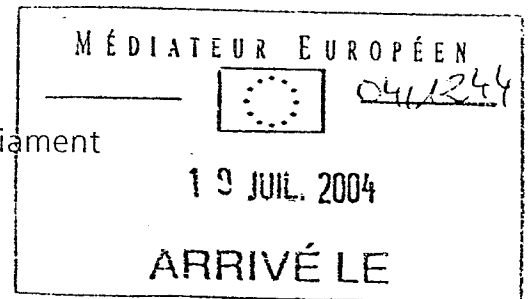


Pat Cox
President of the European Parliament



Mr P. Nikiforos DIAMANDOUROS
The European Ombudsman
1, avenue du Président Robert Schuman
B.P. 403
F - 67001 STRASBOURG

307780 15.07.2004

Dear Mr Diamandouros,

The Secretary-General, Mr Julian Priestley, has notified me of the contacts which he has had with you on the subject of the time limit within which the institutions are required to reply to the Ombudsman in cases where the latter requests comments in respect of complaints concerning access to documents.

In this connection and as I pointed out in my earlier letter of 14 June, Parliament has been challenged only once following a complaint submitted by a member of the general public concerning access to documents. The reply was forwarded to you within seven weeks. Where a member of the general public turns to the Ombudsman following a confirmatory application, the institutions will have already carried out a detailed examination of the original request and of the reasons for denying access, which generally enables them to submit comments within less than two months.

For this reason - and in view of the fact that one of the purposes of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 is to allow access to documents as quickly as possible - I agree that the time limit for the submission of comments in the case of complaints concerning access to documents could be reduced to two months.

I am therefore forwarding you Parliament's agreement in respect of your proposal, without prejudice to a possible extension of the time limit in particularly difficult cases which call for more detailed consideration.

I hope that such a measure will help to ensure that the principles laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 are implemented more effectively, and I thank you for your interest.

Yours sincerely,

Pat COX

CC : Julian Priestley, Secretary-General