



Press release No. 3/2012

Ombudsman achieves friendly solution: NGO receives EUR 70 000 from the Commission

24 January 2012

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.

For more information:
www.ombudsman.europa.eu

Contact:
Gundi Gadesmann,
Media and External
Relations Officer,
T. +32 2 284 26 09
gundi.gadesmann@ombudsman.europa.eu

The European Ombudsman, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has helped settle a dispute between the European Commission and the NGO Migration Policy Group (MPG) concerning an EU project launched as part of the “European Migration Dialogue”. After an audit, the Commission issued a recovery order for more than EUR 130 000 because MPG had delivered too late supporting documents for staff costs. The Commission eventually accepted a friendly solution proposal from the Ombudsman and refunded EUR 70 000 to the NGO.

Mr Diamandouros commented: “I very much welcome the Commission’s positive reply to my friendly solution proposal. Friendly solutions are an excellent tool to achieve win-win outcomes for both complainants and the EU institutions concerned and should be used as often as possible whenever conflicts arise in EU projects or programmes.”

NGO did not manage to deliver on time documents regarding staff costs

From 2004 to 2005, the non-profit NGO *Migration Policy Group* carried out an EU-funded project on “European Migration Dialogue - linking the national and European debates on integration”. The project involved more than 20 partner NGOs and its total costs amounted to more than EUR 600 000. The Commission made the final payment for the project in August 2006.

In October 2009, an audit of the project resulted in a recovery order for more than EUR 130 000 because supporting documents for staff costs had been delivered too late (the Commission had given one extension). The complainant justified the delay by referring to difficulties it had experienced in obtaining the relevant documents

from more than 20 partner NGOs on time. Given that the Commission did not accept its arguments, MPG lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman regarding what it called the “disproportionate” nature of the recovery order.

The Ombudsman proposed a friendly solution, in which he invited the Commission to explain why its conclusions from the audit report could not have been modified after it received the missing documents.

The Commission accepted the Ombudsman’s proposal and refunded EUR 70 000 to MPG. The NGO thanked the Ombudsman for his intervention.

The full decision is available at:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/decision.faces/en/10579/html.bookmark>