

EU funds Ombudsman on Managing Authority level

Best practice example – op prague – growth pole of the czech republic (a multifund programme erdf+, esf+, 2014-2020 programming period)

The Managing Authority of the operational programme decided to increase trust of the applicants and beneficiaries by establishing a position of an independent Ombudsman.

In case of any doubts about the procedure, process and/or the conduct of the staff of the MA, applicants or beneficiaries were able to contact an independent expert without their identity and question being related to the MA staff.

The role of the independent expert (Ombudsman) was to assess the specific situation, recommend a solution and the most appropriate course of action. The Ombudsman was also able to mediate a problematic situation between the MA and the applicant or beneficiary.

JOB DESCRIPTION OF THE OMBUDSMAN:

- Assessment of specific situations by an experienced expert without losing the anonymity of the complainant (applicant or beneficiary)
- Providing expert recommendations /advice to the Managing Authority, the relevant overseeing bodies, and the National Coordination Authority (where appropriate).
- Expert recommendations to the applicant/beneficiary for solving the issue/procedure.
 - In case of consent of the complainant, a specific expert recommendation to the governing body
 - In case of consent of the complainant, mediation between the complainant and the managing authority, finding a mutually acceptable solution and preventing legal disputes

OUTPUTS DELIVERED BY THE OMBUDSMAN AT OP PGP:

- Increased trust in MA
- Gaining a possibility of a “second opinion” for applicants and beneficiaries
- Mediation option where appropriate and approved by the applicant/beneficiary.
- Improved public awareness and transparency of the operational programme.
- Preventing potential legal disputes at close-to-zero costs

KEY CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS:

- Transparency about the role of the Ombudsman (informal role of the experts)
- Anonymity where appropriate
- A separated e-mail was established so that the e-mails would only be seen by the Ombudsman.
- The expert(s) should have extensive experience from both sides (MA and beneficiary) so that they could provide valid feedback and efficiently mediate potential issues and very good knowledge of the regulations, rules and methodologies used to govern the use of EU funds in the specific operational programme