

Press release – EU Ombudsman must continue push for more transparency in Council and Commission



The text (approved with 563 in favour, 3 against and 63 abstentions) commends the Ombudsman's role in making the EU legislative process more transparent to the public in order to hold elected officials and governments to account.

According to the 2018 [report](#), the Ombudsman's office opened a total of 490 inquiries and closed 545. 17 996 citizens called on its services for help. 2 180 requests were handled as complaints, among which 880 fell within the EU watchdog's mandate.

Inquiries related to transparency, accountability and public access to information and documents continued to account for the largest number of cases (20.6%) handled by the Ombudsman's services in 2018.

Democratic accountability undermined by Council's secrecy

The submission of the Special Report on the practices of the Council of the EU to the Parliament marked a significant moment in 2018. The EU watchdog's report included several recommendations to increase transparency and public access to documents in the Council, which Parliament fully [endorsed](#) and further expanded.

MEPs again reminded the Council to align its working methods with the standards of a parliamentary democracy, as required by the Treaties, and encouraged the European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly to continue to follow up on her inquiry.

Better access for citizens

The Ombudsman plays a crucial role in enabling citizens' direct participation in EU policy-making, namely via the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), MEPs point out. They ask for ECI's usage and the implementation of its [latest provisions to continue to be monitored](#).

MEPs also welcome the redesign of the Ombudsman's website, which offers a new, user-friendly 'Fast-Track' procedure for citizens to access documents.

Shut "revolving doors"

MEPs welcome the new Code of Conduct for Commissioners, which bans former commissioners from lobbying the Commission. However, they believe that further reinforcements are needed and that the Ombudsman should continue to monitor compliance with the Commission's revised rules on 'revolving doors', that came into place as a result of her 2018 inquiry.

Quote

"The Ombudsman is the link between the EU's administration and EU citizens and is therefore an important institution. In the past decades, the EU Ombudsmen worked closely with the Parliament and I hope that will be the case in the decades to come", said the rapporteur [Peter Jahr](#) (EPP, DE).

Background information

On 18 December, [Parliament re-elected Emily O'Reilly](#) for a new five-year term as European Ombudsman.