European Ombudsman

# Annual Management Plan

## Year 2011

Strasbourg
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EN

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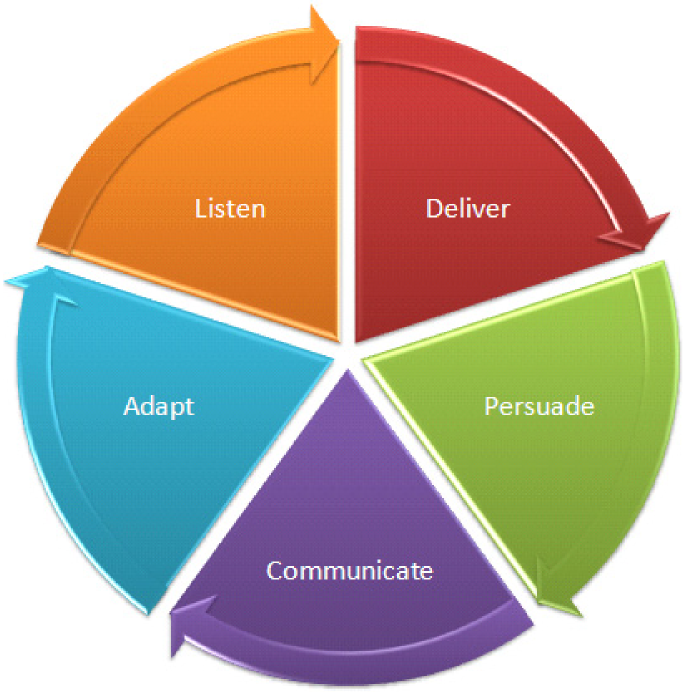
# 1. Introduction

The Annual Management Plan (AMP) identifies actions to be taken in 2011 with a view to implementing the Ombudsman's strategy for the mandate 2009-14.

The Ombudsman adopted a strategy document in September 2010 announcing that, by the end of the current mandate, we aspire to:

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

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




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

Section 3 of the AMP sets out the priorities on which the Ombudsman intends to focus in 2011 and outlines the corresponding actions. It also allocates responsibility for these actions among the different operational units of the Ombudsman's office, which are described in section 2 below.

The actions are formulated in as concrete a way as possible in order to facilitate measurement and reporting of our performance (see section 4 below).

# 2. The organisation of the office

The core activities of the Ombudsman's office are: (i) strategy and governance, (ii) complaints and investigations, (iii) communication and outreach and (iv) support activities.

**(i)** The Secretary-General is responsible for providing policy advice to the Ombudsman, for strategic management and direction and for ensuring overall coordination. The establishment plan provides for the Secretary-General to be supported by an AD official and an AST official.

**(ii)** The complaints and investigations activity is carried out by the Legal Department. The **Legal Department i**s coordinated by a Director, with the assistance of an AST official. The Director of the Legal Department is supported by four Heads of Legal Units, who manage and supervise a team of 17 legal officers. The Director also enjoys the support of two lawyer-linguists who help ensure the linguistic accuracy and consistency of decisions following inquiries, which, for practical reasons are all drafted in English. The **Legal Department** also welcomes a number of trainees each year who are integrated in the existing legal teams under the tutorship and supervision of the Heads of the Legal Units.

**(iii)** Two Units are involved in carrying out the communication and outreach activity: (i) the Communication Unit and (ii) the Media, Enterprise and Civil Society Unit.

The **Communication Unit** (COMM) produces the Ombudsman's publications and promotional material, maintains and develops the Ombudsman's websites, and implements the institution's visual identity. The Communication Unit also co-ordinates the European Network of Ombudsmen and, more generally, is responsible for relations with ombudsmen associations in Europe and beyond. The Head of the **Communication Unit** is supported by a Web Developer, a Publications Assistant and three Administrative Assistants.

The role of the **Media, Enterprise and Civil Society Unit** (MECS) is to raise awareness about the right to complain to the European Ombudsman and the Ombudsman's work. This is achieved via outreach activities, media relations, writing the content of publications and drafting speeches. The Head of the **MECS Unit** is supported by a Media and External Relations Officer, an Editorial Assistant and an Administrative Support Officer.

**(iv)** The Units and Sector in charge of support activities in the Ombudsman's office are: (1) the Administration and Personnel Unit, (2) the Budget and Finance Unit and (3) the Registry.

The **Administration and Personnel Unit** deals with: (i) personnel matters, including recruitment, individual entitlements, leave, absences, health related matters and training; (ii) office space, equipment and furniture; (iii) the development and maintenance of information technology ("IT") in the office and support to IT users; and (iv) liaising, at the administrative level, with the European Parliament and with other European Union institutions and bodies, including participation in interinstitutional committees. The unit is coordinated by the Head of Unit and includes a staff of two IT Officers and seven Administrative Assistants.

The **Budget and Finance Unit** ensures that the Ombudsman's Office complies with the applicable financial rules. It guarantees that available resources are implemented economically, used efficiently and protected adequately, and establishes and implements the appropriate internal control mechanisms necessary for attaining these goals. Its tasks include preparing the budget estimates, presenting them to the Budget authorities, implementing the budget and answering to the various budgetary control authorities. The Unit is coordinated by the Head of Unit and includes a staff composed of a Budget Analyst and three Financial Assistants.

The **Registry** deals with the registration, distribution and transmission of all documents received or sent by the office. It is also in charge of the Ombudsman's archives and library and the development of a public register of documents. The **Registry** comprises ten staff members and is managed by a legal officer designated by the Director of the Legal Department.

# 3. Actions for 2011

This section sets out the priorities on which the Ombudsman will focus in 2011 and the actions that will be taken to help deliver on these priorities. The priorities are presented in the order, and under the objective and numbering, in which they appear in the strategy document. The tables below list, under each priority, the actions to be taken in 2011 and indicate the unit or sector responsible for carrying them out. Where applicable, the associated unit(s) appear in parentheses.

## 3.1 Actions under objective 1 - **Listen**

| **Priority 1.1 - Obtain regular feedback from complainants on their experiences and their views about the quality of service we provide** | |
|---|---|
| ● Carry out one or more client satisfaction surveys with complainants. | MECS (COMM) |

| **Priority 1.3 - Engage with civil society organisations in order to take account of their concerns** | |
|---|---|
| ● Organise a range of thematic events and bilateral meetings with potential complainants. | MECS |

| **Priority 1.5 - Learn from the European Network of Ombudsmen about best practices in the Member States that could be adopted at EU level** | |
|---|---|
| ● Make the 2011 staff retreat an outward looking exercise, focused on identifying best practice in the national ombudsmen's offices that can help us improve our own performance. | SG (COMM) |
| ● Jointly organise the 2011 National Ombudsmen Seminar, in co-operation with the Ombudsman of Denmark.<br>● Develop a new Extranet for the European Network of Ombudsmen. | COMM |
| ● Develop and publicise an improved mechanism for dealing with queries from national ombudsmen. | COMM<br>Legal Department |
| ● Benchmark our IT systems for complaints-handling with best practice in the Network. | ADM (SG) |

## 3.2 Actions under objective 2 - **Deliver**

| **Priority 2.1 - Strengthen the capacity of the office to handle complaints even more effectively and efficiently** | |
|---|---|
| ● Identify opportunities to make procedures more efficient and make useful proposals for this purpose. | Registry |

| **Priority 2.2 - Reduce the time needed to close inquiries by better monitoring of deadlines and, where possible, setting shorter deadlines** | |
|---|---|
| ● Identify clear allegations and claims at the outset of each inquiry. Where this cannot be done without disproportionate effort, advise the complainant to submit a clearer complaint, using the complaint form.<br>● When appropriate, include in the opening letters specific questions the institutions should address, ask for evidence, or request inspections in order to avoid further inquiries focussing on questions which could have been identified at the outset.<br>● Decide on how to proceed in the inquiry no later than two months after receiving the complainant's observations.<br>● Where appropriate, make suggestions on possible solutions to settle the matter already when opening an inquiry. | Legal Department |

| **Priority 2.3 - Develop alternative and simplified procedures to promote, wherever possible, a rapid resolution of complaints without resorting to a lengthy investigation** | |
|---|---|
| ● When appropriate, use rapid means for obtaining information by directly approaching the service(s) concerned rather than making a formal request.<br>● Extend the use of telephone procedures to all cases where there appears to be a reasonable possibility of solving a problem more quickly than through a written inquiry.<br>● Make increased use of the possibilities afforded by inspections by conducting them at an early stage of an inquiry, where appropriate. | Legal Department |

## 3.3 Actions under objective 3 - **Persuade**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Priority 3.1 - Explore ways to make the Ombudsman's proposals for friendly solutions, draft recommendations and remarks more persuasive** | |
| ● Continue, and improve, the use of clear and succinct reasoning.<br>● When appropriate, explain how accepting a friendly solution or a draft recommendation would also be beneficial for the institution.<br>● Carefully consider the language used in friendly solution proposals. Avoid unnecessary criticism which can generate a defensive attitude. | Legal Department |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Priority 3.3 - Persuade the institutions that reaching out to citizens and civil society organisations should be part of the culture of service and has high returns for them** | |
| ● Promote the importance for the EU institutions of reaching out to citizens and civil society organisations through speeches, publications, presentations, and meetings. | MECS (COMM) |
| ● Develop a concrete proposal for a procedure that could be used to update the European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour. | Legal Department (MECS) |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Priority 3.4 - Focus more on systemic questions, by identifying areas of malfunctioning in the EU administration and opportunities for improvement and by using the Ombudsman's power to open own-initiative inquiries** | |
| ● Add a standard point to the agenda of HLU meetings inviting proposals for own initiatives. | Legal Department |
| ● Use input from external stakeholders to make proposals on possible own-initiative inquiries. | MECS |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Priority 3.5 - Contribute to policy debates in areas relevant to the Ombudsman's mandate** | |
| ● Identify topics  relevant to the Ombudsman's work and propose the institution's response. | SG (MECS, Legal Department) |

## 3.4 Actions under objective 4 - **Communicate**

| **Priority 4.1 - Develop a range of publications in paper and electronic format, targeted to the needs of our specific audiences** | |
|---|---|
| ● Produce a shorter and more dynamic annual report.<br>● Produce and distribute a new publication for complainants.<br>● Produce and distribute a new publication for EU staff.<br>● Rethink the European Network of Ombudsmen Newsletter.<br>● Make the Ombudsman's publications, both in paper and electronic format, more accessible to persons with disabilities. | COMM/MECS |

| **Priority 4.2 - Find new and improved ways to inform citizens about how the European Ombudsman and the European Network of Ombudsmen can help them enjoy their rights** | |
|---|---|
| ● Begin using social media to open new channels of communication with citizens.<br>● Produce a short video clip about the European Ombudsman. | COMM |

| **Priority 4.3 - Raise public awareness of the Ombudsman's ongoing inquiries and results in high-impact cases** | |
|---|---|
| ● Identify the Ombudsman’s activities in key sectors (e.g., the environment, consumer protection) and communicate them to interested stakeholders. | MECS |
| ● Create a new section of the website containing summaries of all inquiries opened.<br>● Create a regular e-newsletter, to which all interested parties can subscribe via the website.<br>● Work with the Publications Office to make relevant content from the European Ombudsman's website available through EurLex. | COMM |

| **Priority 4.4 - Ensure that our information policy covers our initiatives to improve the quality of administration, as well as our work with complaints, and encourages full respect for citizens' rights** | |
|---|---|
| ● If possible, include relevant questions in the EuroBarometer. | MECS |

| **Priority 4.5 - Build on our internal communication policy better to inform staff of developments within the institution in a timely fashion** | |
|---|---|
| ● Make SISTEO easier to navigate for users.<br>● Offer training to the units regarding the feeding of SISTEO.<br>● Develop concrete proposals for better communication of information from the Administration Unit to staff on specific administrative issues.<br>● Develop concrete proposals for ways in which units could present news on developments throughout the year, to complement the information provided during general staff meetings. | ADM |

## 3.5 Actions under objective 5 - **Adapt**

| **Priority 5.1 - Enhance management and control mechanisms to ensure optimal use of human and financial resources and the highest standards of administration internally** | |
|---|---|
| ● Promote greater cost-consciousness throughout the office.<br>● Ensure effective monitoring and reporting in financial matters.<br>● Examine the costs and benefits of taking the accounting function in-house. | FIN |

| **Priority 5.2 - Consistently monitor and increase the quality of our work** | |
|---|---|
| ● Establish effective monitoring tools (KPIs/scoreboard).<br>● Examine the costs and benefits of putting in place a quality management and control system. | SG (FIN) |
| ● Use HLU meetings to create a dialogue between the Registry and the Legal Department on issues that impact and/or benefit the work of both entities. | Registry (Legal Department) |
| ● Provide internal training to the Registry staff that will help them better to understand and critically to examine important aspects of their work, for instance, the EO's legal framework (statute and implementing provisions) and data protection.<br>● Consult an archive specialist, with a view to proposing a global and comprehensive archive policy for the EO.<br>● Train and involve the Registry's staff in presenting its work to interested external actors.<br>● Enhance the Registry's awareness and understanding of issues relevant to statistics. | Registry |
| ● Complete the project to establish the EO's public register of documents. | Registry (ADM/COMM) |

| **Priority 5.3 - Put in place an effective integrated IT system to manage the office's overall workflow** | |
|---|---|
| ● Make use of benchmarking (see also 1.5 above) to provide concrete proposals for an integrated workflow management system, after conducting internal consultations. | ADM (SG) |
| ● Complete ongoing work on EUROMBASE, SUPERVISEO, RODEO. | ADM |

| **Priority 5.4 - Develop an effective and ongoing HR policy to attract and maintain a highly qualified and motivated staff** | |
|---|---|
| ● Examine the feasibility of adopting career development plans for each member of staff including training plans. | ADM |

| Priority 5.5 - Explore possibilities for better use of inter-institutional cooperation | |
|---|---|
| ● Examine costs and benefits of transferring complex activities (e.g., accidents/pensions) to PMO.<br>● Ensure systematic participation in inter-institutional tender procedures.<br>● Closely monitor the evolution of implementing provisions of the large institutions.<br>● Further develop inter-institutional cooperation in the area of professional training. | ADM |

# 4. Measuring and reporting on our performance

To measure our progress in achieving our objectives, ten key performance indicators (KPIs) have been established and are outlined below, together with targets and reference figures for 2011.

The usefulness and relevance of the key performance indicators will be reviewed in the light of experience and, if necessary, they will be revised.

### Key Performance Indicators, measurement and targets for 2011

| | Subject matter | Measurement / evaluation criteria | Targets for 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|
| KPI 1 | Strategy and Governance | Assessment[1] by the European Ombudsman's staff and external stakeholders. | (Baseline figure to be established in 2011) |
| KPI 2 | Complaints and investigations | Number of inquiries closed in relation to the number of ongoing inquiries at the end of the previous exercise. | 1.1[2] |
| | | Number and proportion of cases in which the admissibility decision is taken within one month as compared with the previous exercise. | 90% |
| KPI 3 | Complaints and investigations | Proportion of inquiries closed within (i) 12 and (ii) 18 months, as compared with the previous exercise. | 12-m: 70%<br>18-m: 90% |
| KPI 4 | Complaints and investigations | Number of friendly solutions and draft recommendations proposed, as a proportion of all cases in which maladministration is found, as compared with the previous exercise. | 2.5[3] |
| KPI 5 | Complaints and investigations | Number of systemic own-initiative inquiries launched, as compared with the previous exercise. | minimum 6 |

[1] Surveys will be conducted in the context of a general self assessment survey of the Ombudsman's staff.
[2] To obtain this figure, the number of inquiries closed is divided by the number of ongoing inquiries at the end of the previous exercise.
[3] To obtain this figure, the sum of friendly solutions and draft recommendations is divided by the number of critical remarks [(FS+DR)/CR].

| | Subject matter | Measurement / evaluation criteria | Targets for 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **KPI 6** | Provide our external stakeholders with timely, useful and easily accessible information | External stakeholders contacted (frequency and significance). | Press releases (20)<br>Press cuttings (1200)<br>Events involving multipliers (120)<br>Complaints within the mandate (+3%)<br>Advice given through the Interactive Guide to contact a member of the European Network of Ombudsmen (minimum 6 000)<br>Unique visitors to the website (minimum 300 000)<br>Queries (minimum 6)<br>Contributions to discussions on the "EUOMB-Summit" (minimum 120) |
| **KPI 7** | Support Services (HR) | Staffing levels, measured as whole time equivalents (composite indicator). | Reference figure: 74.5 |
| **KPI 8** | Support Services (HR) | Average professional training days per person, as compared with the previous exercise. | 2.5 |
| **KPI 9** | Support Services | Degree of satisfaction of the European Ombudsman's staff[4]. | (Baseline figure to be established in 2011) |
| **KPI 10** | Support Services (finance) | Implementation of the budget (composite indicator). | 86% of budget implementation<br>(+1% compared to the best recent implementation ⇨ 2009)<br>95% of carried-over appropriations paid<br>(+1% compared to the best recent implementation ⇨ 2009)<br>Number of payments beyond 30 days (0) |

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

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[4] Surveys will be conducted in the context of a general self assessment survey of the Ombudsman's staff.

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