



**P. Nikiforos Diamandouros**  
European Ombudsman

Ms Jacqueline McGlade  
Executive Director  
European Environment Agency (EEA)  
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Strasbourg, 22 -07- 2011

**Agency visit - Visit to the European Environment Agency**

Dear Ms McGlade,

In May 2011, I launched a programme of visits to EU agencies, with the main aim of identifying and spreading best practices in relation to the agencies' relations with citizens. During that month, I carried out three "pilot" visits to the EU agencies in the United Kingdom, i.e., the European Banking Authority, the European Medicines Agency and the European Police College. On 1 June, I met with the heads of all EU agencies and had occasion to explain this initiative in more detail.

Information on the visit to the EU agencies is available on the following page of my website: [www.ombudsman.europa.eu/activities/visits.faces](http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/activities/visits.faces)

The European Environment Agency is of particular interest for the purpose of identifying best practice. The European Ombudsman has conducted only very few full inquiries into complaints against the EEA, and the last six or seven years have shown a remarkably low complaints activity in relation to the EEA. Given the EEA's importance and obvious public interest profile, I cannot interpret this as being due to a lack of awareness of the Agency, either on the part of the citizens or on the part of EU civil society. On the contrary, I take it as a sign that your Agency successfully manages to integrate good administration into its procedures and working methods. I am, therefore, particularly interested in informing myself about the EEA's best practices at this early stage of the programme of visits to agencies.

Using the experiences of the first three visits to the EU agencies in the United Kingdom, I have refined and extended the methodology of the programme. As well as informing the agency to be visited of the subjects that I intend to raise, I will normally ask it to provide me in advance with certain



relevant information and documents. The visits are, furthermore, formally carried out on the basis of my competence to conduct inquiries on my own initiative. This implies, among others, that the usual procedural guarantees apply. These include, among others, the agency's right to request the European Ombudsman to treat information and documents on a confidential basis - see Articles 5.1, 5.2 and 14.2 of the Ombudsman's Implementing Provisions: [www.ombudsman.europa.eu/resources/provisions.faces](http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/resources/provisions.faces)

Following each visit, I inform the agency involved of my findings in writing. If I make any specific suggestions, I will normally ask the agency to inform me of any corresponding follow-up action. Depending on the agency's response, I will either consider closing the inquiry or take further steps, for instance, by issuing formal recommendations.

Together with senior members of my staff, I will be in Copenhagen in October 2011 for a major conference of the European Network of Ombudsmen. The conference takes place on 21-22 October, and I would, therefore, be delighted to meet you and relevant members of your team on 20 October, preferably in the afternoon. I expect that my visit would last two to three hours.

If you agree to this date, I will very soon take the necessary preparatory steps for the visit.

My contact person for this visit is Mr Peter BONNOR, Head of Legal Unit, [peter.bonnor@ombudsman.europa.eu](mailto:peter.bonnor@ombudsman.europa.eu), 00 33 3 88 17 25 41. I would be grateful if you could inform me of a relevant contact person from your staff.

Yours sincerely,

P. Nikiforos Diamandouros