



Emily O'Reilly
European
Ombudsman



As EFQM celebrates its 25th Anniversary, the institution that I have the privilege to head and represent is making preparations to celebrate its 20th Anniversary. This leads me to conclude that both our organisations have now reached their 'post-teenage years' with all the challenges that characterise them!

However, as we all know, reaching the adult stage of life is not an end in itself and change will and should continue to happen.

My two predecessors did an outstanding job at laying down a solid foundation for this institution. I am fortunate to be able to benefit from their work and commitment which were rooted in a strong vision to bridge the gap between the EU and its citizens, not only by making right the wrongs done to them by the EU administration, but also by proactively seeking to improve the way the EU administration operates and deals with the public.

Embedded in this heritage is a sound organisational structure, well defined functions and a willingness continually to re-think the way we do things by listening to our stakeholders, proactively asking them how we can do better, and seeking inspiration from the good practices of others.

Even before I took up office in October 2013, I was made aware, by the former Ombudsman, of the institution's involvement with the EFQM and how this has contributed to bringing the institution to a new phase of maturity.

A concrete outcome of this cooperation has been the development of an Operating Framework, which brings together the main processes of the institution and shows how they relate to one another. This instrument proved its usefulness by helping identify weaknesses as well as strengths. It has provided a basis for rethinking our processes internally and for presenting what we do and how we do it to key external stakeholders, such as the EU budgetary authorities.

As I look ahead and strive to make the European Ombudsman an institution that has even greater visibility, impact and relevance, I am acutely aware of how important it is to lead with vision, inspiration and integrity.

First and foremost, I believe that my ambition for this institution can be achieved only if the people who work with me believe in its validity. My primary concern is therefore to communicate my vision clearly to them and to take account of their feedback so that we can collectively take ownership of it.



Second, the concepts of visibility, impact and relevance, which are at the core of my vision for this institution, are ones that require a high degree of flexibility. This means that we have to be prepared to react rapidly to changing circumstances, redirect resources to priority projects and actions, and be innovative in our approaches.

Third, if we want to get our message across; our institution has to be an exemplar for others to follow. In other words, we have to practice what we preach across the board and strive to be beyond reproach. It does not mean that we are not allowed to make mistakes, but rather that, when we do make mistakes, we acknowledge them and learn from them.

All the above I have shared and discussed with my staff partly in the context of a report by an external consultant whom I commissioned to review the core operations of the office. Interestingly, the report

emphasises the usefulness of the EFQM Model in helping shape a strategy for the future.

So, as we begin to assemble the building blocks for the third decade of our institution, we will continue to seek and rely on the valuable support that the EFQM offers to its members and look forward to sharing best practices with others that pursue the same goals.

I conclude by congratulating the EFQM warmly on its 25th Anniversary and by wishing it continued success in its endeavour to help organisations and businesses alike achieve their full potential.

About the European Ombudsman

The European Ombudsman deals independently and impartially with complaints about maladministration in the EU institutions. The Ombudsman also works proactively to encourage transparency, promote the highest standards of behaviour and build trust through dialogue between citizens and the European Union.

The current European Ombudsman is Emily O'Reilly. She was elected by the European Parliament in 2013 after serving ten years as national Ombudsman of Ireland.