European Ombudsman. Annual report 2000

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PURPOSE : to present the the European Ombudsman Annual Report 2000. CONTENT : this Annual Report contains summaries of reasoned decisions taken in 61 cases out of 237 decisions taken during the year. The Annual Report would become prohibitively long if all the cases closed with a reasoned decision were included. The cases presented in this report have been selected so as to include all those of principle importance as well as at least one decision for each different subject and type of finding. In the year 2000, the Ombudsman received more complaints than last year (1732 in 2000 compared to 1577 in 1999). The complaints within the mandate where an inquiry was initiated have also increased to 223, from 201 in 1999. In 2000, the Ombudsman managed to close 237 inquiries with a reasoned decision compared to 203 in 1999. The outcome of thee complaints was as follows (1999 figures in brackets): no maladministration 112 (107), settled in favour of the complainant 76 (62), critical remarks 31 (27), friendly solution 1 (1), draft recommendations accepted by the institution 12 (2), special reports issued 2 (1). This shows that the Office has now made use of all the means at its disposal to undo an instance of maladministration and that the institutions and bodies of the EU have mostly responded positively and demonstrated a true will to put things right. The year 2000 has also been the year in which Internet communication with the citizens has truly come of age. Of the 1732 complaints received in 2000, 420 were sent by E-mail. Complaints submitted by E-mail now account for 24% of all complaints received, compared to 17% in 1999. E-mail provides a great opportunity for citizens to communicate cheaply, rapidly and efficiently with the institutions and bodies of the EU. However, it also creates a significant extra workload for the administration, as the volume of communication received rises dramatically. As regards the future of the Ombudsman, there have been many proposals debated about its future development, for instance, closer cooperation with national and similar bodies in the Member States, extending the mandate of the European Ombudsman to all administrative levels of the Union where Community law is applied, developing closer cooperation with the European Parliament administration that deals with petitions.