



Emily O'Reilly
European Ombudsman

Mr Patrick Lambert
Director
Executive Agency for Competitiveness and
Innovation (EACI Agency)
European Commission
1049 BRUSSELS
BELGIQUE

Strasbourg, 16/12/2013

Own-initiative inquiry OI/8/2013/OV

Dear Mr Lambert,

In the framework of dealing with a complaint against the Executive Agency for Competitiveness and Innovation (EACI) concerning the review of a proposal (submitted under the Call for proposals CIP-EIP-Eco-Innovation-2012), I became aware that the EACI does not provide a review procedure to which the authors of rejected projects may turn. Such procedures exist in some other EU agencies such as the Research Executive Agency (REA) and the European Research Council Executive Agency (ERCEA). Like the EACI, these latter agencies also deal with the assessment of scientific proposals submitted to them in the framework of Calls for proposals.

In the absence of a review procedure, applicants for grants have no other choice than to initiate court proceedings or to submit a complaint directly to the European Ombudsman. In the Ombudsman's view, each EU institution in frequent contact with people who may have reason to complain should put in place a procedure that allows for grievances to be addressed and resolved rapidly by the institution itself, if possible. This provides a more efficient and effective solution than recourse to the court or to the Ombudsman constituting the first and only avenue of redress.

In order to make a complaints (or "redress") procedure effective and credible, it must ensure an impartial examination of the issues raised by the complainant. In the case of the EACI, the most appropriate way to achieve this could be to establish an independent Review or Redress Committee.

I have therefore decided to open an own-initiative inquiry into this matter by inviting the EACI to consider establishing a procedure by which a dissatisfied applicant could turn to an independent Review or Redress Committee.



The EACI could take inspiration from the review procedures that are in place at the REA and the ERCEA. You might also find it useful to consult the special report that I submitted to Parliament concerning a similar issue in relation to Frontex¹.

I would very much appreciate if the EACI could send its opinion by 31 March 2014 at the latest.

Yours sincerely,

Emily O'Reilly

¹ Special Report of the European Ombudsman in own-initiative inquiry OI/5/2012/BEH-MHZ concerning Frontex. The report is available on the Ombudsman's website:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/specialreport.faces/en/52465/html.bookmark>