

Subject: Call for applications for the post of European Ombudsman

I am responding to your call of 30 August 2024 for applications for the elected post of European Ombudsman. The value and benefit of an ombudsman in a modern democracy is great. The role of the ombudsman, as it has developed in both European Union Member States and the Union itself, should not be underestimated. In the modern constitutional state, where all government action proceeds from the rule of law, the ombudsman has an indispensable role in the relationship with the government and its citizens and businesses.

The fact that the European Union, too, has opted to establish an ombudsman who is able to represent the interests of citizens and businesses at the highest level and make judgments and recommendations on the relationship between the Union's citizens and businesses and the European institutions, agencies and other European administrative bodies is of fundamental importance to the citizens and businesses of the European Union.

I would readily discharge the duties of European Ombudsman for the term of your Parliament from 2024 to 2029.

As regards what is required to be a candidate for the post of European Ombudsman, I would bring the following to your notice.

- I was born on 11 May 1960 in Wageningen; I am a Netherlands national and therefore a European Union citizen. I enjoy all political and civil rights that fall to a Union citizen and national of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
- I offer all the guarantees of independence required to perform the duties of European Ombudsman. That is evidenced by the fact that I have held positions within the judiciary since 1992 and am currently the National Ombudsman of the Netherlands. For those offices, independence and impartiality are a prerequisite.
- As a judge, I have discharged the highest judicial duties in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, namely as a member of the Joint Court of Justice for the six Dutch Caribbean islands, as President of the Administrative High Court for Trade and Industry and as a State Counsellor in the Administrative Jurisdiction Division of the Council of State.
- My competence and qualifications necessary to perform the duties of European Ombudsman are evident from, among other things, the fact that on 24 November 2020 the Netherlands House of Representatives unanimously reappointed me for a second term as National Ombudsman of the Netherlands. Furthermore, this is also reflected in the international backing I receive. For example, I was elected Regional President of the International Ombudsman Institute for the European region. In addition, as Veterans Ombudsman I occupy a leading position in the International Conference of Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces. Lastly, in this context, I would cite the fact that I have carried out future-proof cooperation projects in Europe, but also beyond, from which many ombuds institutions, and certainly the institution in the Netherlands, will reap the benefits for many years to come.
- To wind up, I would mention the fact that, while I have been the National Ombudsman of the Netherlands, I have not held any political or administrative positions in the Netherlands or in a European context.

I hereby solemnly undertake – should I be elected European Ombudsman by your Parliament – not to engage in any other occupation, whether gainful or not, during my term of office.

In addition to what is set out above, I would state the following. I am highly motivated to help citizens out where things go wrong between them and the European administration. That applies equally to businesses. What I mean by that is that the European Ombudsman should primarily focus on self-employed people and small and medium-sized enterprises. For both citizens and business, Europe is crucial. Their future literally depends on Europe. They therefore deserve an ombudsman who stands up for them, who knows what obstacles and problems they face, and who is able to make the European authorities learn from what has gone wrong.

I will readily explain in discussions with you and Members of your Parliament how I would fulfil the role of European Ombudsman. As far as I am concerned, cooperation and learning from mistakes are just as important as proactively identifying what prevents Union citizens from exercising their fundamental rights as Union citizens; to my mind, then, they are at the top of the list of issues to be discussed.

I very much hope to serve as European Ombudsman during the current term of the European Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Reinier van Zutphen

Contact details:

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Email:

Annexes:

- CV
- Copy of passport
- Letter from the House of Representatives, reappointment as National Ombudsman of the Netherlands