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Ombudsman: “Real progress for TTIP transparency”

25 November 2014

The European Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in the EU institutions and bodies. Any EU citizen, resident, or an enterprise or association in a Member State, can lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman offers a fast, flexible and free means of solving problems with the EU administration.

For more information:
www.ombudsman.europa.eu

Twitter:
[@EUombudsman](https://twitter.com/EUombudsman)

Contact:
Gundi Gadesmann,
Deputy Head of the
Communication Unit

T. +32 2 284 26 09

gundi.gadesmann@ombudsman.europa.eu

The European Ombudsman, Emily O’Reilly, has welcomed the decision of the European Commission to publish more EU negotiating texts and to give broader access to other documents in the context of the on-going Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations between the EU and the US. She opened an investigation in July 2014, asking the Commission to give timely public access to important TTIP documents, and to details of meetings with stakeholders. This was triggered by concerns about key documents not being disclosed, about delays, and about the alleged granting of privileged access to certain stakeholders.

Emily O’Reilly stated: “I am delighted that the Commission has taken the concerns of citizens, civil society organisations, MEPs and my own office on board to increase TTIP transparency. The negotiations have attracted unprecedented public interest, given the potential impact the deal will have on the lives of citizens. I am looking forward to receiving further details about how the Commission will enhance TTIP transparency in its reply to my inquiry which is also due this week.”

The Ombudsman received more than 6000 emails in reply to her public consultation on TTIP transparency. In January 2015, she will submit a report on these contributions as well as concrete measures to further enhance TTIP transparency and public participation.

Commission to increase lobbying transparency

The Ombudsman also welcomed the Commission’s announcement that it will increase lobbying transparency. As of 1 December 2014, all Members of the Commission and senior staff are expected to make public on the Commission’s website all contacts and meetings held with

stakeholders and lobbyists.

Emily O’Reilly said: “Lobbying plays an important role in functioning democracies and Brussels is now the second most important “lobbying capital” in the world after Washington. The EU institutions need to apply the highest ethical standards as well as pro-active transparency about lobbying to allow for proper public scrutiny. In this context, I also applaud the intention of the First Vice-President of the Commission, Frans Timmermans, to work towards a mandatory Transparency Register for interest representatives. However, I would like to see it eventually based on legislation, and not just as an inter-institutional agreement.”

The Ombudsman’s letter to the Commission is available here:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/cases/correspondence.faces/en/54633/html.bookmark>