

Ombudsman helps French company to obtain EUR 88 000 from Commission

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The European Ombudsman, **P. Nikiforos Diamandouros**, has welcomed the European Commission's decision to reimburse an outstanding sum of EUR 88 000 to a French consulting firm for its participation in an IST (Information Society Technologies) programme with China. This followed a complaint from the consulting firm, which claimed that the Commission had not repaid it the entire eligible costs for the project. The Commission stated that the complainant had committed a mistake concerning its cost statements. After the Ombudsman intervened, it agreed to pay the outstanding sum.

The case

In 2004, a French consulting firm participated in an IST programme supported by the European Commission. The project included EU-Chinese cooperation on the *Digital Olympics Programme* which aims at ensuring the successful organisation of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games as well as long-term EU-Chinese cooperation in the field of IST. The Commission accepted to pay the total amount of EUR 178 000 for the complainant's participation in the project.

In July 2005, the complainant asked for the reimbursement of a first amount of EUR 90 000 which was paid by the Commission. In a second cost statement, the complainant applied for the remaining amount of EUR 88 000. One year later, the Commission sent the final financial statement which did not include the outstanding sum. As the Commission did not provide a satisfactory explanation for its failure to pay the amount requested, the complainant turned to the Ombudsman.

In its reaction to the complaint, the Commission stated that the complainant had mistakenly applied the wrong rules to the project. It pointed out that, according to the rules applicable to the project, the consulting firm should have requested reimbursement for all eligible costs right from the start. After the Ombudsman intervened, the Commission proceeded to reimburse the remaining sum of EUR 88 000 to the complainant.

To read the full text of the decision, please visit:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/decision/en/071471.htm> [Link]



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