



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2019**

### **INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

The Ombudsman's 2019 Annual Report was submitted on Tuesday 31 March 2020 to the Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament, Mr. Konstantinos Tassoulas.

For the first time in the history of the institution, the Ombudsman Mr. Andreas Pottakis, did not personally deliver the Annual report to the Parliament Speaker. In compliance with the measures against spreading covid-19, the Authority's annual report was sent electronically and by post.

There is no doubt that the severe shadow of the pandemic has monopolised the interest and worries of the Central Government and the citizens, however, as emphasised by the Ombudsman Mr. Pottakis, "The Independent Authority's 2019 Annual Report becomes particularly important as it reflects the state of the administrative mechanism by the end of 2019, i.e. shortly before it was called to face up to the pandemic. 2019 was a pivotal year. The country, after the end of the period of implementation of the inflexible fiscal adjustment programmes, is looking for a new point of balance. The loss of some ¼ of the produced wealth in the decade of the fiscal and economic crisis, contributed significantly to the disruption of the administrative mechanism, the degradation of the welfare state and the weakening of public control and monitoring mechanisms".

"In the years of the fiscal adjustment, public administration has been called upon to adapt to successive reforms -many of which remained incomplete or proved ineffective-, experienced abrupt and often not well-thought-out changes and restructuring, suffered an overwhelming loss of staff and resources".

This year's record of citizens' complaints to the Ombudsman since its establishment, continuing the upward trend noted in the last five years, is a testimonial of the above findings. In the last five years, the increase of complaints has reached 50%, from 11.502 in 2015 to 16.976 in 2019.

2019 is also recorded as an important year for the Independent Authority. As Mr. Andreas Pottakis noted "2019 has been a year of reorganisation and redeployment, with a view to upgrading the infrastructure of the Independent Authority, renewing its structures, revising its functions, claiming new institutional tools, stronger legitimacy, functional completeness and guarantees of independence, with reference to the 'Venice principles', common to the Ombudsmen institutions, which the Council of Europe drew up and approved for its Member States. Playing a leading role among the counterpart institutions in the wider Mediterranean area, but also within the European family, the Greek Ombudsman has been recognised as a valuable and reliable partner for the UN institutions, the EU, the Council of Europe, taking on the task of a national body protecting rights and monitoring the implementation of the

State's commitments. Without the Authority's intermediary, monitoring and operational expertise and intervention, the administrative costs and the judicial matter would rise far beyond current levels, with severe consequences to the prospects for sustainable growth and social cohesion."

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