



Press release No. 12/2014

Ombudsman opens investigation into Commission's expert groups

14 May 2014

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 opened an investigation on her own initiative into the composition and transparency of the Commission's expert groups. As a first step, she is asking interested persons and organisations for feedback on how balanced the representation of relevant areas of expertise and interest is in different groups, how transparent the groups are and how well the application procedures work.

Emily O'Reilly explained: "The Commission relies heavily on the advice of hundreds of expert groups to draw up legislation and policy, covering areas from tax and banking services, to road safety and pharmaceuticals. It is of utmost importance for these groups to be balanced and to work as transparently as possible so that the public can trust and scrutinise their work."

Strategic use of own-initiative investigations

When Emily O'Reilly took office as European Ombudsman in October 2013, she announced that she would use her own initiative power to investigate systemic problems in the EU administration more strategically. To this end, she appointed an internal co-ordinator for own-initiative inquiries. The expert groups investigation is the first in a series of strategic own-initiative inquiries which will be opened during the coming months.

With the help of the public consultation, the Ombudsman will investigate which expert groups may lack a balanced representation of interests, whether the appointment of members "in a personal capacity" is problematic and whether expert groups work as transparently as possible.

The invitation to the public consultation is available here:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/correspondence.faces/en/54300/html.bookmark>

Specific investigation into expert groups for common agricultural policy

The Commission (DG AGRI) is currently setting up 14 "civil dialogue groups" which will serve as advisory bodies for the common agricultural policy. More than a third of the EU's budget goes into this crucial policy area. The Ombudsman has therefore opened an investigation into the composition of these groups to guarantee a balanced representation of the wide range of economic and non-economic interest groups. You can find the opening letter for this specific investigation here:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/correspondence.faces/en/54297/html.bookmark>

