

Ombudsman calls on EU institutions to engage more positively with his critical remarks

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The European Ombudsman, **P. Nikiforos Diamandouros**, has published a study of the follow-up given by the European institutions to the criticisms and suggestions concerning their work, which he made in 2008. The Ombudsman issued 53 critical remarks on such matters as unjustified refusal of access to documents, non-transparent tender procedures or infringement of the right to be heard. In 62% of these cases, the institutions gave a positive follow-up response, thereby making similar maladministration less likely to occur in the future. In 38% of cases, the Ombudsman considered the follow-up unsatisfactory.

Mr Diamandouros commented: "When a mistake occurs, matters should be put right, if possible, and an apology given if appropriate. Then the matter is dealt with and one can move on. An important part of "moving on" is to profit from the experience with a complaint in order to raise the quality of administration in the future."

The Ombudsman's critical remarks

Most of the 53 critical remarks issued in 2008 concerned the Commission. In one case, where the response was positive, the Ombudsman had criticised the Commission for delays in paying its bills to a contractor. The Commission's reaction was to take measures to speed up its project management and better to respect payment deadlines. The Ombudsman welcomed these measures. On the other hand, in a case where the Ombudsman had called on the Commission to establish a complete register of documents, the Commission's response appeared to suggest that it has no intention of doing so.

"Star cases"

The Ombudsman also identified five "star cases" in which the follow-up to a critical or further remark was exemplary. In one of these cases, the European Parliament recovered part of an allowance before informing the complainant of its recovery decision. The EP acknowledged its mistake and informed the Ombudsman that it had adopted measures to avoid similar cases in the future.

Further remarks by the Ombudsman



The Ombudsman also examined the replies he received to "further" remarks. The purpose of further remarks is to give advice to EU institutions on how to improve the quality of their services in cases where the Ombudsman has not found maladministration. In 2008, the Ombudsman issued 47 further remarks. The follow-up was satisfactory in 100% of these cases.

The follow-up study on critical and further remarks is available at:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/cases/followups.faces> [Link]