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Ombudsman: New strategy for greater involvement of citizens and civil society

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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 adopted a strategy designed to raise the quality of the EU administration and to ensure that EU citizens enjoy their rights fully. The strategy will form the basis for the Ombudsman's work during his new mandate (2009-2014). It outlines the Ombudsman's intention to meet the expectations of complainants and of other stakeholders, to increase his institution's effectiveness as an alternative means of resolving disputes with the EU administration, and to be recognised as the driving force in putting citizens at the centre of the Union's administrative culture.

Mr Diamandouros explained: "The European Union has to deliver on the promises it has made to citizens in the Treaty of Lisbon concerning fundamental rights, enhanced transparency, and greater opportunities for participation in the Union's policy-making. I hope that the strategy I have adopted will serve as a useful guide as regards the Ombudsman's commitments towards citizens, stakeholders and institutions alike."

The Ombudsman's objectives and priorities

The major objectives the Ombudsman has set for the mandate include:

- Listening to the institution's stakeholders, by (a) obtaining regular feedback from complainants, (b) further developing contacts with the EU institutions, (c) engaging with civil society, and (d) identifying best practices in the European Union (via the European Network of Ombudsmen) and beyond.
- Delivering results faster, by developing simplified procedures to promote, where possible, a rapid resolution of complaints.
- Having a positive impact on the Union's administrative culture, by opening more own-

initiative-inquires on systemic problems in the EU institutions and by engaging more actively in EU policy debates in areas relevant to his mandate.

- Raising public awareness about his cases and finding new ways to inform citizens and other stakeholders about how the European Ombudsman and the Network of European Ombudsmen can help them defend their rights.

The full text of the strategy is available at:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/resources/strategy.faces>

The Ombudsman's new visual identity

As of today, the European Ombudsman has a new visual identity, including a new logo. The logo is designed to enhance the Ombudsman's efforts to reach out to a wide range of audiences, while evoking the institution's identity and values. The colours are meant to serve as a reminder of the European flag, while the circular shape represents unity and consensus. The arrows and the equals sign within the logo respectively symbolise exchange and dialogue, as well as equality and fairness, key features, that is, of the Ombudsman's approach to citizens and good administration.