

Monday, February 18, 2019

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **20 years of the Greek Ombudsman**

**The Greek Ombudsman, a constitutionally endorsed independent authority, is celebrating its 20th anniversary. More than 1.000.000 citizens who have come to contact with the services of the Authority throughout the years — according to the data held by the Ombudsman — are also celebrating with us.**

It is noticeable that merely the complaints handled by the Ombudsman have exceeded 250.000. Many complaints concern not only a single individual but large groups of people, such as property owners, taxpayers, pensioners, the unemployed and other vulnerable groups.

It is also characteristic that the Greek Ombudsman in comparison with its counterparts (in European countries with similar population) receives much more complaints, which indirectly brings to light the challenging situation of the public sector (and not just that) in Greece— at least in terms of serving citizens.

Within these 20 years, the competences of the Greek Ombudsman have been considerably enhanced. So, today, in addition to mediating between the State and citizens and monitoring legality of administrative action, compliance with fundamental rights and equal treatment, protecting minors and promoting the rights of the child, the Ombudsman monitors prisons and detention centres, as well as hotspots and refugee camps. It also oversees the disciplinary procedures of law enforcement authorities and prison officers and deals with obstacles encountered by people with disabilities.

### **Events**

Celebrations will begin with an event held on Wednesday 20 February at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre. The President of the Republic, Mr. Prokopios Pavlopoulos, will open the event and the Ombudsman of the Republic of Ireland and President of the International Ombudsmen Institute, Mr. Peter Tyndall as well as the Greek Ombudsman, Mr. Andreas Pottakis will address the participants.

The event will be followed by a two-day conference (Thursday 21 and Friday 22 of February) on “State and Society — Challenges for rights and freedoms” to be hosted in the Senate Chamber of the Parliament. Experts from Greece and other European countries will take part in the conference, addressing current issues such as yellow waistcoats in France and protection against fake news (the full programme and titles of contributions in the attached file).

It should be noted that among those who have already registered in the events are representatives of the UN, the Council of Europe, members of International and European courts as well as representatives of the Greek judiciary, Ombudsmen from EU Member-States and from other countries, including the Ombudsman of Russia, Ukraine, Turkey, Israel, Albania, Tunisia, etc.

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