



International Ombudsman Institute – European Region
Instituto Internacional del Ombudsman – Región Europea
Institut International de l’Ombudsman – Région Européenne

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NEWSLETTER No. 4

Dear colleagues,

European Ombudsman Meeting in Vienna 2006

I would like to thank you for having attended the IOI European conference in Vienna. As you probably know, not only were almost all the members of the IOI-Europe present, but other ombudsman institutions and delegates of befriended organisations were also represented. I believe one can say that all of Europe was represented at the event. This is all the more gratifying, since it does not only reflect an interest in our collective work as control institutions but also represents a commitment to the IOI itself. The importance of the European Region of the IOI was further confirmed, by the attendance of the President of the IOI, Bill Angrick, and of the Secretary of the IOI, Alice Tai, which added further standing to the Conference.

It is important to thank our speakers and rapporteurs, who facilitated constructive discussions and debate through their valuable contributions. What was particularly satisfying was the level of networking that was evident that will provide a widening and deepening of relationships across the European Region of IOI.

As already indicated during the conference, the Directors of the IOI would like this conference to act as a catalyst for further in-depth discussions among and between members. The first results of the study on the ombudsman institutions in Europe, presented by Prof. Kucsko-Stadlmayer, have indicated that the final results will not only offer a basis for our future cooperation, but will also provide a wide variety of themes on which we shall be able to work together to enhance the work we all undertake on behalf of the public we serve.

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The Directors of the IOI, hope therefore that you will continue to support this study, which is scheduled to be completed in 2007 and which, once published, will be an important resource for all of us.

All the hand-outs distributed during the conference are now available on our homepage. www.ioi-europe.org. As soon as we have the transcriptions of the other contributions to our plenary session, we will complete the conference report. I am keen to have this in place by September.

European Regional Meeting of the IOI

Amendments of the Rules for the European Region

It is important to record that the amendments to the Rules of the European Region that we proposed, as well as those that were put forward during the conference, were adopted by the membership. The Directors are satisfied that we now have an appropriate framework of rules and regulations that will facilitate the work of the IOI during the years to come.

You will find the new Rules enclosed with this newsletter. They are already available on our homepage.

Election of a new Director

Ombudsman Rafael Ribó i Massó is the newly elected member of our Board of Directors of the IOI-Europe. Rafael Ribó was born in 1945, he has been Ombudsman of Catalonia since July 2004, and he has taught Administration and Political Science at a number of universities in Barcelona over many years and was also for an extended period a member of the Parliament of Catalonia, as well as of the Spanish Parliament. Congratulations to Mr. Ribó on his election, importantly as a result both National and Regional ombudsman institutions are now represented on the Board.

As a Board of Directors we would also like to thank our colleague Matjaz Hanzek for his outstanding contribution as a member of the Board and for his valuable assistance and deep involvement in the substantive work of the IOI European Region over the term of his Office.

New tasks for the IOI Europe

The Council of Europe

The Interim Report of the Group of Wise Persons of the Council of Europe, presented during the conference and the initial response to it offered by the new European Commissioner for Human Rights also identifies the potential contribution by Ombudsmen in assisting in the more effective management of the workload currently faced by the European Court of Human Rights. The final report will be available in a few weeks and the IOI (Europe Board) would like to facilitate a discussion not only within the IOI-Europe, but also within a larger community of interest, since we feel that close cooperation between the different parts of the European Council, would not only be helpful for the European Council, but also would open potential development opportunities for a number of ombudsman institutions in Europe. Our aim is to convey to the Council of Europe a structured paper respecting the views and comments of the European ombudsman institutions on this final report. The Board of the IOI-European Region will therefore, as already indicated, not only forward the final report to all our members, but will also distribute a questionnaire that will help us to identify common and controversial positions.

UNDP

The UNDP has indicated it will continue its programme of Round-Table discussions. On the basis of the future cooperation between the IOI-European Region and the UNDP (see Newsletter No.3), I would ask all members to indicate to what extent they would be willing to support this cooperation through the support of study visits and the release and assignment of staff for particular projects.

Board-Meeting in Barcelona

Over the next period we will also begin to prepare for the Board-Meeting of the IOI that is scheduled to take place in October in Barcelona. At this meeting we will discuss important matters affecting the IOI worldwide. This does not only concern the substantive work of the IOI but also the work in every one of the regions.

As already indicated during the meeting in Vienna this will also depend on our finding an equitable and fair funding model for the IOI, which will also dictate how far the European Region can support its programme of work in the future. We must also keep in mind the suggestions that were made during our Regional Meeting, expressing the wish that the IOI-European Region prepares and issues a „strategy-paper“ within which projects can be developed and objectives set.

The aspiration that the IOI-European Region might act as an “umbrella” for all the Ombudsman institutions at a national, regional and local level would require us to work at improved levels of cooperation and more effective communication with organisations and networks similar to the IOI. Importantly the specific autonomy and interests of these networks and organisations within such a model must be respected.

Directors invite all members once again to identify any further suggestions and ideas you may have that should be considered for inclusion in the work programme of the IOI-Europe, so to help us to represent you effectively during the Board-Meeting of the IOI in Barcelona and beyond to the next World Conference in Stockholm in 2009.