

MORAIS BISMARQUE GASPAR Ana Gloria

From: Valerie Solle [REDACTED]
Sent: 05 June 2014 19:14
To: Euro-Ombudsman
Cc: Angelika Poth-Moegele
Subject: Investigation into the European Commission's expert groups
Attachments: Ombudsman O'Reilly 5-6-2014.pdf; Dacian Ciolos 15-4-2014 EN.pdf

Follow Up Flag: BEH (ag) OI/6/2014/BEH
Due By: 06 June 2014 16:30
Flag Status: Flagged

Dear Ms O'Reilly,

Please find attached a letter from Mr Frédéric Vallier, Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), concerning your initiative to investigate the composition and transparency of the European Commission's expert groups.

This letter is also being sent out to you by post.

Best regards,

Valérie Solle



Valérie Solle
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Council of European Municipalities and Regions
European Section of United Cities and Local Governments

The Secretary General

Ms Emily O'Reilly
European Ombudsman
1 avenue du Président Robert Schuman
CS 30403
FR - 67001 Strasbourg Cedex

Brussels, 5th June 2014

Re: Investigation into Commission's expert groups

Dear Ms O'Reilly,

I would like to thank you for your initiative to investigate the composition and transparency of the European Commission's expert groups. The recent call for application for non-governmental organisations' membership in the civil dialogue group on rural development by DG AGRI also raised CEMR's concern.

With the enclosed letter to Commissioner Dacian Ciolos from 15th April, we explained that CEMR as broadest European umbrella organisation representing local and regional governments wishes to continue contributing to the reflections on rural development, as we have done so far being a member of the advisory group to DG AGRI. In his response, the head of Commissioner Ciolos' cabinet, Mr Georg Häusler, told us that DG AGRI is currently examining the applications.

Previously, CEMR questioned the expert or advisory groups where we had the impression that the composition was not balanced. In particular in areas where local and regional authorities were concerned and no representation from these levels was ensured. For example, this is the case in the expert group on the future of VAT: local and regional government is not represented, but is seriously concerned by the question to what extent locally provided public services are subject to VAT taxation. In addition to the non-balanced and non-transparent composition of the expert groups, we also experience a non-balanced representation in the related events such as the "FISCALIS 2013 Seminar" (Mestre, 17 – 19 April 2013) or the Tax Forum 2013 (Brussels, 18 November 2013) where no local or regional representative was among the speakers.

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CEMR also has positive experience with Commission expert groups and contributed to the preparation of new legislation or policy on water and air quality. We believe that experts from the local and regional authorities can provide very relevant expertise to the European Commission in particular in the preparation phase of legislation or policy.

CEMR wishes to contribute to your valuable investigation and will provide you more examples and evidence by the set deadline of 31st August. We would be pleased to present you our views and experience and CEMR's Director of Policy Angelika Poth-Mögele [REDACTED] [REDACTED] remains at your disposal for further questions.

Yours sincerely,


[REDACTED]

Frédéric VALLIER



Council of European Municipalities and Regions
European Section of United Cities and Local Governments

The Secretary General

To Mr Dacian Ciolos
Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural
Development

Brussels, 15 April 2014

Re: Local and Regional representatives in the new DG AGRI Civil Dialogue Groups

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to you regarding the call for applications for the new DG AGRI civil dialogue groups (CDGs), which is open until the end of April 2014.

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the broadest European umbrella organisation representing local and regional governments in 41 countries. Together these associations represent some 150 000 local and regional authorities from urban and rural areas.

We understand that the decision on the change of the current advisory groups was taken by the European Commission in the context of the new agricultural policy. However, we regret that this was done without prior consultation of the target groups concerned. CEMR is very concerned that the call for applications specifically excludes local and regional authorities from applying for membership to the civil dialogue group on rural development.

Since 2007, local governments' experts, nominated by CEMR, are actively participating in DG AGRI's advisory group on Rural Development, the European Network for Rural Development coordination committee and the LEADER sub-committee, alongside with farmers, industry and civil society groups. These structures offer the possibility to representatives from different areas to have an exchange with DG AGRI on a range of aspects of rural development and to provide the local government perspective. In turn it enabled local governments' representatives to share first hand information with colleagues from other CEMR member associations, helping them to better understand the Commission's approach.

We question the reasoning behind the exclusion of local and regional representatives from the civil dialogue group on rural development, because we are convinced that they can contribute significantly to the tasks of the civil dialogue group that are described in the call.

The exclusion of all governmental organisations seems too rigid to us, and we would like ask you to **re-consider the exclusion of local and regional authorities**, and their representative organisations. Another option could be **to establish a specific working group where local and regional representatives could have a direct and structured dialogue with DG AGRI on rural development issues**.

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I wish to highlight that the European Union promotes a multi-level governance system, which is reflected in the recognition of regional and local self-government in the Lisbon Treaty (article 4), and the introduction of an "open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society" (article 11). We hope that DG AGRI will find a way to enter into this dialogue on rural development with associations that represent local and regional governments.

Thank you very much in advance for your understanding. CEMR's Director of Policy Angelika Poth-Mögele (tel. 02 5000540) remains at your disposal for further questions.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature area. Above the box, there are several blue ink strokes, likely remnants of a handwritten signature.

Frédéric VALLIER