

THE EUROPEAN OMBUDSMAN



P. NIKIFOROS DIAMANDOUROS

PRESS RELEASE NO. 18/2003
25 September 2003

Don't sideline citizens in the Constitution, says Ombudsman

The European Ombudsman, **P. Nikiforos Diamandouros**, today called for the future Constitution for Europe to include a clear and comprehensive system of non-judicial remedies for citizens. "This would be a real and visible achievement for citizens, who too often seem to be left on the sidelines of European integration," he said.

The draft Constitution for Europe tells citizens what judicial remedies they can use to defend their rights under European Union law but does not mention the range of non-judicial remedies they have. Non-judicial remedies have the advantage of being free, flexible and fast when compared with going to court, according to the Ombudsman, who will continue his quest to improve the Constitution for the benefit of citizens.

Speaking during Parliament's annual debate on the activities of the European Ombudsman, Mr. Diamandouros explained what the Ombudsman can do to put citizens in a position of strength, when it comes to defending their rights. As well as reacting to complaints, the Ombudsman "should be proactive in empowering citizens and widening the choices available to them to defend their rights". This is key to the ombudsman's role in improving the quality of democracy in modern societies.

Since becoming European Ombudsman on 1 April this year, Mr. Diamandouros has proved his determination to reach out to all the Union's citizens - old and new - to inform them of their rights under Union law and how to exercise and defend those rights. In the last six months, he has travelled to almost half of the current and future Member States to tell citizens about his work and to build on the liaison network of national and regional ombudsmen.

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