



International Ombudsman Institute

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Press release

October 4th, 2006

Barcelona hosts for the first time the International Ombudsman Institute's Board of Directors meeting

Ombudsmen advise in setting-up similar institutions in Jordan, Turkey and Serbia

The city of Barcelona hosts for the first time the Board of Directors World Meeting of the International Ombudsman Institute.

Founded in 1978, IOI is the international Ombudsmen organization gathering Ombudsman offices from 87 different worldwide states. IOI is organized in six wide regions: Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and Pacific, Latin America and Caribbean and North America. The Catalan ombudsman, Rafael Ribó, is one of the European Board's four Directors since last June.

Its main objectives are to promote Ombudsman's institutions and roles worldwide and to favour the exchange of information and experiences between them. Some of the most outstanding efforts made lately by some IOI's members to promote the Ombudsman institution have been advising Jordanian and Turkish Governments to write an Ombudsman Act, first step that should lead to setting-up an Ombudsman's institution. The Catalan Ombudsman has also carried out a similar action advising Serbian authorities on the subject. Once the Act has been passed and the Ombudsman Chief has been elected, the Catalan Ombudsman will be helping in setting-up the Serbian Ombudsman office and in giving speeches to promote its roles.

The IOI's work sessions, starting today until Friday, will be attended by the Ombudsmen of Sweden, Austria, Finland, Slovenia, Mexico, South Korea, Macao, Papua New Guinea, Northern Ireland, EUA's state of Iowa, Hong-Kong, Canada, Australia and Tunisia.

National, regional and local Ombudsmen are represented at the meeting, taking into account they all enjoy different levels of competences according their respective regulations.

Human rights around the world

During the Meeting, and through the exposition and debates of the six world regions reports, there will be made an assessment about the Ombudsmen's work worldwide in favour of human rights defence.

Regarding Human Rights in general it is stated they are constantly being questioned around the world for various reasons. IOI's members and other Ombudsman institutions believe the new debate between security and freedom and possible cutbacks from Democracy in favour of safety can be dangerous. Ombudsmen plead for to establishing the boundaries between rights cutback and security protection in order to look for a balance based on deciding to renounce or not to some aspects of individual freedom in order to strengthen collective safety.

Improving the Ombudsmen's offices functioning

Ombudsmen have the mission to watch over a good administration. This role makes its own offices to be speedy when dealing with the peoples' complaints, which can be easier achieved by using the advantages on New Technologies to improve efficacy and response time. IOI's members will be discussing about this during Barcelona's Meeting to improve the service given to the people that contact with the Ombudsman's offices.

Different Ombudsman's models

Nowadays, according territorial factors, each nation's Constitution and competences, there are different Ombudsman models. Catalonia's current model is similar to most Ombudsmen, although it enjoys some competence that others lack of, like, for instance, the authority for proposing legal modifications.

Regarding those mentioned different models, there will be released a comparative study about the functioning, competences, and legal framework of 75 Ombudsmen around Europe.

An institution that strengthens Democracy

Ombudsmen help the Administration to improve their way of working. They are their supervisors/collaborators. Therefore, it is an institution that strengthens Democracy. IOI has co-operation programmes to promote the institution to new nations, as well as the Catalan Ombudsman, which is carrying out an 8 years aged programme in the Balkan zone to strengthen rights' defence.

Besides the actions carried out in Turkey and Jordan by some IOI's members, the IOI's European region will be reporting about a new co-operation project with the Bratislava regional office for 2006-2010 included in the UN Development Programme . This co-operation will consist of strengthen the authority and competences of European Eastern Ombudsman offices, as they have no much democratic experience yet.