European Ombudsman, special report: secrecy in the Commission's recruitment procedures

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PURPOSE : to present a Special Report from the European Ombudsman to the European Parliament following the own-initiative inquiry into secrecy which forms part of the Commission's recruitment procedures. CONTENT : in November 1997, the European Ombudsman began an own-initiative inquiry concerning the secrecy which forms part of the Commission's recruitment procedures as there had been a number of complaints about the lack of transparency. In fact, there were two recurrent themes in the comments on this kind of complaint. The first relating to the proceedings of the Selection Board being secret (Article 6) and the second being the wide discretionary powers of the Selection Board. Although, the Ombudsman accepted that Article 6 was enacted with a view to guaranteeing the independence of Selection Boards, by protecting them from interference and pressure and that the Selection Boards are cested with wide discretionary powers, he considered however that the possession of such powers should not prevent public authorities from complying with principles of good administration. After careful examination of the Commission's opinion, the Ombudsman informed the Commission that in its view its approach contained instances of maladministration. In order to remedy these shortcomings, the Ombudsman made draft recommendations relating, in particular, to the above mentioned issues, and, also to issues such as knowing the name of the examiner, and allowing the disclosure to a candidate in a written examination of the markerd copy of his/her own exam script. In its letter of 5 July 1999, the Commission provided the Ombudsman with a detailed opinion on these draft recommendations. This Special Report highlights the recommendations and gives an analysis of the Commission's responses. Finally, the Ombudsman has a duty to make this Special Report to the European Parliament in accordance with Article 3(7) of the Statute on the European Ombudsman in order to try and modify the Commission's administrative procedures to improve transparency and give the citizen a positive impression of the Community institutions. The Ombudsman clearly pointed out that in its future recruitment competitions, and at the latest from 1 July 2000 onwards, the Commission should give candidates access to their own marked examination scripts upon request.