

Honourable President, honourable members of the Committee on Petitions,

First of all, I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity, after the first selection, to appear before you.

This introduction will be intentionally brief.

I've learned by experience that debating is the most effective way to expand on the topics that you will choose in order to better evaluate the person in front of you, and it's the best way to leave space to any other matter you will consider worthy of attention.

This isn't the lesson in history of human rights that I usually teach my students, because you, as members of the European Parliament and members of this Committee are perfectly familiar with the particular form of non judicial protection of human rights, characterised by an independent, easily accessible and soft control of public administration.

As to my experience and knowledge of this topic, you have my C.V. and the fact that I'm here in front of you means that you've deemed it appropriate. For any further clarification, I'm at your complete disposal.

Moreover, I've already answered in writing to some specific questions on relevant topics. My answers reflect my priorities in order to improve the service given by the Ombudsman and in order to give the Ombudsman the best possible visibility.

But there's a concept that is fundamental and must therefore be repeated.

The formal recognition of human rights, which is present in all the Constitutions of the member States, is not enough to guarantee the protection of such rights.

In fact this protection – and I'm clearly speaking about the one guaranteed by the Ombudsman – is not the same in all member States and in all regions, and there is an evident discrimination between State and State, Region and Region.

During the last meeting in Florence of the European Ombudsmen Institute, a relevant and worrying tendency has emerged in many regions and countries members of the European Union, some Ombudsmen have been abolished by law, others haven't been reconfirmed, others been downsized in their human and financial resources. This meeting has confirmed something that all Ombudsmen have known for a long time.

In the light of this, two questions must be answered:

One: what are the causes of this negative trend?

Two: what can and what must the European Ombudsman do about it?

As to the first problem, the reasons of what is happening are clear to anybody who deals with human rights and has daily contacts with the Public Administration.

It is to be recognised that the Parliament and the local and national administrations are structures created by the people in order to accomplish what is necessary to running the Country and to the Country's well being. But once created, these structures can become self sufficient, practically sovereign organisms, and not only in limited fields, but with a certain contrasting claim of

universality. At this point, they cease to be instruments for the people and it's people who has become an instrument for the anarchic development of these structures.

In other words, the ruling class does not seem able to carry out its essential duty anymore, which is to satisfy, as a delegated and instrumental body, the essential needs of the People, primary body and therefore holder of sovereignty.

As to the second point, a remedy must be found; it's evident, in fact, that citizens of the EU cannot be discriminated as they have the same citizenship in common.

It's therefore necessary for institutions and bodies, which deal with human rights and their protection (and for all the ombudsmen linked by the European network) to have a recognised, visible and influential point of reference: the European Ombudsman.

His action, in case of critical and evident discrimination, will be limited to inform the Committee on Petitions about possible complaints.

I'm aware that after ten years of complete dedication to the citizens of my region, my commitment to providing an effective and energetic service will have to be even stronger. In this moment the challenges but also the opportunities that the protection of human rights offers are crucial for a more and more accomplished and shared European integration.