

Selmayrgate: Commission hits back at Ombudsman report

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News

The European Commission has hit back at the EU Ombudsman's report on the appointment of Martin Selmayr as the executive's Secretary General.



Martin Selmayr | *Photo credit: Press Association*

In a report on Tuesday, Emily O'Reilly said the Commission failed to follow rules "either in letter or in spirit, created a false sense of urgency to shoehorn him into job then was evasive when questioned."

Publishing the findings of her investigation into the February appointment of Selmayr, a German lawyer, as Secretary General of the European Commission, O'Reilly, the EU's official watchdog, said four instances of maladministration resulted from not following rules correctly.

Selmayr was previously chief of cabinet for Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, leading to claims of favouritism in the appointment. Several MEPs had called for his appointment to be

overturned, a demand which so far has been rejected by the Commission.

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The Commission issued a statement which confirmed it had received the recommendation by the Ombudsman on the appointment of the Secretary General, the top civil service post in the executive.

The statement read, “While we do not share all aspects of the underlying report, we welcome that the Ombudsman - based on a detailed analysis of some 11,000 pages provided to her - neither contests the legality of the appointment procedure of the Secretary General, nor the choice of the candidate who is described as a ‘competent EU official, highly committed to the European Union’.

“On some aspects, where the Commission has a different factual assessment, we will provide further information to the Ombudsman in due course.”

It went on, “When it comes to the recommendation of how the Secretary General should be appointed in the future, at first glance we do not see any reason why the appointment of the Secretary General should be carried out independently from the appointment of any other Director General.

“Having said this, the Commission will look into the Ombudsman’s recommendation and looks forward to reassessing, together with the European Parliament and the other institutions, how the application of the current rules and procedures can be improved in the future and applied in the same manner to all institutions.”

The Commission said that it had convened an inter-institutional roundtable to discuss the issue, which will take place on 25 September.

It hoped “that these discussions will allow us to guarantee the excellence and independence of the EU civil service, working for the benefit and in the common interest of our citizens.”

Juncker is due to retire late next year and a new Commission will be formed for the next five-year mandate.

Ordinarily, Selmayr would keep his post of running the 30,000-strong administration but some believe his future has now been called into question after the Ombudsman’s ruling.

About the author

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