



## European Ombudsman

**Emily O'Reilly**  
European Ombudsman

Strasbourg, 24/03/2020

Dear European Network of Ombudsmen colleagues,

In these difficult times for Europe, I send warm greetings to you all from our staff and myself where, like many of you I am sure, we are now working from our homes.

To those of you in the worst hit parts of Europe especially, our thoughts are with you and we are heartened by the numerous acts of solidarity - big and small - that we are daily witnessing. We have not in recent times been part of such a stark collective experience and while it will test Europe to its limits, it will I hope demonstrate the best of ourselves, and of our Union.

To those of you who may have caught the virus or who have friends, colleagues or family members who have done so, we wish you a speedy recovery. The extraordinary measures that have now been taken in so many parts of Europe will hopefully result in containing the spread of the virus. It is encouraging to read of the huge efforts that are going into providing health equipment and in developing a vaccine and hopefully this will advance as quickly as possible. Many Europeans are now desperately in need of urgent help, as we know.

As Ombudsmen, we too are in a completely new situation. Normal administration, as we know it, is severely disrupted and all of us are trying to find ways in which we can usefully contribute to supporting each other but also those who are on the front line or executing new policy decisions. While we all appreciate the need for rapid action and quick decisions, it is also important that measures taken at EU, national and regional levels are proportionate, transparent and legally sound.



It may be therefore useful if we connected and reached out even more intensively during this period. It would be useful and enlightening to hear, for example:

- J How your offices are practically coping with the new situation and whether you are able to continue to provide an adequate service to citizens?
- J We are keen to hear about your teleworking experiences or other methods you are using for service continuation. Are you still getting complaints? Are numbers up or down, or of a different kind?
- J What have the main actions of your national or regional government been?
- J Separately, it would be interesting to hear of more personal experiences as I think knowing that many people are experiencing the same feelings and problems can be a solace.
- J Finally, are there some existing tools we could use to communicate during this difficult time? Do you feel the daily ENO newsletter and extranet sufficient? Should we utilise social media or video conferencing?

I would appreciate your thoughts and ideas in the coming weeks. You may also of course continue to post in the ENO extranet, or you may if wished, also draft an article for the next ENO newsletter.

In the meantime, my best wishes and take care,

Emily O'Reilly  
European Ombudsman