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Ombudsman: Citizens have a right to know what the EU administration is doing

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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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On the occasion of the “**International Right to Know Day**”, on 28 September, the European Ombudsman, **P. Nikiforos Diamandouros**, has called on the EU administration to be as transparent and citizen-friendly as possible. Speaking in an event he co-organised with **Transparency International** in Brussels, entitled “**Transparency at the EU level and in the Member States**”, he said: “**Only if European citizens feel that the EU administration is transparent, accessible and accountable, will they develop the necessary trust and willingness actively to participate in the democratic life of the Union.**”

Complaints relating to transparency and ethical standards

More than one third of the Ombudsman’s inquiries concern complaints about lack of transparency in the EU administration. Such complaints concern, for example, access to information or documents, the composition of working groups, or the institutions’ policy making.

Mr Diamandouros stressed: “The Lisbon Treaty provides for greater transparency in the activities of the EU administration. It requires the Council to meet in public when it deliberates on draft legislation and contains the citizens’ right of access to documents of all EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, including, for the first time, the European Council. The Treaty also requires the EU administration to conduct its work as openly as possible, in order to promote good governance and the participation of civil society. I am committed to informing citizens about their right to know what the EU administration is doing.”

The Ombudsman also receives an increasing number of complaints that raise ethical concerns.

They range from the question of what gifts EU officials may accept to the issue of “revolving doors” whereby former Commissioners or EU officials move to the private sector thereby running the risk of creating conflicts of interest. With a view to identifying best practices with regard to the fundamental ethical principles that should apply to EU officials, the Ombudsman recently launched a consultation with the national ombudsmen in the Member States.

More information about the “International Right to Know Day” event is available at:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/activities/calendarevent.faces/en/400/html.bookmark>

The Ombudsman’s new visual identity

As of today, the European Ombudsman has a new visual identity, including a new logo. The logo is designed to enhance the Ombudsman’s efforts to reach out to a wide range of audiences, while evoking the institution’s identity and values. The colours are meant to serve as a reminder of the European flag, while the circular shape represents unity and consensus. The arrows and the equals sign within the logo respectively symbolise exchange and dialogue, as well as equality and fairness, key features, that is, of the Ombudsman’s methodology.