

IOI European Region Newsletter

July – September 2026

The IOI European Regional Board wants to be transparent about its activities and therefore sends you this quarterly newsletter. Feel free to share it with whoever is interested.

The IOI European Regional Board

The IOI European board met once online on Tuesday 1 September.

Ombudsman attending:

Reinier van Zutphen
Joseph Zammit McKeon
Maria Stylianou
Marino Fardelli

Absent with apologies:

Dmytro Lubinets

Staff present:

Paul Borg
Jurgen Cassar
Stephan Sjouke

The IOI Board discussed the agenda for the IOI European Regional meeting for this year. As soon as the location has been finalised, we will send you all the information.

Venice Principles

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, the IOI European Regional President, Reinier van Zutphen, and the IOI President, Nadine Mailloux, requested a mandate from the IOI World Board to continue their work on developing the relationship with the Venice Commission, with the aim of producing a series of comments on the Venice Principles. The IOI World Board granted the mandate, and a letter was sent to the Venice Commission on 21 August. We are happy to be able to inform you that the Venice Commission has already responded to the letter and told us that the Venice Commission will provide the requested clarifications, through the adoption of a report or, if appropriate, an interpretative declaration to be adopted, in principle, at the 149th Plenary Session (11-12 December 2026). We will keep you posted as soon as we have more information.

New Colleagues

Although this was not covered in earlier newsletters, the arrival of four new incumbents warrants a mention, so we would like to inform you of the new colleagues in:

Czech Republic: Eva Kostolanská, formerly a lawyer at the Office of the Ombudsman and the Children's Ombudsman, has officially assumed office as the Czech Ombudsperson. She succeeds Stanislav Křeček, who served as Ombudsman from 2020 until 2026.

France: François-Noël Buffet took office as the new Défenseur des droits on 23 July 2026. He has been appointed for six years. His mandate cannot be renewed and is not revocable. He succeeds Claire Hédon.

Poland: Sylwia Gregorczyk-Abram was appointed Commissioner for Human Rights by the Sejm of the Republic of Poland on 17 July. Sylwia Gregorczyk-Abram is an attorney-at-law, social activist, and human rights defender. For over twenty years, she has been actively involved in promoting and protecting civil rights and freedoms. Since 2010, she has been a member of the Warsaw Bar Association. She succeeds Marcin Wiącek.

Portugal: Luísa Neto took office as Ombudsperson on 15 July 2026. Born in Lisbon in 1971, Luísa Neto holds a degree in Law and has a PhD in Law from the Faculty of Law of the University of Porto (2003). She is a full professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Porto, where she has been teaching since 1995 in the fields of Constitutional Law, Fundamental Rights and Political Science. She succeeds Maria Lúcia Amaral, who left office in 2025.

Upcoming conferences

The Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Cyprus and the Association of Mediterranean Ombudsmen (AOM) will organise a regional conference entitled “The reflection of the institution on improving citizens’ quality of life and protecting human rights throughout its 35-year journey”. It will take place in Nicosia, Cyprus, on 10–12 November 2026.

The Ararteko (the Ombudsman of the Basque Country) is organising an international conference, “Strengthening Ombuds Institutions to Underpin Democracy.” It will take place on 18 and 19 November 2026 in Bilbao (Basque Country, Spain).

On Friday 4 December, the biennial IOI European Regional Conference will take place in Brussels. It will start with a dinner on Thursday 3 December, followed by a members’ meeting on Friday morning. The afternoon will be open to the public and will address a general topic of interest to ombudsman institutions. The meeting will be hybrid and held in the three languages of the IOI. The agenda and programme will be sent to you soon.

Upcoming publication

Ombuds Institutions for the Armed Forces: Citizens, Uniforms and Human Rights

By Luka Glušac and Daniel Reimers

This book examines ombuds institutions for the armed forces as mechanisms of accountability, human rights protection, and democratic oversight.

The book will become available around November.