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Ombudsman: Cases opened now online

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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.

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The European Ombudsman, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has started to publish information about the inquiries he opens. This forms part of his strategy to conduct his work as transparently as possible. The subject matter of the complaint, as well as the complainant's allegations and claims will be published on the Ombudsman's website, usually one week after the Ombudsman asks the institution concerned for information. This new feature in the Ombudsman's website is in addition to the information the Ombudsman already publishes about his inquiries.

Mr Diamandouros commented: "This new policy will make it easier for citizens, journalists, and other interested persons to follow inquiries right from the start. Being proactive in providing useful information to citizens is a key aspect of transparency."

Complaint about alleged infringement of EU environmental law by Ireland

One of the first cases to which the new policy applies is a complaint by an Irish environmental consultancy, which alleges that the European Commission failed to inform it about the status of its infringement complaints against the Irish authorities.

The Ombudsman has asked the Commission to submit its opinion by 31 May 2011. The complainant will then have the opportunity to comment before the Ombudsman decides on the next step.

The Ombudsman's inquiries

The European Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in the EU administration, such as late payment for EU projects, the refusal to give access to documents, problems with calls for tender, and discrimination. On average, the Ombudsman receives 3000 complaints per year, of which around 700 are within his mandate.

The Ombudsman aims to achieve friendly solutions and issues recommendations where maladministration can still be rectified. If that is not possible, he can close cases with critical remarks. In exceptional cases, he can issue a special report to the European Parliament.

Some cases can be resolved within weeks. More complex cases obviously take longer. The average length of an investigation is nine months.

It is possible to submit confidential complaints to the Ombudsman. In such cases, the information published on the website is anonymised.

The cases opened are available at:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/casesopened.faces>