-	0,00%	18.250	100,00%
34- Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	2.400	2.400	100,00%	-	0,00%
Title III - Total	245.372	117.952	48,07%	127.420	51,93%



Payments totalled € 117 952, equivalent to 37% of the final appropriations and 48,07% of the commitments (in 2021, these rates were 20,25% and 60,51% respectively). Commitments carried over to 2023 in accordance with Article 12 of the Financial Regulation amounted to € 127 420, i.e 39,97% of the final appropriations and 51,93% of the commitments (in 2021, these rates were 13,21% and 39,49% respectively).

In Chapter 30 'Meetings and conference', the majority of the carry-over relates to budget line 300 'Staff mission expenses' (€ 31 954) and budget line 303 'Meetings in general' (€ 22 000) 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.

In Chapter 32 'Expertise and information : acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination', the majority of the carry-over concerns budget item 3201 'Expenditure on archive resources' (€ 16 000) and budget item 3210 'Communication and publications' (€ 38 372).

The budget line which entirely accounts for the carry-over of € 18 250 under Chapter 33 'Studies and other subsidies' is budget line 3300 'Studies' and is related to the Lean consultancy for the optimisation of the complaints handling process in the Ombudsman's Office.

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



3 - Appropriations carried over from 2021

The carry over of 2021 appropriations is shown in Table 11 below and in Annex 4.

Table 11 - Carry over of 2021 appropriations to 2022

(EUR)

Chapters	Carry-over from 2021 to 2022	Payments on carry-over	Cancellations
10- Members of the institution	5.824	1.351	4.473
12- Officials and temporary staff	-	-	-
14- Other staff and outside services	291	87	204
16- Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	77.787	5.874	71.913
Title I - Total	83.902	7.312	76.590
20- Buildings and associated costs	1.127.492	1.125.133	2.359
21- Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	278.979	272.219	6.759
23-Current administrative expenditure	130.243	108.631	21.612
Title II - Total	1.536.713	1.505.983	30.730
30- Meetings and conferences	25.929	12.635	13.294
32- Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	11.822	8.732	3.089
33- Studies and other subsidies	10.000	10.000	-
34- Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	-	-	-
Title III - Total	47.751	31.367	16.383
Title I, II and III - Total	1.668.366	1.544.663	123.703

Automatic carry-overs of appropriations (Article 12 of the Financial Regulation) from the financial year 2021 to the financial year 2022, which totalled € 1 668 366, gave rise to payments amounting to € 1 544 663, i.e. a utilisation rate of 92,59% compared to 85,39% in 2021.



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

Line	Heading	Revenues 2022 (in EUR)			
		Initial Budget	Establ Rights of the Year	Recovered of Year	To be recovered of Year
3000	Tax on remunerations	640.549	696.154,41	696.154,41	-
3001	Special levies on remunerations	121.545	127.155,37	127.155,37	-
300	Taxes and levies	762.094	823.309,78	823.309,78	-
3010	Staff contributions to the pension scheme	634.632	628.733,33	628.733,33	-
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	634.632	628.733,33	628.733,33	-
Chapter 30	Revenue from staff	1.396.726	1.452.043,11	1.452.043,11	-
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	-	-	-
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	1.371,50	1.371,50	-
339	Other revenue from administrative operations	p.m	997,03	997,03	-
Chapter 33	Other administrative revenue	p.m	2.368,53	2.368,53	-
Title 3	Administrative revenue	1.396.726	1.454.411,64	1.454.411,64	-
400	Revenue from investments, loans granted and bank accounts	p.m	27,93	27,93	-
Chapter 40	Revenue from investments and accounts	p.m	27,93	27,93	-
Title 4	Financial revenue, default interest and fines	p.m	27,93	27,93	-
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		1.396.726	1.454.439,57	1.454.439,57	-



Annex 2: Changes in appropriations for the year

in EUR

Budget Line	Initial Budget 2022	Reductions	Transfers (+/-)	Appropriations Year 2022	Carry Over by Right Y-1
Article 1 00 - Salaries, allowances and payments related to salaries	445.700	0	12.000	457.700	0,00
Article 1 02 - Temporary allowances	0	0	0	0	0,00
Article 1 03 - Pensions	0	0	0	0	0,00
Article 1 04 - Mission expenses	35.000	0	0	35.000	5.824,24
Article 1 05 - Language and data-processing courses	2.000	0	0	2.000	0,00
Article 1 08 - Allowances and expenses on entering and leaving the service	0	0	0	0	0,00
Chapter 10 - Members of the institution	482.700	0	12.000	494.700	5.824,24
12 00 Remuneration and allowances	8.233.111	0	-147.700	8.085.411	0,00
12 02 Paid overtime	3.000	0	0	3.000	0,00
12 04 Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service	30.000	0	0	30.000	0,00
Article 1 20 - Remuneration and other entitlements	8.266.111	0	-147.700	8.118.411	0
12 20 Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service	0	0	0	0	0,00
12 22 Allowances for staff whose service is terminated and special retirement scheme for officials and temporary staff	0	0	0	0	0,00
Article 1 22 - Allowances upon early termination of service	0	0	0	0	0
Chapter 12 - Officials and temporary staff	8.266.111	0	-147.700	8.118.411	0
14 00 Other staff	340.000	0	65.000	405.000	0,00
14 04 Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	173.500	0	0	173.500	290,88
Article 1 40 - Other staff and externals	513.500	0	65.000	578.500	290,88
Chapter 14 - Other staff and outside services	513.500	0	65.000	578.500	290,88
16 10 Expenditure on recruitment	3.000	0	0	3.000	0,00
16 12 Further training	90.000	0	0	90.000	76.786,85
Article 1 61 - Expenditure relating to staff management	93.000	0	0	93.000	76.787
16 30 Social welfare	0	0	0	0	0,00
16 31 Mobility	5.000	0	0	5.000	1.000,00
16 32 Social contacts between members of staff and other social measures	7.000	0	0	7.000	0,00
Article 1 63 - Measures to assist the institution's staff	12.000	0	0	12.000	1.000
16 50 European Schools	124.697	0	0	124.697	0,00
16 51 Crèches and childcare facilities	15.000	0	70.700	85.700	0,00
Article 1 65 - Activities relating to all persons working with the institution	139.697	0	70.700	210.397	0
Chapter 16 - Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	244.697	0	70.700	315.397	77.787
TITLE I - EXPENDITURE RELATING TO PERSONS WORKING WITH THE INSTITUTION	9.507.008	0	0	9.507.008	83.901,97



Budget Line	Initial Budget 2022	Reductions	Transfers (+/-)	Appropriations Year 2022	Carry Over by Right Y-1
2000 Rent	1.030.000	0	147.700	1.177.700	1.127.491,66
2001 Fitting-out and installation work	178.000	0	-172.100	5.900	0,00
2002 Cleaning, maintenance and energy consumption	162.000	0	-9.400	152.600	0,00
2003 Security and surveillance of buildings	272.000	0	14.000	286.000	0,00
Article 2 0 0 - Buildings	1.642.000	0	-19.800	1.622.200	1.127.491,66
Chapter 2 0 - Buildings and associated costs	1.642.000	0	-19.800	1.622.200	1.127.491,66
2100 Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work	260.000	0	0	260.000	258.182,76
Article 2 1 0 - Equipment, operating costs and services relating to data processing and telecommunications	260.000	0	0	260.000	258.182,76
Article 2 1 2 - Furniture	3.000	0	3.400	6.400	11.216,18
Article 2 1 6 - Vehicles	12.000	0	0	12.000	9.579,63
Chapter 2 1 - Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	275.000	0	3.400	278.400	278.978,57
2300 Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables	5.500	0	-260	5.240	3.479,37
2301 Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	3.000	0	0	3.000	2.616,41
2302 Telecommunications	7.000	0	0	7.000	1.500,00
2303 Financial charges	700	0	260	960	220,79
2304 Other expenditure	3.500	0	0	3.500	380,00
2305 Legal costs and damages	1.000	0	0	1.000	0,00
Article 2 3 0 - Administrative expenditure	20.700	0	0	20.700	8.196,57
Article 2 3 1 - Translation and interpretation	315.000	0	0	315.000	102.746,37
Article 2 3 2 - Support for activities	160.000	0	0	160.000	19.300,00
Chapter 2 3 - Current administrative expenditure	495.700	0	0	495.700	130.242,94
TITLE II - BUILDINGS, FURNITURE, EQUIPMENT AND MISCELLANEOUS OPERATING EXPENDITURE	2.412.700	0	-16.400	2.396.300	1.536.713,17



Budget Line	Initial Budget 2022	Reductions	Transfers (+/-)	Appropriations Year 2022	Carry Over by Right Y-1
Article 3 0 0 - Staff mission expenses	120.000	0	0	120.000	17.183,27
Article 3 0 2 - Reception and representation expenses	2.000	0	0	2.000	0,00
Article 3 0 3 - Meetings in general	25.000	0	0	25.000	8.570,71
Article 3 0 4 - Internal meetings	25.000	0	-2.000	23.000	174,90
Chapter 3 0 - Meetings and conferences	172.000	0	-2.000	170.000	25.928,88
3 2 0 0 Documentation and library expenditure	5.000	0	0	5.000	320,55
3 2 0 1 Expenditure on archive resources	3.000	0	13.000	16.000	932,68
Article 3 2 0 - Acquisition of information and expertise	8.000	0	13.000	21.000	1.253,23
3 2 1 0 Communication and publications	110.000	0	-13.000	97.000	10.568,57
Article 3 2 1 - Production and dissemination	110.000	0	-13.000	97.000	10.569
Chapter 3 2 - Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	118.000	0	0	118.000	11.822
3 3 0 0 Studies	10.000	0	18.400	28.400	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	0	0	0	0	-
Article 3 3 0 - Studies and subsidies	10.000	0	18.400	28.400	10.000
Chapter 3 3 - Studies and other subsidies	10.000	0	18.400	28.400	10.000,00
3 4 0 0 Miscellaneous expenses	2.400	0	0	2.400	0,00
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	0,00
TITLE III - EXPENDITURE RESULTING FROM GENERAL FUNCTIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE INSTITUTION	302.400	0	16.400	318.800	47.750,68
GRAND TOTAL	12.222.108	0	0	12.222.108	1.668.365,82



Annex 3 : Use of appropriations for the year

in EUR

Budget Line	Appropriations Year 2022	Commitments	Payments	Available on Comt	Carry Over Right Y+1	Cancelled Appropriations
Article 1 0 0 - Salaries, allowances and payments related to salaries	457.700	446.810,60	446.810,60	-	-	10.889,40
Article 1 0 2 - Temporary allowances	-	-	-	-	-	-
Article 1 0 3 - Pensions	-	-	-	-	-	-
Article 1 0 4 - Mission expenses	35.000	35.000,00	26.215,15	8.784,85	8.784,85	-
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	494.700	481.810,60	473.025,75	8.784,85	8.784,85	12.889,40
1 2 0 0 Remuneration and allowances	8.085.411	7.915.605,40	7.915.605,40	-	-	169.805,60
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	17.399,45	17.399,45	-	-	12.600,55
Article 1 2 0 - Remuneration and other entitlements	8.118.411	7.933.004,85	7.933.004,85	-	-	185.406,15
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	-	-	-	-	-	-
Article 1 2 2 - Allowances upon early termination of service	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chapter 1 2 - Officials and temporary staff	8.118.411	7.933.004,85	7.933.004,85	-	-	185.406,15
1 4 0 0 Other staff	405.000	350.168,37	350.168,37	-	-	54.831,63
1 4 0 4 Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	173.500	165.852,19	164.644,87	1.207,32	1.207,32	7.647,81
Article 1 4 0 - Other staff and externals	578.500	516.020,56	514.813,24	1.207,32	1.207,32	62.479,44
Chapter 1 4 - Other staff and outside services	578.500	516.020,56	514.813,24	1.207,32	1.207,32	62.479,44
1 6 1 0 Expenditure on recruitment	3.000	1.145,00	1.025,00	120,00	120,00	1.855,00
1 6 1 2 Further training	90.000	87.036,20	57.409,57	29.626,63	29.626,63	2.963,80
Article 1 6 1 - Expenditure relating to staff management	93.000	88.181,20	58.434,57	29.746,63	29.746,63	4.818,80
1 6 3 0 Social welfare	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 6 3 1 Mobility	5.000	2.317,25	2.317,25	-	-	2.682,75
1 6 3 2 Social contacts between members of staff and other social measures	7.000	4.576,60	4.396,60	180,00	180,00	2.423,40
Article 1 6 3 - Measures to assist the institution's staff	12.000	6.893,85	6.713,85	180,00	180,00	5.106,15
1 6 5 0 European Schools	124.697	124.697,00	124.697,00	-	-	-
1 6 5 1 Crèches and childcare facilities	85.700	85.700,00	10.607,00	75.093,00	75.093,00	-
Article 1 6 5 - Activities relating to all persons working with the institution	210.397	210.397,00	135.304,00	75.093,00	75.093,00	-
Chapter 1 6 - Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	315.397	305.472,05	200.452,42	105.019,63	105.019,63	9.924,95
TITLE I - EXPENDITURE RELATING TO PERSONS WORKING WITH THE INSTITUTION	9.507.008	9.236.308,06	9.121.296,26	115.011,80	115.011,80	270.699,94



Budget Line	Appropriations Year 2022	Commitments	Payments	Available on Comt	Carry Over Right Y+1	Cancelled Appropriations
2 0 0 Rent	1.177.700	1.176.938,81	1.176.938,81	-	-	761,19
2 0 0 1 Fitting-out and installation work	5.900	5.314,96	-	5.314,96	5.314,96	585,04
2 0 0 2 Cleaning, maintenance and energy consumption	152.600	152.510,16	152.510,16	-	-	89,84
2 0 0 3 Security and surveillance of buildings	286.000	286.000,00	286.000,00	-	-	0,00
Article 2 0 0 - Buildings	1.622.200	1.620.763,93	1.615.448,97	5.314,96	5.314,96	1.436,07
Chapter 2 0 - Buildings and associated costs	1.622.200	1.620.763,93	1.615.448,97	5.314,96	5.314,96	1.436,07
2 1 0 0 Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work	260.000	258.639,50	134.294,26	124.345,24	124.345,24	1.360,50
Article 2 1 0 - Equipment, operating costs and services relating to data processing and telecommunications	260.000	258.639,50	134.294,26	124.345,24	124.345,24	1.360,50
Article 2 1 2 - Furniture	6.400	6.304,87	2.847,77	3.457,10	3.457,10	95,13
Article 2 1 6 - Vehicles	12.000	10.040,08	234,80	9.805,28	9.805,28	1.959,92
Chapter 2 1 - Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	278.400	274.984,45	137.376,83	137.607,62	137.607,62	3.415,55
2 3 0 0 Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables	5.240	2.846,74	2.323,36	523,38	523,38	2.393,26
2 3 0 1 Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	3.000	3.000,00	1.524,22	1.475,78	1.475,78	-
2 3 0 2 Telecommunications	7.000	3.479,53	1.979,53	1.500,00	1.500,00	3.520,47
2 3 0 3 Financial charges	960	960,00	476,91	483,09	483,09	-
2 3 0 4 Other expenditure	3.500	2.549,26	2.299,26	250,00	250,00	950,74
2 3 0 5 Legal costs and damages	1.000	-	-	-	-	1.000,00
Article 2 3 0 - Administrative expenditure	20.700	12.835,53	8.603,28	4.232,25	4.232,25	7.864,47
Article 2 3 1 - Translation and interpretation	315.000	315.000,00	282.628,20	32.371,80	32.371,80	-
Article 2 3 2 - Support for activities	160.000	146.499,56	126.249,56	20.250,00	20.250,00	13.500,44
Chapter 2 3 - Current administrative expenditure	495.700	474.335,09	417.481,04	56.854,05	56.854,05	21.364,91
TITLE II - BUILDINGS, FURNITURE, EQUIPMENT AND MISCELLANEOUS OPERATING EXPENDITURE	2.396.300	2.370.083,47	2.170.306,84	199.776,63	199.776,63	26.216,53



Budget Line	Appropriations Year 2022	Commitments	Payments	Available on Comt	Carry Over Right Y+1	Cancelled Appropriations
Article 3 0 0 - Staff mission expenses	120.000	118.306,25	86.352,38	31.953,87	31.953,87	1.693,75
Article 3 0 2 - Reception and representation expenses	2.000	496,40	401,40	95,00	95,00	2.496,40
Article 3 0 3 - Meetings in general	25.000	24.823,44	2.823,44	22.000,00	22.000,00	49.823,44
Article 3 0 4 - Internal meetings	23.000	6.204,51	6.204,51	-	-	29.204,51
Chapter 3 0 - Meetings and conferences	170.000	149.830,60	95.781,73	54.048,87	54.048,87	83.218,10
3 2 0 0 Documentation and library expenditure	5.000	1.463,08	713,77	749,31	749,31	3.536,92
3 2 0 1 Expenditure on archive resources	16.000	16.000,00	-	16.000,00	16.000,00	-
Article 3 2 0 - Acquisition of information and expertise	21.000	17.463,08	713,77	16.749,31	16.749,31	3.536,92
3 2 1 0 Communication and publications	97.000	57.428,45	19.056,32	38.372,13	38.372,13	39.571,55
Article 3 2 1 - Production and dissemination	97.000	57.428,45	19.056,32	38.372,13	38.372,13	39.571,55
Chapter 3 2 - Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	118.000	74.891,530	19.770,090	55.121,44	55.121,44	43.108,470
3 3 0 0 Studies	28.400	18.250,00	-	18.250,00	18.250,00	10.150,00
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	28.400	18.250,00	-	18.250,00	18.250,00	10.150,00
Chapter 3 3 - Studies and other subsidies	28.400	18.250	0	18.250,00	18.250,00	10.150,00
3 4 0 0 Miscellaneous expenses	2.400	2.400,00	2.400,00	-	-	-
Article 3 4 0 - Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	2.400	2.400,00	2.400,00	-	-	-
Chapter 3 4 - Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	2.400	2.400,00	2.400,00	-	-	-
TITLE III - EXPENDITURE RESULTING FROM GENERAL FUNCTIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE INSTITUTION	318.800	245.372,13	117.951,82	127.420,31	127.420,31	136.476,57
GRAND TOTAL	12.222.108	11.851.763,66	11.409.554,92	442.208,74	442.208,74	433.393,04



Annex 4: Use of appropriations carried-over from 2021

in EUR

Budget Line	CARRY OVER BY RIGHT		CANCELLED APPROPRIATIONS	CARRY OVER BY DECISION
	Carry over by right	Payments CO Right		
Article 1 0 4 - Mission expenses	5.824,24	1.351,39	4.472,85	-
Chapter 1 0 - Members of the institution	5.824,24	1.351,39	4.472,85	-
Chapter 1 2 - Officials and temporary staff	-	-	-	-
1 4 0 4 Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	290,88	86,78	204,10	-
Article 1 4 0 - Other staff and externals	290,88	86,78	204,10	-
Chapter 1 4 - Other staff and outside services	290,88	86,78	204,10	-
1 6 1 2 Further training	76.786,85	5.822,35	70.964,50	-
Article 1 6 1 - Expenditure relating to staff management	76.786,85	5.822,35	70.964,50	-
1 6 3 1 Mobility	1.000,00	51,80	948,20	-
Article 1 6 3 - Measures to assist the institution's staff	1.000,00	51,80	948,20	-
Chapter 1 6 - Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution	77.786,85	5.874,15	71.912,70	-
TITLE I - EXPENDITURE RELATING TO PERSONS WORKING WITH THE INSTITUTION	83.901,97	7.312,32	76.589,65	-

Budget Line	CARRY OVER BY RIGHT		CANCELLED APPROPRIATIONS	CARRY OVER BY DECISION
	Carry over by right	Payments CO Right		
2 0 0 0 Rent	1.127.491,66	1.125.132,64	2.359,02	-
Article 2 0 0 - Buildings	1.127.491,66	1.125.132,64	2.359,02	-
Chapter 2 0 - Buildings and associated costs	1.127.491,66	1.125.132,64	2.359,02	-
2 1 0 0 Purchase, servicing and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work	258.182,76	252.242,29	5.940,47	-
Article 2 1 0 - Equipment, operating costs and services relating to data processing and telecommunications	258.182,76	252.242,29	5.940,47	-
Article 2 1 2 - Furniture	11.216,18	11.101,31	114,87	-
Article 2 1 6 - Vehicles	9.579,63	8.875,60	704,03	-
Chapter 2 1 - Data processing, equipment and furniture: purchase, hire and maintenance	278.978,57	272.219,20	6.759,37	-
2 3 0 0 Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables	3.479,37	2.223,72	1.255,65	-
2 3 0 1 Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	2.616,41	292,57	2.323,84	-
2 3 0 2 Telecommunications	1.500,00	734,94	765,06	-
2 3 0 3 Financial charges	220,79	39,54	181,25	-
2 3 0 4 Other expenditure	380,00	324,57	55,43	-
Article 2 3 0 - Administrative expenditure	8.196,57	3.615,34	4.581,23	-
Article 2 3 1 - Translation and interpretation	102.746,37	93.923,67	8.822,70	-
Article 2 3 2 - Support for activities	19.300,00	11.092,20	8.207,80	-
Chapter 2 3 - Current administrative expenditure	130.242,94	108.631,21	21.611,73	-
TITLE II - BUILDINGS, FURNITURE, EQUIPMENT AND MISCELLANEOUS OPERATING EXPENDITURE	1.536.713,17	1.505.983,05	30.730,12	-



Budget Line	CARRY OVER BY RIGHT		CANCELLED APPROPRIATIONS	CARRY OVER BY DECISION
	Carry over by right	Payments CO Right		
Article 3 0 0 - Staff mission expenses	17.183,27	5.125,94	12.057,33	-
Article 3 0 3 - Meetings in general	8.570,71	7.509,03	1.061,68	-
Article 3 0 4 - Internal meetings	174,90	-	174,90	-
Chapter 3 0 - Meetings and conferences	25.928,88	12.634,97	13.293,91	-
3 2 0 0 Documentation and library expenditure	320,55	115,41	205,14	-
3 2 0 1 Expenditure on archive resources	932,68	156,88	775,80	-
Article 3 2 0 - Acquisition of information and expertise	1.253,23	272,29	980,94	-
3 2 1 0 Communication and publications	10.568,57	8.460,05	2.108,52	-
Article 3 2 1 - Production and dissemination	10.568,57	8.460,05	2.108,52	-
Chapter 3 2 - Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination	11.821,80	8.732,340	3.089,46	-
3 3 0 0 Studies	10.000,00	10.000,00	-	-
Article 3 3 0 - Studies and subsidies	10.000,00	10.000,00	-	-
Chapter 3 3 - Studies and other subsidies	10.000,00	10.000,00	-	-
Chapter 3 4 - Expenses relating to the Ombudsman's duties	-	-	-	-
TITLE III - EXPENDITURE RESULTING FROM GENERAL FUNCTIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE INSTITUTION	47.750,68	31.367,31	16.383,37	-
GRAND TOTAL	1.668.365,82	1.544.662,68	123.703,14	-

**European Ombudsman
Annual Report
2022**

DRAFT

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1. Introduction



(Photo 1) Emily O'Reilly, European Ombudsman

It is a great pleasure to present the European Ombudsman's Annual Report for 2022.

This year, the office put renewed focus on the public's right to take part in the democratic life of the European Union, for which transparent decision making and timely access to EU documents is essential.

In this light, I asked the European Commission to take steps to ensure that the public can easily see how funds meant to help the EU economy recover from the pandemic are being spent.

I also launched a public consultation on the transparency of environmental decision making. Citizens have strong participation and access to information rights when it comes to environmental decisions, and it is important to assess whether these rights are being fully respected by the EU administration.

Complaints to my office show that people are often frustrated with how long it takes EU institutions to deal with their access to document requests, despite the fact that there are set timelines. To find out what is contributing to these delays, I launched two inquiries to look at the details of how such requests are treated.

I also published guidelines on what is for the EU administration a relatively new aspect of this issue: how and when to record work-related text messages. These guidelines will help bring EU administrative practices in line with the modern methods we use to communicate.

I continued my focus on 'revolving doors' throughout 2022, including by asking the European Central Bank to be particularly vigilant about staff moves to jobs in the financial sector and suggesting to the European Investment Bank that it tighten the implementation of its rules in this area. I was pleased to note that the Commission took steps to improve how it handles revolving doors following my broad inquiry into the matter.

1. Introduction

Over the past years, I have reformed the office internally to allow it to work more efficiently on complaint-handling and tackling systemic issues within the EU administration. This has led to faster complaint-handling times, as well as important positive results in the EU administration across a range of areas. With the aim of gathering ideas to maintain the office as a valuable oversight body, I hosted an academic seminar with the European University Institute's Department of Law and School of Transnational Governance in Florence on the evolving role of the European Ombudsman. I plan to further explore several of the ideas arising from the discussions.

Lastly, the annual European Network of Ombudsmen (ENO) conference addressed some of the major issues facing ombudsmen, such as upholding the rights of those fleeing the war in Ukraine. I was happy to formally welcome the Ukrainian and Moldovan ombudsman offices to the Network after the two countries received EU candidate status in June.

The year ended on a sombre note with the corruption allegations in the European Parliament. It put the spotlight on the lax ethics rules in the Parliament, as well as in the wider institutional EU. The EU's status as a global regulatory, trading, and political power makes it a natural target for lobbyists, industry, and foreign states trying to influence its decision making. We need to ensure that the EU's ethics and anti-corruption rules are able to withstand this pressure.

Part of making the EU administration stronger in this area involves pointing out where standards have slipped and what can be improved. As an independent ethics-monitoring body, my office will continue to do this in 2023.

2. 2022 at a glance

2. 2022 at a glance

January

[Ombudsman finds maladministration in Commission's handling of access to text messages request](#)

February

[European Banking Authority releases voting records of its board of supervisors](#)

March

[Inquiry opened into how the European Central Bank deals with 'revolving door' cases](#)

April

[European Network of Ombudsmen Annual Conference with a focus on helping Ukrainian refugees](#)

May

[New Ombudsman logo unveiled](#)

June

[Council asked to give faster public access to legislative documents](#)

July

[Inquiry opened into how Commission ensures fundamental rights protection in migration management centres](#)

August

[Inquiry opened into how the European Medicines Agency dealt with an access request concerning the composition of medicines authorised in the European Economic Area](#)

September

[Launch of public consultation on transparency of EU environmental decision making](#)

October

[European Maritime Safety Agency agrees to publish statistics concerning maritime pollution](#)

November

[Academic conference on the evolving role of the European Ombudsman](#)

December

[Ombudsman participates in debate on need for higher ethics standards to safeguard EU democracy following European Parliament corruption allegations](#)

3. Key topics

3. Key topics

The Ombudsman helps people, businesses, and organisations as they engage with the EU institutions, bodies, offices, and agencies. Problems can include a lack of transparency in decision making, refusal of access to documents, violations of fundamental rights, and contractual issues. The following sections give an overview of key cases related to a particular area.

3.1. Ethical issues

Maintaining high ethics standards in the EU administration is a key area of the Ombudsman's work. This covers the implementation of rules on 'revolving doors', conflicts of interest, and meetings with lobbyists. The Ombudsman also anticipates potential problems and proactively asks EU institutions to provide information on how they are upholding ethics standards, particularly in areas of high public interest.

As part of an overall focus on how the EU administration interacts with lobbyists and stakeholders, the Ombudsman asked the Commission for information on how it is ensuring transparency and a balanced representation of interests in relation to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The Ombudsman made several [observations](#), including that the Directorate General for Agriculture and Rural Development, as lead department on this issue, should to the greatest extent possible discuss CAP with citizens and other stakeholders in addition to representatives from the agricultural sector. She also encouraged the Commission to proactively publish more information about the approval of Member States' 'strategic plans', which detail how CAP objectives will be met.



Following the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), we have suggested that the European Commission proactively publishes more material on national plans to implement the new CAP, and that the Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development meets more non-agricultural sector representatives.

The Ombudsman opened an [own-initiative inquiry](#) to assess how the Commission ensures that its interactions with tobacco interest representatives are transparent. The inquiry is a follow-up to previous inquiries in the area, including one which in 2016 concluded that the Commission was failing to meet its obligations under the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

3. Key topics



As part of our inquiry into transparency of interactions with tobacco lobbyists, we have asked the European Commission for additional info about:

- written records of meetings with lobbyists
- how it dealt with access to documents requests on this matter

The role of the Ombudsman is also to anticipate public interest issues and pre-emptively ask for information from the EU administration. In this light, the Ombudsman [asked](#) the Commission for more details about how it ensures that external experts involved in evaluating project proposals under the European Defence Fund (EDF) do not have conflicts of interest. The Ombudsman noted that the list of experts is not made public, making it more important that ethics obligations are robustly implemented.

The Ombudsman welcomed the Commission's proposal to amend the Financial Regulation to include the possibility to reject tenderers if they have a professional conflict of interest. The amendment was in response to the Ombudsman's [findings](#) about the Commission's decision to award BlackRock Investment Management a study contract in an area of regulatory and financial interest to it.



Following our BlackRock inquiry, we welcome the European Commission's proposal to reject tender applicants if they have a professional conflicting interest.

3.2. Revolving doors

Following a [broad inquiry](#) – covering 100 files – into how the Commission handles moves by staff to the private sector, the Ombudsman asked it to forbid jobs temporarily if they pose risks that cannot be offset by restrictions or if restrictions cannot be credibly monitored and

3. Key topics

enforced. The Commission was also asked to publish decisions on staff members' new jobs faster to allow for timely public scrutiny.



Following an inquiry into how the European Commission handles Revolving Doors, we called on the Commission to:

- forbid jobs temporarily if risks cannot be offset or restrictions cannot be enforced
- publish decisions on staff members' new jobs faster.

Emily O'Reilly: "My office has carried out several enquiries about how EU institutions handle applications by staff to move to jobs in the private sector. The EU institutions are at a critical point in their treatment of this issue, known as 'revolving doors'. To maintain the expertise and integrity of the EU administration, revolving door rules need to be robustly implemented and that includes by temporarily forbidding jobs where necessary."

In [response](#), the Commission said that, for cases where there is a reputational risk for the Commission, it would ask former staff to report back on how they are complying with any restrictions, such as on lobbying former colleagues. It also said it would publish its annual overview of senior staff members requesting permission to move to new employment, and its assessment of these requests, faster than previously. In addition, staff on unpaid leave are now forbidden from taking employment in areas where there is a risk of conflict of interest. The Ombudsman welcomed the improvements and said she would continue to monitor the Commission's handling of the issue.

After conducting an [own-initiative inquiry](#) into how the European Central Bank (ECB) manages revolving doors, the Ombudsman asked the bank to apply stricter rules to moves by staff to the private sector, and particularly to the financial sector. The Ombudsman asked that more staff are subject to stricter cooling-off requirements, and that the ban on former senior ECB staff lobbying their former colleagues is increased to one year.



As part of our work on revolving doors in the EU administration, we have asked the European Central Bank to take a more robust approach to managing staff moves to the private sector, and particularly to the financial sector.

The Ombudsman made [several suggestions](#) to the European Investment Bank (EIB) to strengthen how it assesses moves by members of its Management Committee to the private

3. Key topics

sector. This followed the EIB's decision to approve a move by a former Vice-President to a utility company that had received loans from the bank.

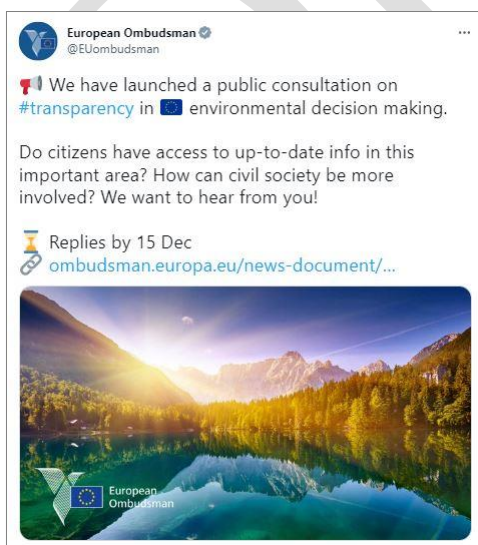


We ask the European Investment Bank (EIB) to take a more robust approach to revolving doors after our investigation into a former EIB Vice-President's move to an energy utilities company that had received EIB loans.

3.3. Accountability in decision making

The EU treaties require that all EU decisions are taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen. Transparency and participation helps to increase the legitimacy of EU decision making. This is particularly important when it comes to decisions related to the environment.

In September, the Ombudsman launched a [public consultation](#) to evaluate whether citizens have access to up-to-date information in this area. The questions were aimed at finding out how easy it is for the public to obtain documents or information related to the environment, and how citizens could be more involved in the preparation and implementation of green policies. The consultation received 18 replies and the Ombudsman will be taking follow-up steps in 2023. To help prepare this work, the Ombudsman's Office reached out to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee Secretariat to learn more about its role in complaint-handling on environmental matters.



We have launched a public consultation on transparency in EU environmental decision making.

Do citizens have access to up-to-date info in this important area? How can civil society be more involved? We want to hear from you!

Three Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) [complained](#) to the Ombudsman that the European Investment Bank (EIB) publishes too little information, and too late, about the projects it finances. The Ombudsman asked the Bank to implement a number of steps so that the public

3. Key topics

has sufficient time to raise environmental concerns about EIB-funded projects. The steps include publishing lists of the project documents that contain environment information and publishing online project summaries in the language of the country concerned. The EIB's follow up has been insufficient to date and the Ombudsman intends to step up her scrutiny of the Bank's activities.



The European Investment Bank is the world's biggest multilateral financial institution. We have asked it to improve transparency about projects it finances so the public can more easily assess their impact on the environment.

The Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) forms part of an unprecedented EU-financed stimulus package to help Member State economies recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ombudsman [asked the Commission](#) how it will ensure accountability when it comes to recovery fund spending so that the public can easily see which projects are being financed and whether promised milestones have been reached. The Ombudsman also received complaints about refused access to documents related to the recovery plans of Germany, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Denmark. In her analyses, the Ombudsman stressed that the importance of the RRF must be matched by high transparency standards.



We found the European Commission reasoning to not grant wider access to documents concerning EU COVID-19 recovery funds vague and inconsistent.

Next Generation EU is an unprecedented €800bn stimulus package and should be matched with high transparency standards.

A group of CSOs and associations [turned](#) to the Ombudsman after the Commission counted the almost 123 000 individual responses – submitted in one document – to a public consultation on the Sustainable Corporate Governance Initiative as a single response with multiple signatories. It also did not summarise the main concerns raised via the campaign in a timely and adequate way. The Ombudsman found this approach regrettable and asked that in the future the Commission provide better information on the responses received from citizens through campaign platforms.

3. Key topics

The Commission [explained](#) how it collects information concerning the implementation of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation in Ireland following concerns that it had not collected sufficient information to be able to assess how the law is being applied. The Ombudsman found the explanations satisfactory but encouraged the Commission to be more prescriptive in terms of its information needs so that it can adequately monitor this important area.

Referring to the strong and legitimate public interest, the Ombudsman [asked](#) the Council whether it could proactively release more documents related to the adoption of sanctions against Russia. The Council provided a detailed and convincing explanation as to why even marginal additional transparency is hard to achieve in this area at this moment.

3.4. Access to documents

EU citizens have broad rights to access EU documents held by the EU institutions. They can turn to the Ombudsman if they face difficulties gaining access to these documents.

The Ombudsman published a set of [practical recommendations](#) for the EU administration on the recording of work-related text and instant messages. The recommendations say that work-related text and instant messages should be recognised as EU documents, technological solutions should be put in place to enable the easy recoding of such messages, and staff should have clear guidance on how such messages should be recorded. This issue is a relatively new one for the EU administration and arose when a journalist asked for access to text messages between the Commission President and the CEO of a pharmaceutical company. The Ombudsman [found maladministration](#) in how the Commission handled the matter as it did not identify whether the text messages exist and noted that its practice is not to register text messages. In response, the Commission said it would issue further guidance on modern communication tools such as text messages.



Given how the European Commission handled this issue and has still not even clarified whether messages concerning a major vaccine purchase deal exist, we confirm our finding of maladministration.

Emily O'Reilly: "Public access requests for text messages will become more common. This inquiry is a wake-up call for all EU institutions. The issue needs to be tackled substantively and in good faith."

The European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) agreed to [publish](#) on its website extensive information on detections of possible oil spills from the year 2015 onwards. The Ombudsman praised EMSA's action, which followed a complaint by an investigative journalist platform.

For complainants, getting the sought-after information in a timely manner is key as the relevance of the information usually declines over time.

Following an inquiry, the Council gave [access](#) to Member States' initial comments and questions on the draft Digital Markets Act – a key piece of EU legislation – but only after

3. Key topics

legislative discussions on the law had finished. Similarly, the Commission granted public [access](#) to documents concerning the purchase of 1.5 million medical masks almost two years after the initial request.



We have asked the European Council to give faster access to legislative documents.

This follows its decision to give access to Member States' opinions on the Digital Markets Act – but over a year after the initial request, and after the end of negotiations.

Given the increasing number of delays in handling access to document requests, the Ombudsman launched two inquiries to look into the issue. One concerned the length of time it takes the [Commission](#) to deal with public access requests; the second is related to how the European Border and Coast Agency (Frontex) handles such requests.



We have asked the European Commission for details on time it takes to deal with access to document requests, following an increase in complaints about delays in the process.

Aim of the inquiry is to identify a systemic approach for reducing handling times.

3.5. Fundamental rights

The Ombudsman asked Frontex to improve its accountability after conducting a [strategic inquiry](#) into how it complies with its fundamental rights obligations under its expanded mandate. The inquiry examined the transparency of Frontex's joint operations with national authorities at the EU's borders, how it identifies fundamental rights concerns, and how it monitors the return of people seeking asylum.

3. Key topics

The Ombudsman identified several areas where Frontex could improve its practices, including by publishing summaries of its operational plans and further training its fundamental rights monitors. In a separate [inquiry](#), the Ombudsman made suggestions for how to improve the accessibility of Frontex’s complaints mechanism for people who feel their fundamental rights have been breached.



We welcome that Frontex has followed our suggestions to improve the accessibility of its complaints mechanism for potential victims of fundamental rights violations.

Following an [inquiry](#), the Ombudsman criticised the Commission’s delay in setting up a monitoring mechanism for border management by the Croatian authorities. She asked the Commission to provide up-to-date information on how the monitoring mechanism is working and whether it is independent and effective. She also asked the Commission to report back by early 2023 on the steps it has taken to strengthen fundamental rights compliance in Croatian border operations receiving EU funds.

In response to questions about how it ensures respect for human rights in international trade agreements, the Commission noted that since 2020 a Chief Trade Enforcement Officer oversees the enforcement of EU trade agreements and manages complaints from different stakeholders through an online portal. The Ombudsman [asked](#) the Commission to set up a new and separate complaint-handling portal for alleged human rights abuses, and to examine how it can be made accessible for human rights-related complaints by civil society organisations and other stakeholders in countries with which the EU has trade deals.

Following a complaint by a group of Civil Society Organisation (CSOs), the Ombudsman [found](#) that the Commission did not sufficiently assess the human rights impact of projects with potential surveillance capabilities funded by the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa. She asked that, in the future, each project be assessed on human rights grounds.

3. Key topics



We have found the European Commission did not sufficiently assess the human rights impact of projects with potential surveillance capabilities under EU's Emergency Trust Fund for Africa.

We have asked for stand-alone human rights assessments for future projects.

In 2020, the Ombudsman published a set of [practical recommendations](#) on the use of the official EU languages when communicating with the public. These included establishing a clear policy on use of official languages, publishing the policy, and applying it consistently. In autumn 2022, the network of EU agencies announced that, on the basis of the Ombudsman's recommendations, it had agreed guidelines and a template on multilingual policies.

3.6. Grants, contracts and tenders

An international conservation organisation, which carried out an EU-funded project concerning environmental protection and biodiversity in the Horn of Africa, [turned to the Ombudsman](#) after the Commission sought to recover costs following the findings of an audit report. During the course of the inquiry, the Commission waived its decision to recover the funds granted for one of the costs and satisfactorily explained its reasoning for recovering another part of the costs.

Following the Ombudsman's [intervention](#), the Commission revised its stance on costs incurred by a recipient of an EU grant for a water infrastructure project in Lebanon. It agreed to accept as eligible the staff costs the complainant had submitted.

The Translation Centre for the bodies of the EU (CdT) changed the wording of the documentation used in procurement procedures to provide greater clarity for tenderers following an [Ombudsman inquiry](#). The complainant had turned to the Office after the CdT had rejected her submission to provide editing services on the grounds that she had not provided evidence of her professional experience.

Following an [Ombudsman inquiry](#), the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) acknowledged it had made a technical error in refusing to pay a complainant the reimbursements they had requested. It then proceeded to make the payment.

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

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 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 constantly seeking to improve internal procedures to ensure the Office deals with inquiries in the most efficient manner possible and to ensure that complainants have an optimal experience. To enhance the efficiency and consistency of inquiries, the 'thematic teams' within the Directorate of Inquiries continued to improve their collaborative peer review approach to case handling. The further development and expansion of knowledge management tools and expert resources helped inquiries officers deal with cases covering a broad range of issues.

The Ombudsman also introduced further improvements to how inquiries are published online to make them easier for the public to follow. Inquiries are now presented by theme or topic, meaning visitors to the website can easily find all the inquiries related to a specific area of work. The webpages also contain an explanation of the Ombudsman's role and powers in each area, so that potential complainants have more information about how complaints are handled.

The Ombudsman continued to promote the Office's work as a redress mechanism for those seeking public access to documents. Building on the Office's expertise in this area, the Ombudsman published a detailed guide on the right of public access to EU documents. This online tool includes a [Q&A for a general audience](#), as well as an [in-depth guide for expert stakeholders and transparency activists](#). The guide provides comprehensive information on the practical and legal aspects of the right of public access.

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 her 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.

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

Advice and complaints in 2022

16 589	People helped
13 313	Advice given through the Interactive Guide on the Ombudsman's website
2 238	New complaints handled
1 038	Requests for information replied to by the Ombudsman's services

Inquiries by the European Ombudsman in 2022

348	Inquiries opened
344	Inquiries opened on the basis of complaints
4	Own-initiative inquiries opened
330	Inquiries closed
325	Complaint-based inquiries closed
5	Own-initiative inquiries closed

Topics of strategic inquiries in 2022

- How the European Commission and the ECB manage 'revolving doors' moves of its staff members
- How Frontex complies with its fundamental rights obligations and ensures accountability in relation to its enhanced responsibilities
- How the European Defence Agency handled the application by its former Chief Executive to take on senior positions at Airbus
- The transparency of the Commission's interactions with representatives of the tobacco industry
- How the Commission monitors EU Structural and Investment funds to ensure they are used to promote the right of persons with disabilities to independent living and inclusion in the community
- The time taken by the Commission and Frontex to deal with requests for public access to documents
- How the Commission ensures respect for fundamental rights in EU-funded migration management facilities in Greece

Topics of strategic initiatives in 2022 (requests for clarification, not formal inquiries)

- The transparency and accountability of the Recovery and Resilience Facility
- How EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies record text and instant messages sent/received by staff members in their professional capacity
- How the Council of the EU ensures transparency of the decision making concerning sanctions against Russia
- How the European Commission makes available information about meetings between commissioners and organisations or self-employed individuals
- The impact of artificial intelligence on the EU administration and public administrations in the EU
- How the Commission ensures respect for human rights in the context of international trade agreements
- How the Commission ensures transparency and balanced interest representation under the Common Agricultural Policy
- The information provided by the Commission to unsuccessful bids in the context of calls for tenders and proposals

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

- How the EU Asylum Agency complies with its fundamental rights obligations and ensures accountability for potential fundamental rights violations
- How the Commission ensures that there are no conflicts of interest with external experts involved in evaluating project proposals under the European Defence Fund

National origin of complaints registered and inquiries opened by the European Ombudsman in 2022

Country	Number of complaints registered	Number of inquiries opened
Spain	386	52
Germany	216	39
Poland	180	12
Belgium	161	67
France	129	24
Italy	125	28
Portugal	95	2
Netherlands	87	31
Greece	74	11
Bulgaria	65	5
Ireland	53	8
Hungary	46	4
Sweden	45	4
Romania	44	10
Austria	37	9
Czech republic	34	2
Cyprus	32	2
Malta	23	3
Slovakia	18	2
Croatia	18	0
Finland	18	3
Lithuania	14	3
Luxembourg	13	6

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

Denmark	12	6
Slovenia	12	0
Latvia	8	0
Estonia	6	0
Other countries (including UK and Ukraine)	262	10
N/A	10	1
Total	2 223	344

4.1.2. Complaints outside the Ombudsman's mandate

In 2022, the European Ombudsman processed almost 1 500 complaints that did not fall within her mandate, mostly because they did not concern the work of the EU administration. Over 40% of these complaints came from Spain, Poland, and Germany, with Spain alone accounting for half that figure.

For the most part, people approached the Ombudsman with issues concerning court cases, equal treatment or discrimination, health policy and care, administrative transparency, and consumer protection. Their out of mandate complaints primarily related to problems encountered with national, regional or local public bodies, governments and public service bodies, and national or international courts (such as the European Court of Human Rights). Citizens also directed a large number of complaints at private entities, including banks, online businesses and platforms, and airlines.

The Ombudsman also received many out of mandate complaints related to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine following Russia's invasion.

The Ombudsman continued to receive a high number of out of mandate complaints related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These predominantly concerned measures national authorities put in place in response to the pandemic and the right to move freely within the EU.

Other out of mandate complaints concerned EU institutions, but were related to political or legislative work.

The Ombudsman replied to all those seeking help in the language of their complaint or in the language 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. Even though these comprised mainly national and regional ombudsman institutions, the Ombudsman also guided complainants to EU institutions (mostly the Commission and Parliament), and 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.

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

To help deal with these cases as speedily and efficiently as possible, the Ombudsman streamlined their handling via new templates introduced in May. Feedback on their use has been positive to date.

Number of complaints 2018-2022

	Complaints outside the mandate of the European Ombudsman	Complaints inside the mandate of the European Ombudsman	Total
2018	1 300	880	2 180
2019	1 330	871	2 201
2020	1 420	728	2 148
2021	1 437	729	2 166
2022	1 483	755	2 238

4.2. Against whom?

Inquiries conducted by the European Ombudsman in 2022 concerned the following institutions

197	European Commission	57.1%
22	European Personnel Selection Office	6.3%
19	European Parliament	5.5%
16	European External Action Service	4.6%
14	Frontex	4.3%
7	European Union Aviation Safety Agency	2.0%
46	Other EU Institutions or bodies (1)	13.5%
23	Other EU Agencies (2)	6.7%

(1) Including the Council of the EU (4), CJEU (4), ECB (3), EUIPO (3), EDPB (3), EIB (3), EDPS (2), EBA (2), and OLAF (1).

(2) Including EMA (5), EASO (4), ERA (3), REA (3), Europol (3), and EISMEA (1).

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

4.3. About what?

Subject matter of inquiries closed by the European Ombudsman in 2022

Transparency and accountability (e.g. access to information and documents)	107	32%
Culture of service	67	20%
Respect for fundamental rights	48	15%
Proper use of discretion (including in infringement procedures)	47	14%
Recruitment	42	13%
Good management of personnel issues	37	11%
Respect for procedural rights	31	9%
Proper management of infringement proceedings	17	5%
Sound financial management	13	4%
Ethics	7	2%
Public participation in EU decision-making	7	2%
Other	6	2%
Grants, procurement, contracts	3	1%

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

4.4. Results achieved

Action taken by the European Ombudsman on new complaints dealt with in 2022

811	Advice given or case transferred to another complaints body	36.2%
1 083	Reply sent to inform the complainant that no further advice could be given	48.4%
344	Inquiry opened	15.4%

Evolution in the number of inquiries by the European Ombudsman

Year	Inquiries opened	Inquiries closed
2013	350	461
2014	342	400
2015	261	277
2016	245	291
2017	447	363
2018	490	545

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

2019	458	560
2020	370	394
2021	338	305
2022	348	330

Results of inquiries closed by the European Ombudsman in 2022

Settled by the institution, solutions achieved	152	46.1%
No maladministration	122	37.0%
No further inquiries justified	42	12.7%
Maladministration found, recommendation agreed by the institution	15	4.5%
Solution rejected	1	0.3%
Dealt with by a Court (Art. 2.7)	4	1.2%

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

Length of inquiry of cases closed by the European Ombudsman

in 2013 (13 months on average)	in 2022 (less than 6 months on average)	
101 (22%)	157 (48%)	Cases closed within 3 months
171 (37%)	126 (38%)	Cases closed within 3 to 12 months
65 (14%)	36 (11%)	Cases closed within 12 to 18 months
124 (27%)	11 (3%)	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 achieves 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. She may also 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 2022 covers cases closed in 2021.

In 2021, the EU institutions cooperated satisfactorily with the Ombudsman in 79% of instances. Of the 33 proposals the Ombudsman made to correct or improve their administrative practices, the EU institutions reacted positively to 26 of them.

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.	
2018	77%
2019	79%
2020	81%
2021	79%

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 impact of the Ombudsman's work over time.

The Ombudsman opens around 350 inquiries each year. Positive change arising from these inquiries often emerges gradually as the EU institutions adjust to new norms concerning good administration. Engaged collaboration with the EU institutions, bodies, and agencies, as well as pressure on the EU administration from complainants, media, civil society, Members of the European Parliament, and EU courts also help to achieve positive results.

Below are some examples of positive change in key areas of Ombudsman inquiries over recent years.

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

Situation previously	Situation now
Accountability in decision making	
Difficult for the public to scrutinise Eurogroup decision making.	Eurogroup meetings are summarised in more detail. Online repository of publicly available Eurogroup documents.
More clarity needed about how the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control takes decisions.	ECDC explains reasoning for decisions and is committed to more accessible communication with the public.
Lack of transparency concerning decision making by the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority .	EIOPA publishes its Board of Supervisors' voting records on draft regulatory standards.
Room for improvement in how the European Central Bank engaged with stakeholders.	ECB took steps to avoid any risk of potentially market-sensitive information being shared with restricted audiences.
Lobbying transparency & ethics	
Code of Conduct for Commissioners: notification period concerning post-term employment is too short. Ethics committee's assessment of Commissioners' new jobs not published.	Code of Conduct strengthened: Notification periods lengthened , rules on declaration of financial interests tightened. Proactive publication of assessment of Commissioners' post-term employment.
Lobbying awareness: limited training or guidelines on interactions with lobbyists. No records of meetings between Commissioners and lobbyists.	List of ' Dos and Don'ts ' for EU officials interacting with lobbyists, used by Commission. Public record of meetings between Commissioners with lobbyists.
Revolving doors: lack of awareness about potential conflicts of interest and negative effects on public trust.	EC publishes Names and new posts of senior staff moving to entities potentially active in lobbying and advocacy annually.

4. Complaints and inquiries: how we help the public

<h3>Access to documents</h3>	
Inadequate prioritisation of access to document inquiries.	Many EU institutions agree with EO's Fast-Track approach , allowing EO to issue findings within 40 working days.
Lack of transparency around clinical trials results for medicines.	European Medicines Agency grants access to clinical trials documents.
Commissioner travel expenses and miscellaneous costs for work trips not published.	Commission proactively publishes commissioner travel expenses and miscellaneous costs for work trips.
<h3>Legislative transparency</h3>	
Trilogues: no information about dates, agenda, and negotiators present for inter-institutional negotiations on draft laws	Trilogue calendars and agendas are often published in advance and lead negotiators named. Work on a joint legislative database is underway.
Council legislative transparency: little information available on evolution of draft legislation through the Council.	Council proactively publishes report on negotiations on draft laws , as well as its mandate for legislative negotiations with the Parliament.
<h3>Fundamental Rights</h3>	
Lack of redress for migrants and refugees who felt their fundamental rights had been breached.	Frontex and the EU Agency for Asylum have set up complaints mechanisms for allegations of fundamental rights breaches.
Rights of persons with disabilities: room for improvement in implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.	Commission improves accessibility of its website and online tools for persons with disabilities.

For a broader overview of the impact of the European Ombudsman's work, please visit this webpage: <https://europa.eu/!vQ6937>

5. The evolving role of the Ombudsman

5. The evolving role of the Ombudsman



(Photo 2) View of the conference room during a speech by the European Ombudsman

On 17-18 November, the European Ombudsman and the European University Institute's Department of Law and School of Transnational Governance held a conference in Florence, Italy to examine how the European Ombudsman has evolved in its role of ensuring an independent, transparent, and accountable EU administration. The event brought together diverse perspectives from academia, civil society, the EU administration, and the European Ombudsman's office itself.



Read here the speech by Emily O'Reilly on the ethos of the European Ombudsman, what it means to treat people fairly, and the role of public interest inquiries – at the European University Institute seminar on evolving role of the European Ombudsman.

Emily O'Reilly: "The Ombudsman gives the complainant what the administration already has: power, status, knowledge and consequently the ability to state their case and play on a level field."

The various panels discussed how the Ombudsman's role has developed over the years, how the Ombudsman's 'soft power' can encourage positive change, and the role of transparency in

5. The evolving role of the Ombudsman

achieving accountability in the EU institutions. Based on a call for academic papers, there was also a discussion on new challenges and opportunities for the Ombudsman in monitoring specific policy areas or specific EU bodies.

A core topic of discussion across the event's five panels was the emerging shift from reactive to proactive transparency on the part of EU institutions, something the Ombudsman has worked to encourage over the years. Participants also spoke of the Ombudsman's regular dialogue with EU institutions and civil society, how the Ombudsman uses her broad mandate to promote good governance and the highest ethics standards, and how the new statute governing the Ombudsman's work has strengthened the institution.



(Photo 3) Group photo of the European Ombudsman with conference participants in Florence

Some of the challenges mentioned by participants were the Ombudsman's broad mandate and small office size, and how to measure the impact of the Ombudsman's work over time.

When it comes to the future of the Ombudsman as an institution, participants suggested that probable areas of work would include further developing the Ombudsman's role as the ethics watchdog, the European Network of Ombudsmen, as well as investigating underexamined and emerging agencies.

6. Communication and cooperation

6.1. Communication

The Office continued its efforts to promote the work of the European 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.

To help further understanding of the Ombudsman's role, a series of videos was produced to present an overview of the office's work, and to explain three key areas of work – transparency of EU decision making, public access to EU documents, and upholding ethics standards.



(Photo 4) Shooting the office videos at the Schuman roundabout in Brussels

In May, the Ombudsman launched a new logo and visual identity. The logo resembles a bird in flight, while its vantage point signifies the view the Ombudsman has over the EU administration. The presence of the EU flag makes it clear that the Ombudsman is part of the community of EU institutions and bodies.



The EU Ombudsman gets a new look! We are launching our new logo and visual identity today.

Some highlights about the new design:

- The stylised waves of the logo resemble a bird in flight. Its vantage point signifies the view the Ombudsman has over the EU administration.
- The three elements represent the Ombudsman's mission: accountability, transparency and trust.
- The presence of the EU flag makes it clear that we are part of the collection of EU institutions and bodies.

6. Communication and cooperation

In addition to social media posts, press releases, and news pieces, 2022 saw the launch of the EO express, a regular newsletter giving an overview of the Ombudsman's recent key inquiries, activities, events, and speeches.

The Ombudsman presented the work of the Office during her annual press conference, held in May. The press conference focused on the findings of her inquiry into how the Commission handles revolving doors, as well as the main aspects of the previous year's annual report.

There was an increase of 60% in the total number of press articles compared to 2021, with 72% of the media coverage coming from EU countries.

In 2022, the growth in social media followers was considerably higher than in past years. A number of high profile cases and the change of logo, which made the Ombudsman more recognisable as an EU body, contributed significantly to this increase. The Ombudsman's Instagram account saw a 92% growth in total followers (3 472 new followers compared to the 1 195 followers gained in 2021). On LinkedIn, the number of followers increased by 50% (+ 2 990 compared to the 1 148 new followers in 2021). On Twitter, where the Ombudsman has the largest audience amongst the social media channels, the number of followers reached 34 431 in December 2022, which represented a 10% increase (+ 3 089). There was also strong improvement in the engagement rate, as well as a significant jump in mentions. In 2022, we had 63 218 mentions (16 300 in 2021) and an engagement rate of 188 488 (41 500 in 2021). This represented a 118% and a 128% increase respectively compared to the previous year.

Since April 2022, the European Ombudsman is part of a public pilot project – led by the European Data Protection Supervisor and the Commission – to bring EU institutions on free, open-source social media networks, based on Mastodon software.

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



(Photo 5) The European Ombudsman meets with citizens at the European Parliament in Strasbourg for Europe Day

6. Communication and cooperation

6.2. Relations with EU institutions

6.2.1. European Parliament



(Photo 6) The European Ombudsman meets with European Parliament President Roberta Metsola in Strasbourg for the handover of the 2021 Annual Report

A strong relationship with the European Parliament is of paramount importance for the European Ombudsman, who is elected by parliamentarians every five years. Throughout 2022, the European Ombudsman continued to maintain close cooperation and trust with the European Parliament, having been invited to present key inquiries to committee meetings and to participate in parliamentary hearings and workshops on topics related to the EU administration, fundamental rights, and access to documents. This year, the Ombudsman also addressed a plenary session, had a first meeting with the Parliament's newly elected President Roberta Metsola, and continued to meet with several Members of the European Parliament from across the political spectrum.

6.2.2. Committee on Petitions



(Photo 7) The European Ombudsman during the plenary session in February 2022

6. Communication and cooperation

Although they have a different focus and mandate, both the European Ombudsman and the Parliament's Committee on Petitions (PETI) aim to address issues the public may have in relation to the EU and its policies. This is why the Ombudsman's office highly values its relationship with the Committee and its Members. Throughout 2022, the Ombudsman participated in different events and meetings organised by the Committee, such as a workshop on the rights of people with disabilities. She also met with the Petitions Committee Chair Dolors Montserrat to discuss their continued cooperation when it comes to addressing citizens' concerns. As in previous years, the PETI Committee also showed cross-party support for the Ombudsman's work and strategy during the annual exchange of views on the Ombudsman's activities.

6.2.3. European Commission

As the EU's executive arm, the Commission's administrative work receives considerable public attention. It is therefore not surprising that, like in previous years, the largest percentage of complaints received by the Ombudsman concerned the Commission's work. The working relationship with the Commission and in particular with its Secretariat-General remained very constructive. Commission officials participated in the Conference on the Evolving Role of the Ombudsman in November. In addition, the Ombudsman's Directorate of Inquiries met with the Commission's Unit for Ethics, Good Administration and Relations with the European Ombudsman to exchange information on working processes.

6.2.4. Other institutions, agencies, and organisations

As foreseen in her strategy 'Towards 2024', the Ombudsman maintains a constructive dialogue with various actors in the EU administration to ensure the continued improvement of administrative practices. In 2022, she met, among others, the Executive Director of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), the Director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), and the Chair of the Single Resolution Board (SRB), as well as with staff from the Council of the European Union, the European Central Bank, and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

6.2.5. 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 2022. As a member of this framework, the Ombudsman plays close attention to the EU administration's implementation of the UN CRPD. The Framework made a [contribution, including input from the Ombudsman](#), to the UN's CRPD committee, which conducts a periodic review of the EU's performance in relation to the Convention. The UN committee then published its [list of issues](#). The periodic review process will continue throughout 2023.

6. Communication and cooperation

In addition, the Ombudsman dealt with important inquiries in 2022 related to the rights of persons with disabilities. In April, she closed her own initiative investigation into how the European Commission monitors EU Structural and Investment funds to ensure they are used to promote the right of persons with disabilities to independent living and inclusion in the community. With the participation of a number of offices from the European Network of Ombudsmen (ENO) and input from civil society organisations, the inquiry concluded with a series of [suggestions for improvement](#) to the Commission, which it took into account in its policy projects.

In October 2022, the Ombudsman also hosted a hybrid seminar for ENO members to exchange information and experiences related to the standards of the EU web accessibility directive and its implementation.

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



European Ombudsman
@EUombudsman

"Europe should be at the forefront when it comes to the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities."

Read here the full speech by Ombudsman O'Reilly at @EP_Petitions workshop on EU disability rights ombudsman.europa.eu/speech/163530?...

*We must always remember that if governments wish to effectively support **all their citizens**, they must not lose sight of the differences between them.*

Emily O'Reilly

European Ombudsman

ALT

"Europe should be at the forefront when it comes to the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities."

Read here the full speech by European Ombudsman O'Reilly at the European Parliament Committee on Petitions' workshop on EU disability rights.

Emily O'Reilly: "We must always remember that if governments wish to effectively support all their citizens, they must not lose sight of the differences between them."

6.3. Cooperation with the OECD

During 2022, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) developed a [policy paper](#) in collaboration with the European Ombudsman's Office. The paper provides guidance to governments on ensuring transparency and accountability in the use of COVID-19 recovery funds.

6. Communication and cooperation



(Photo 8) Alessandro Bellantoni from the OECD speaking about good practice principles for government transparency in the use of recovery funds at the European Network of Ombudsmen conference

With a specific focus on the funding provided through the European Union’s Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), the paper identifies ways for local, national, and EU administrations to promote access to information, enhance public communication, and strengthen citizen and stakeholder participation and oversight in the implementation phases of recovery funding.

Finally, it highlights the role of regional, national, and supranational organisations in fostering the open government principles of transparency, accountability, and stakeholder participation throughout the public decision making and spending cycle, within the remits of their respective mandates.

6.4. European Network of Ombudsmen



(Photo 9) Family photo of European Network of Ombudsmen members during their annual conference, held in Strasbourg in 2022

6. Communication and cooperation

The European Network of Ombudsman (ENO) is an informal network coordinated by the European Ombudsman, which consists of over 95 offices in 36 European countries, as well as the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting refugee crisis had a profound impact on the work of ombudsmen from across Europe in 2022, as they sought to ensure refugees were well treated and monitor how governments were implementing the EU's Temporary Protection Directive. Consequently, the [2022 ENO annual conference](#) in Strasbourg focused on 'the role ombudsmen can play in times of crisis.' The first session saw ombudsmen exchange experiences and best practice for helping refugees. The annual conference also included a session on the effect that the digitalisation of public services has had on citizens' rights. These discussions focused on the extent to which administrations have taken the needs of citizens into account during the digitalisation process and what can be done to ensure people without digital skills are not left behind.



(Photo 10) Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, making a keynote speech via video on the topic of digitalisation of public administrations at the European Network of Ombudsmen conference

In October 2022, the European Ombudsman organised an ENO webinar on improving web accessibility and on the queries procedure. The latter allows ENO members to ask questions about EU law that arise during the course of their inquiries. The European Ombudsman then obtains expert replies from the EU institutions. Query topics in 2022 included EU energy efficiency rules, maternity leave in relation to EU funded projects, and the issuing of EU digital COVID certificates to people not vaccinated against COVID-19 due to medical reasons.

6. Communication and cooperation



Great to meet with the European Network of Ombudsmen today, in person and online, for a lively discussion around the topics of:

- web accessibility
- practical aspects of cooperation.

More on the European Network of Ombudsmen

The second half of 2022 also saw the addition of two new ENO members: the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights and the People's Advocate Office of the Republic of Moldova.

Complainants advised to contact other institutions and bodies by the European Ombudsman in 2022 and complaints transferred (811 in total)

National administrations and other organisations	275	34%
Member of the European Network of Ombudsmen	394	49%
National or regional ombudsman or similar body	358	44%
European Parliament's Committee on Petitions	36	5%
European Commission	115	14%
SOLVIT	17	2%
Other EU institutions, bodies or agencies	10	1%

7. Resources

7.1. 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 2022, budgeted appropriations amounted to EUR 12 222 108.

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.

7.2. 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 2022 Annual Management Plan is the second 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 2022, there were 73 posts in the Ombudsman's establishment plan, in addition to which, there was an average of six contract agents working with the Office. Eighteen 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](#).

8. How to contact the European Ombudsman

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LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/company/272026](https://www.linkedin.com/company/272026)

YouTube: [youtube.com/eotubes](https://www.youtube.com/eotubes)

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8. How to contact the European Ombudsman

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

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www.ombudsman.europa.eu

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