

European Ombudsman seeks to promote better administration of the European Schools

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The European Ombudsman, **P. Nikiforos Diamandouros**, has welcomed the response of the European Commission to his own-initiative inquiry into good administration of the European Schools. According to the Ombudsman, the Commission has recognised its responsibility to promote good administration by the European Schools in accordance with the same values, principles and standards that apply to the Community institutions and bodies and has "sought to identify and tackle the most serious operational weaknesses that have given rise to complaints...."

The Commission has also announced its intention to issue a Communication on the European Schools. Among the proposals for the Communication are:

- the observance of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Rights of the Child in all the schools;
- full accountability of each school and its director for issues of good administration and transparency; and
- external quality evaluation of programmes and/or methods in teaching.

In the Ombudsman's view, this represents a significant opportunity to enhance the quality of the European Schools' administration.

The Commission's response to the Ombudsman identifies a "democratic deficit" in the European Schools' Board of Governors, which may limit the extent to which the necessary modernisation of the European Schools' system is possible without a fundamental revision of the entire system and its governance. The Ombudsman acknowledges the problem, which the European Parliament has also identified, and offers to assist in a regular external review of progress in raising the quality of administration and enhancing the Schools' transparency and efficiency.

The Ombudsman also welcomed the Commission's commitment to cooperation with parents and encouraged the Commission to seek to ensure that the European Schools themselves acknowledge, as part of their core mission, the need to empower parents and win their trust.

Background

The European Ombudsman has received and dealt with numerous complaints from parents of children at the European Schools, many of whom expressed a sense of frustration and disempowerment. The Ombudsman considered that an own-initiative inquiry could help raise



the quality of administration of the Schools, thereby enabling them to ensure improved and sustained levels of trust among the many constituencies whose interests they should serve (children, parents, the institutions and citizens generally), as well as increased efficiency in the future. The Ombudsman therefore requested the Commission to inform him whether it planned to take action to promote the good administration of the European Schools and, if so, to explain the details and the timetable of its future activity.

The Ombudsman's decision can be found on his website at:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/decision/en/03oi5.htm> [Link]

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