



P. NIKIFOROS DIAMANDOUROS

PRESS RELEASE NO. 1/2008

24 January 2008

Ombudsman: NGOs can help EU institutions do their job better

The European Ombudsman, **P. Nikiforos Diamandouros**, has underlined the importance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in pointing out possible instances of maladministration in the EU institutions. Over the past ten years, the Ombudsman's office has received almost 1 000 complaints from NGOs and associations. They included alleged maladministration concerning environmental projects, late payment for EU contracts, and lack of transparency in the EU institutions. Among the NGOs that complained were Statewatch, Corporate Europe Observatory, and the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS). Two recent complaints concerning the environmental policy of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the question of "revolving doors" in the Commission were lodged, respectively, by two Polish NGOs and Greenpeace.

Mr Diamandouros commented: "The Ombudsman relies on complaints from NGOs to help him uncover possible instances of maladministration in the EU institutions. The institutions, in turn, profit from the active involvement of NGOs to help them rectify problems in the system."

Polish NGOs complain about the EIB's environmental policy

Two Polish environmental NGOs complained to the Ombudsman about the EIB's failure to comply with the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive during flood reconstruction and repair works in Poland in 2001. The Ombudsman issued a critical remark. He underlined the key role of the NGOs in bringing important information to the attention of the EIB.

To read the full decision, please visit: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/decision/en/061807.htm>

Greenpeace complaint about "revolving doors"

In a report on the new European chemicals regulation REACH, Greenpeace criticised the practice of "*trading working places*" between the Commission and the lobbying chemical industry. A Commission spokesperson called the allegations "unfounded and unfair". In a complaint to the Ombudsman, Greenpeace accused the Commission of having made inaccurate and defamatory accusations. The Ombudsman did not find maladministration as far as the spokesperson's comments were concerned. However, he underlined the importance of transparency in relation to lobbying activities during EU legislative procedures.

To read the full decision, please visit: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/decision/en/062740.htm>

The European Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in the EU institutions and bodies. Any EU citizen, resident, or an enterprise or association in a Member State, can lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman offers a fast, flexible and free means of solving problems with the EU administration. For more information: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu>

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