

Foreword by the European Ombudsman, Emily O'Reilly.

When I gave the oath of office as European Ombudsman at the Court of Justice in October 2013, I said that my ambition is to help the EU institutions to live up to their own best selves. That is in the interest of the institutions and their staff. It is in the interest of persons who have direct dealings with the institutions. But above all, it is in the interest of European citizens generally.

As European Ombudsman, the gap between the governing institutions of the European Union and its citizens is my particular concern. Those of us who work in the institutions need to understand that we face a crisis of European citizenship. And one key aspect of that crisis is that many citizens see the EU and its institutions as remote and alien.

The enormous work the Research Network in European Union Administrative Law (ReNEUAL) undertook and successfully accomplished in drafting Model Rules of administrative procedure helps makes more visible, and more understandable, the administrative framework through which the EU institutions carry out their functions.

No set of rules can possibly hope to cover every conceivable issue or situation. There must always be room for the exercise of good judgment in applying principles. The law should not become a shield for the administration to hide behind by saying that a particular action is not expressly allowed or forbidden. It is therefore of fundamental importance that ReNEUAL succeeded in avoiding rules that are excessively detailed. The Model Rules do not invite a box ticking approach, nor do they create an obstacle course that inhibits sound judgment or defies common sense.

The Model Rules make sense both as a basis for possible future legislation and as a persuasive synthesis of principles to be found in the existing law. I am convinced that they could have a significant long-term impact in helping the EU institutions to live up to their own best selves. They will certainly provide a valuable source of inspiration in carrying out the Ombudsman's mission to serve democracy by working with the institutions of the European Union to create a more effective, accountable, transparent and ethical administration.