Annual report on the activities of the European Ombudsman in 2015

2016/2150(INI) - 15/11/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Petitions adopted the report by Notis MARIAS (ECR, EL) on the annual report on the activities of the European Ombudsman in 2015.

The committee **approved the annual report for 2015** presented by the European Ombudsman and congratulated Emily O'Reilly for her excellent work.

Transparency: Members acknowledged the importance of transparency as a core element of good administration, something that is also underlined by the high percentage of complaints concerning transparency (22.4 %). They welcomed the continued efforts of the European Ombudsman to increase transparency in the **Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations** through proposals to the Commission. They reemphasised the need for enhanced transparency in international agreements.

Members also underlined that **transparency and full access to documents** held by the EU institutions must be the rule. They regretted that the revision of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 is stalled as the Regulation no longer reflects the current legal situation or institutional practices.

The Commission is called upon to ensure the highest accuracy in its work and full transparency as regards the documentation provided, in full compliance with the principle of sincere cooperation, so as to guarantee that **Parliament's Committee of Inquiry into Emission Measurements in the Automotive Sector** (EMIS) can fully and effectively exercise its powers of investigation.

Members supported the European Ombudsman's determination to **make the workings of the European Central Bank (ECB) more transparent** and compliant with a high standard of governance, especially as a member of the **Troika/Quadriga** that supervises fiscal consolidation programmes in EU countries. They also called for greater transparency in **Eurogroup meetings**.

The report also supported the Ombudsman's efforts to make lobbying more transparent but regretted the Commission's reluctance to publish detailed information on meetings with tobacco lobbyists.

The Commission is urged to submit, **in 2017, a proposal for a fully mandatory and legally binding lobby register** aimed at closing all loopholes and achieving a fully mandatory register of all lobbyists.

Citizens' complaints: pointing out the concern of citizens in relation to the handling of infringement complaints by the Commission, the report welcomed the opening of the Ombudsman's inquiry into the Commission's handling of infringement complaints under EU Pilot procedures in its role as a guardian of the Treaties.

Revolving door: Members welcomed the continuation of the European Ombudsman's investigations into 'revolving door' cases in the Commission and encouraged the **more frequent publication of the names and other data** of such persons.

They expressed great concern at the fact that former Commission President Barroso was appointed as an adviser and non-executive chairman of Goldman Sachs International.

The Committee on Petitions stressed that effectively tackling all sources of **conflict of interest** is crucial in order to achieve good administration and ensure the credibility of political and technical decision-making. It called for a **directive on whistleblowing** which sets out appropriate channels and procedures for denouncing all forms of maladministration, as well as minimum adequate guarantees and legal safeguards at all levels for the individuals involved.

Citizens' rights: acknowledging that the right of citizens to have a say in EU policymaking is now more important than ever, the report welcomed the guidelines proposed by the Ombudsman for improving the functioning of the **European Citizens' Initiative** (ECI), especially where solid reasoning by the Commission in ECI rejections is concerned.