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Ombudsman commends Commission for opening an investigation into funding of Spanish football clubs

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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, Emily O'Reilly, has welcomed the European Commission's decision to open an investigation into the allegedly unfair tax advantages accorded to Real Madrid CF, Barcelona CF, Athletic Club Bilbao, and Club Atlético Osasuna. This follows her call on the Commission to stop delaying a decision on a complaint about the matter from investors in other European football clubs.

Emily O'Reilly stated: "I am glad that the Commission has finally acted in this case after a delay of more than four years. It is important for the European public to see that the Commission deals rapidly with concerns about the breach of state aid rules. My role is not to look into the merits of the allegations, but I am satisfied that the Commission is now investigating the facts, thereby dispelling any suspicions of a conflict of interests."

The tax advantages amount to several billion Euro

In 2009, the complainant turned to the Commission, alleging that Spain is infringing EU State Aid Rules by granting unfair tax advantages to four Spanish football clubs. According to the complainant, these advantages amount to several billion Euro. He also noted that Spain is granting these tax advantages even as it requests hundreds of billions of Euro from Eurozone taxpayers.

The Commission normally has 12 months to decide on the opening of infringement proceedings. In this case, more than four years passed without any decision. Today, the Commission officially announced the opening of an investigation.

The Ombudsman's summary of her recommendation is available at:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/correspondence.faces/en/52874/html.bookmark>