

## **European Ombudsman invites observations from the public concerning his own-initiative inquiry into the problem of late payment by the European Commission**

Public consultation - 12/01/2010

### **Background**

Since his office was set up in 1995, the European Ombudsman has received numerous complaints about late payment by Union institutions and bodies.

In 1999, the Ombudsman decided to launch an own-initiative inquiry ("OII") as regards the problem of late payment by the European Commission, which administers most of the payments made by the EU. After having given interested parties the possibility to make observations, the Ombudsman arrived at the conclusion that the steps that had been undertaken or proposed by the Commission, if properly implemented, were likely to represent considerable progress in this area.

In 2007, the Ombudsman decided to launch a further OII into this subject. During this inquiry, the Commission informed the Ombudsman of a number of further measures it had undertaken, both as regards the administrative and the legislative level, in order to improve the timeliness of its payments. The Ombudsman considered that these measures were clearly useful and likely to lead to improvements but that it was too early to assess the impact that they would have on the situation. In the Ombudsman's view, the best way to proceed was thus to open a new OII in 2009, when figures for the Commission's performance in 2008 would be available, so as to ascertain whether the Commission had taken all appropriate steps to combat delays in payments or whether further action was necessary.

This further OII was launched in February 2009 by a letter asking the Commission for an opinion. After having examined this opinion, the Ombudsman asked for further information, which the Commission provided in late October 2009.

### **Consultation of the public**

The Ombudsman considers it appropriate and useful to give interested parties the possibility to make observations in this case. The relevant correspondence between himself and the



Commission has, therefore, been available on this website. Most of the complaints concerning late payment are submitted in English, German and French. The Ombudsman, therefore, considers that making the relevant documents available to the public in these three languages constitutes a reasonable compromise between the wish to inform citizens in as many languages as possible and the need to spend the EU taxpayer's money prudently and thriftily.

Contributions by interested parties can of course be submitted in any of the languages mentioned in Article 55(1) of the Treaty on European Union .

These contributions will be accessible to the Commission and to interested third parties.

## **What the Ombudsman is looking for**

The present OII concerns the problem of late payment by the Commission in general. The Ombudsman would, therefore, be highly interested in receiving feedback from interested citizens, companies and associations concerning the question whether, in their view, the efforts undertaken by the Commission in this field are sufficient or what further steps could and should be taken.

The present inquiry is not intended to examine and solve individual cases of late payment. Such cases can of course be submitted to the Ombudsman in individual complaints. A complaint form that can be used for this purpose is available on this website.

## **Deadline for observations**

Observations should be sent to the Ombudsman by 31 March 2010 .

by letter: European Ombudsman, 1 avenue du Président Robert Schuman, CS 30403, F-67001 Strasbourg Cedex

by fax: +33-388-179062

by e-mail: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/shortcuts/contacts.faces> [Link]