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Ombudsman launches public consultation on ethical principles for EU officials

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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, has invited citizens, interest groups, and other organisations to submit comments on a draft statement of principles that should guide the conduct of EU civil servants. The draft “public service principles” take account of best practice in the Member States, established through a consultation with the European Network of Ombudsmen. Comments can be submitted until 15 May 2011 and will be considered before the principles are finalised.

Mr Diamandouros commented: “Our aim is to set out clearly and concisely the fundamental ethical principles that should guide the professional conduct of EU officials. By identifying these public service principles, we aim to help civil servants avoid conflicts of interest and other forms of maladministration. This, in turn, should increase citizens’ trust in the EU administration.”

Overview of the draft principles

Commitment to the EU:

Officials should be conscious that the EU administration exists to serve the Union and its citizens and act accordingly.

Integrity:

Civil servants should avoid conflicts of interest, also after leaving office. They should not place themselves under financial or other obligations that might influence their professional performance. In claiming expenses and allowances, officials should not seek to maximise their benefits but act with a sense of propriety.

Objectivity:

Civil servants should be open-minded and ready to correct mistakes. They should base decisions on merit and not on personal preferences.

Respect:

EU officials should be polite, helpful and co-operative with each other and vis-à-vis citizens.

Transparency:

Civil servants should be willing to explain their actions and welcome public scrutiny.

The full public consultation document (available in 23 languages), as well as documents related to the consultation of the European Network of Ombudsmen, are available at:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/resources/otherdocument.faces/en/10111/html.bookmark>