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Ombudsman welcomes Commission's actions to combat increased bee mortality

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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, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has welcomed the measures recently taken by the European Commission to combat increased bee mortality in the EU, which is potentially linked to certain insecticides. This follows a complaint from the Austrian Ombudsman Board, alleging that the Commission failed to take into account new scientific evidence arguing in favour of restricting the use of these insecticides.

Increased bee mortality possibly linked to certain insecticides

The Commission has authorised the use of a number of insecticides, known as neonicotinoids, for plant protection purposes. The relevant regulation provides for a review process concerning the authorisation of substances where new scientific evidence indicates that they no longer fulfil the approval criteria, for example, because they pose a threat to animal health.

In March 2012, the Austrian Ombudsman Board turned to the Ombudsman, explaining that new scientific evidence suggested that certain neonicotinoids have led to increased bee mortality. It alleged that the Commission failed to take appropriate measures, such as reviewing the authorisation of relevant substances, in order to address the problem.

In its opinion, the Commission listed a whole set of measures it had recently taken to address the problem of increased bee mortality. It designated, for example, an EU Reference Laboratory for bee health and commissioned a study on the extent of bee mortality. Furthermore, in April 2012, it requested that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) review the risk assessment as regards all neonicotinoids and their effects on

bees. EFSA's evaluation is expected in December 2012.

The Austrian Ombudsman Board was satisfied with the measures the Commission had taken to address the problem of increased bee mortality. The Ombudsman therefore closed the case and asked that the Commission inform him about the outcome of its review by 31 March 2013.

The Ombudsman's decision is available at:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/decision.faces/en/11989/html.bookmark>