
Activities of the European Ombudsman: transparency remains a key issue in 2015

The European Ombudsman's efforts during 2015 to boost transparency within the EU institutions, international trade agreements and negotiations on legislation between the three main EU bodies were welcomed by Parliament's Petitions Committee on Wednesday. MEPs also call for the adoption of common rules and safeguards for the better protection of whistle-blowers revealing illegal or unethical activities in the public or private sectors.

The Petitions Committees' resolution on the European Ombudsman's annual report for 2015, drafted by Notis Marias (ECR, GR), was passed by 21 votes to 9 with 0 abstentions.

Focus on transparency

Like recent years, transparency-related issues continue to top the Ombudsman's list of 278 opened inquiries in 2015. MEPs welcome the Ombudsman's continued efforts to increase openness within the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) talks and informal negotiations on legislation between the European Commission, Parliament and Council.

They also call on the European Ombudsman, currently Ms Emily O'Reilly, to push for more clarity and good administration within the European Central Bank.

Protection of whistle-blowers

The resolution further welcomes the fact that in 2015, all EU institutions introduced internal rules for whistleblowing. However, the adoption of additional common rules, guarantees and safeguards to enhance the protection of people revealing illegal or unethical activities in the public or private sectors is still of great importance, notes the text.

Members also commend the EU Ombudsman for investigating Member States' compliance with EU rules when it comes to sensitive Union funded actions, such as the placement of people with disabilities in various institutions rather than integrating them into society. They urge the Ombudsman to continue these investigations, in order to ensure transparency and the benefits of these kinds of measures.

Commission's expert groups

MEPs also highlight the Ombudsman's investigation into the make-up and openness within the Commission's expert groups, and reiterates their call to the Council to join the lobby register as soon as possible. They urge the Commission to make all information on lobby influence available free of charge, comprehensible and fully accessible to the public through one centralised online database.

The Petitions Committee finally calls on the Commission to submit, within 2017, a proposal for a mandatory and legally binding register for all lobbyists, aimed at closing current loopholes and uncertainties.

Next step

The Petitions Committees' resolution is scheduled to be voted in plenary on 24 November.

Background

The European Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in the institutions and bodies of the European Union. Emily O'Reilly (Ireland) was re-elected European Ombudsman by the Parliament at its plenary Strasbourg session on 16 December 2014.

Further information

[Parliament's Petitions Committee](#)

[More on rapporteur Notis Marias \(ECR, GR\)](#)

[Web page of the European Ombudsman](#)

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