

EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Ursula von der Leyen
The President

Brussels, 18. 03. 2022

Ares (2022) 1781817

Dear President,

I have committed in my Political Guidelines for the European Commission 2019-2024¹ to support the creation of an independent ethics body common to all EU institutions and to engage and work closely with the other institutions to make this happen. The underlying reasoning is that the institutions of the European Union should be open and beyond reproach on ethics, transparency and integrity if Europeans are to have faith in the Union.

I have entrusted the Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Values and Transparency, Věra Jourová, with the responsibility for this issue in her Mission letter and she will be in charge of the future discussions on this issue.

On 16 September 2021, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on 'strengthening transparency and integrity in the EU institutions by setting up an independent EU ethics body'², which sets out the position of the European Parliament on this matter.

The European Commission has replied to the European Parliament with a preliminary analysis of the resolution, which is attached to this letter. The establishment of an EU ethics body would be an additional component of the existing ethical framework at EU level and help consolidate and strengthen trust in the institutions and in the people serving them. The design of the body touches, however, upon sensitive aspects of the institutional balance between institutions and advisory bodies as well as their autonomy. An interinstitutional ethics body must respect the attribution of competences to each institution and advisory body as well as their particularities, respective members and role in the framework of the system of checks and balances established by the Treaties.

Ms Christine Lagarde

President

European Central Bank

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¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en_0.pdf

² https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0396_EN.pdf

In this context, the Commission considers that some aspects of the resolution of the European Parliament are agreeable, while others require further analysis or raise substantial difficulties.

The Commission is in favour of an interinstitutional ethics body with a competence for the members of all institutions and advisory bodies mentioned in Article 13 TEU.¹ All of them and all their members play an important role and must contribute to building and maintaining trust in the European Union. This is a collective responsibility.

One of the crucial points will be to ensure that the body is able to provide efficient and meaningful ethical advice to each institution and advisory body based on the existing ethical rules. It is necessary to acknowledge that there are significant differences between the EU institutions and advisory bodies and their respective members. Consequently, the practices and experiences of the different institutions and advisory bodies must be taken into account.

Against this background, the Commission would be grateful to hear from each institution and advisory body, ideally by end of April, its views on taking part in interinstitutional discussions on a possible future joint agreement to establish an ethics body common to all EU institutions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

These discussions will be important to define the way forward in this matter and would help the Commission table a respective proposal.

Yours sincerely,

A large rectangular area of the document is redacted with a solid grey box, obscuring the signature of Ursula von der Leyen.

Ursula von der Leyen

Attachment:

Reply of the European Commission to the European Parliament of 18 February 2022