



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

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*Committee on Petitions*

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**2010/XXXX(BUD)**

21.06.2010

# **DRAFT OPINION**

of the Committee on Petitions

for the Committee on Budgets

on the estimates of the European Ombudsman's budget for the financial year  
2011  
(2010/XXXX(BUD))

Rapporteur: Adina-Ioana Vălean

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## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The Committee on Petitions has taken note of the European Ombudsman's estimates concerning his budgetary requirements for the financial year 2011, which he submitted to the budgetary authority in accordance with Article 31 of the Financial Regulation.

The European Ombudsman's mission is to seek fair outcomes to complaints against European Union institutions. He also encourages transparency and promotes an administrative culture of service. The Ombudsman works closely together with other EU institutions and bodies and with the European network of national and regional ombudsmen.

The Ombudsman's budget is made up of three main parts: expenditure relating to personnel, expenditure on buildings, furniture, equipment, etc., and expenditure resulting from general functions carried out by the institution.

In order to be able to perform all his tasks the European Ombudsman in his budget estimates for the financial year 2011 requests a total amount of EUR 9 395 100. This represents an increase of 0.67% (EUR 62 825) compared to his budget for 2010. In the preceding years the budget increases were markedly higher with + 5.95% in 2009 and + 7.14% in 2010.

In the light of the current financial and economic crisis and to show solidarity with national and regional colleagues who are experiencing hard times for their budgets, the Ombudsman has tried to limit budget increases as much as possible.

On the other hand there are certain new responsibilities for the Ombudsman. Under the Lisbon Treaty the Ombudsman's mandate has been broadened from '*Community institutions and bodies*' to the '*Union institutions, bodies, offices or agencies*'. This will no doubt have an effect on his workload in the future.

The estimates for 2011 do not take specific account of these new tasks and the Ombudsman indicates that he cannot give guarantees with regard to the sustainability of the current level of restraint. He also indicates that he will request additional resources should he be compelled to do so by the additional 'Lisbon' workload. At this stage this remains hypothetical and it is not immediately apparent as to what the impact might be in practice.

As was done for previous estimates the Ombudsman's services have scrutinised all budget lines to identify and generate savings and/or redeploy funds. This exercise has resulted in total savings for 2011 of EUR 273 500. The amount saved covers more than 80% of the total increase in other budget lines resulting, *inter alia*, from increased translation costs due to a new pricing policy of the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union (CDT) and increased IT spending in order to improve an outdated videoconference system used for the communication between the Ombudsman's offices in Strasbourg and Brussels.

The Ombudsman states that the results achieved in 2009 were very positive. Inquiries were completed more rapidly without negative effects on quality. This is explained partly by the additional staff that the Ombudsman was able to employ since the 2009 budget and partly by

using innovative inquiry methods. In 2009 on average cases were closed after an inquiry period of 9 months and almost 60% of inquiries resulted in a satisfactory solution to the complaint.

As regards staff, the Ombudsman's establishment plan in the 2010 budget included 63 posts: 16 officials and 47 temporary agents (35 AD and 28 AST posts). For the 2011 budget the Ombudsman requests 1 additional AST post as well as twelve upgradings (6 AST and 6 AD) in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Staff Regulations. In addition he requests the transformation of one AD14 post from a temporary into a permanent post.

With regard to his institution's training policy the Ombudsman proposes to increase the funds for training in 2011 from EUR 37 000 to EUR 45 000. If these funds were available the institution could extend its new training policy that was already foreseen in the 2010 estimates and will be put into effect in the second part of 2010.

Your rapporteur endorses the Ombudsman's requests and is of the opinion that the total amount of budgetary resources as requested in the estimates will enable him to meet his obligations under his Statute and allow him to perform his duties effectively.

## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Petitions calls on the Committee on Budgets, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Considers that the appropriations requested by the European Ombudsman will ensure that he will be able to meet the obligations under his Statute and will allow his institution to perform its tasks effectively;
2. Notes that as compared with 2009 (+ 5.95%) and 2010 (+ 7.14%) the increase in budget resources requested by the Ombudsman for 2011 is limited to a modest 0.67% (EUR 62 825);
3. Commends the Ombudsman for showing restraint and expressing solidarity with his national and regional colleagues, who in the current financial and economic crisis are confronted with difficult situations in terms of their budgets;
4. Notes that the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty has broadened the Ombudsman's mandate from the 'Community institutions and bodies' to the 'Union institutions, bodies, offices or agencies', which entails new responsibilities in particular in relation to the European Council and the second pillar of the Common Foreign and Security Policy;
5. Is aware that in view of the Ombudsman's additional responsibilities under the Lisbon Treaty the current limited budget growth may not be sustainable; encourages the Ombudsman to continue to present realistic, cost-based estimates that take full account of the need to manage scarce resources in an optimal way;
6. Is pleased to learn that 2009 has been a very positive year in which inquiries were completed more rapidly without compromising quality; notes that this was the result of both additional human resources and the introduction of innovative inquiry methods; encourages the Ombudsman to continue to work towards perpetuating these excellent results;
7. Notes that, as in previous years, the Ombudsman has scrutinised all budget lines in order to generate savings and redeploy funds; is pleased to find that this exercise has resulted in total savings of EUR 273 500, which covers more than 80% of the total increase of the 2011 budget (EUR 336 325) and explains its very limited increase (EUR 62 825);
8. Supports the Ombudsman's request for 1 additional AST post, twelve upgradings (6 AD and 6 AST) and one (AD 14) transformation from a temporary into a permanent post; endorses the Ombudsman's proposal to increase the appropriations for training and to implement a quality management review in 2011.