



## Press release no. 10/2015

# Ombudsman welcomes improvements to Commission expert groups

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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 Commission's agreement to improve its system of expert groups in response to proposals made by her in an own-initiative investigation. Hundreds of such advisory groups play a crucial role in the development of EU legislation and policy.**

The Commission has said that it will develop a new conflict of interest policy for experts appointed in a personal capacity. It also announced that the selection procedure for experts will be more transparent, including an obligation, where relevant, to be registered on the Transparency Register. Furthermore, the Commission plans to revise its expert groups register in 2016.

In January 2015, the Ombudsman sent a list of proposals to the Commission on how to address several shortcomings in its expert groups system. This followed a public consultation, during which respondents cited issues such as perceived corporate dominance of certain groups and potential conflicts of interest of certain experts.

Emily O'Reilly stated: "The Commission's response to my first set of suggestions is encouraging and should help to secure the full range of expertise needed and increase the transparency of the process, which is key to building public trust. However, the Commission still needs to do more to open up the important work of these groups to public scrutiny, in particular by publishing detailed minutes of their work. I also intend to examine closely the reasons put forward by the Commission for not adopting a new legal framework for expert groups."

The Ombudsman will now study the Commission's reply in detail and publish her full analysis soon. The Commission's opinion is available here: <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/correspondence.faces/en/60019/html.bookmark>

In a separate investigation, the Ombudsman is looking into whether DG AGRI has properly implemented the obligations laid down in its legally-binding framework for "civil dialogue groups". The result of this investigation will be published soon as well.