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Ombudsman meets with College of Commissioners and stresses citizens' rights to good administration and openness

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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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The European Ombudsman, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, outlined measures designed to reinforce cooperation with the European Commission in the interests of European citizens. In today's meeting with the College of Commissioners, he acknowledged the progress already attained in relations with the Commission and went on to stress the enhanced role which the Ombudsman should play in helping the EU institutions deliver to citizens the rights promised by the Treaty of Lisbon and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. These include the right to have one's affairs handled impartially, fairly and within a reasonable time by the EU administration, as well as the right of access to documents.

Mr Diamandouros commented: "Good administration depends on creating and nourishing a culture of service to citizens. Mistakes are inevitable in any administration. But a culture of service makes it possible to acknowledge and put right mistakes when they occur."

The Ombudsman welcomed a cultural shift, which has occurred within the Commission in recent years concerning the acknowledgment and rectification of mistakes. He went on to stress that offering compensation constitutes the next frontier to cross in seeking to deepen the culture of service within the Commission. The Ombudsman suggested establishing guidelines to facilitate compensation payments in future cases.

In order to increase citizens' trust in the European civil service, the Ombudsman also announced that he is preparing a statement of public service principles for the conduct of EU officials. He called on the Commissioners to respond positively to this initiative, on which he will launch a public consultation in the near future.