

## **IOI European Region Quarterly Newsletter**

April 2025 - June 2025

*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 whomever is interested.*

### **The IOI European Regional Board**

The Board convened twice in this period. One time online on 8 May and one time in person on 12 May in Rabat.

### **Online European Board meeting 8 May**

During the online the European Board discussed the following topics.

#### *Ombudsman Mandate*

In the European region there is a disparate view on the mandate of an ombuds institution. This sometimes leads to a completely different approach in the way institutions operate. This difference should be addressed and the IOI European Region is proposing a "Poldershop" — a forum designed for open and constructive dialogue. The goal is to bring together a broad range of voices to explore and discuss these varied understandings of the ombudsman role.

#### *Support Ombudsman Moldova*

The IOI European Region has been actively supporting the Ombudsman of Moldova. At the request of the IOI, a draft letter of support was prepared and circulated among the European Board before being submitted to the IOI Secretariat in Vienna. The definitive version of the letter, which received the approval of the Moldovan Ombudsman, was subsequently shared with all IOI members.

#### *Strengthening Ties with ENNHRI*

In a move to foster deeper collaboration, Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets — who also serves on the ENNHRI Board — plans to propose a joint meeting between the ENNHRI and IOI European Regional boards. The aim is to explore avenues for closer cooperation and coordinated efforts in promoting and protecting human rights across the region.



#### *UN working group*

This topic will be elaborated on below.

#### *Representation of the IOI European Regional Board*

The IOI European Regional Board has formalized a policy regarding its representation at international meetings held across Europe. Emphasizing the importance of maintaining a visible and active presence, the board agreed that when the Regional President attends such events, the board is considered officially represented. In cases where the President is unavailable, one of the Directors will be designated to attend on behalf of the board.

### **Marc Bertrand steps down**



Marc Bertrand has stepped down from his role as a Director. The IOI European Board extends their deepest thanks to Marc for his invaluable contributions to the Board and for his unwavering dedication to strengthening the work of the IOI and promoting the evolution of the ombuds institution. Marc's commitment, insight, and passion have left a lasting mark—most notably through his pivotal role in the creation and adoption of the *Guide to the*

*Values and Ethical Principles for Ombudsmen and their Staff* within the IOI European Region. This remarkable achievement has not only elevated standards in Europe but has also served as an inspiring model for the global IOI community. The IOI European Board wishes Marc all the best.

### **Elections European Regional Board**

Currently, there are two vacancies on the IOI European Regional Board for the position of Regional Director. A call for nominations has already been sent out, and the application period has recently been extended. The IOI European Regional President, acting as the returning officer, emphasizes the importance of having a board that represents all parts of Europe and recognizes the need for gender balance within the group.

### **Rabat World Board meeting**

As you have been able to see on the [website of the IOI](#), the World Board met in Rabat from 11 May till 15 May. The Regional President and the Parliamentary Ombudsman Malta, were in Rabat and held a short regional meeting. One notable outcome of the meeting is that the UN working group has been renamed 'IOI Working Group for UN and International Cooperation'. The reason is that the aim that besides the United Nations, there are many, relevant contacts in



the international community which are relevant to the IOI. The European Regional President will take on the task to further explore areas of collaboration with GANHRI and ENNHRI. He will also undertake the strengthening of the cooperation with the Council of Europe and its Venice Commission. This latter is significant as the aim is to establish a peer review process to evaluate members' compliance with the Venice Principles. The European

Regional President will lead a sub-committee focusing on the Council of Europe, Venice Commission, and a peer review. The Ombudswoman of the Republic of Croatia, Tena Šimonović Einwalter, is also a member of this sub-committee.

### **Welcome to new members**

During the Rabat meeting four applications for membership in the European region were accepted. The IOI European Board is happy to welcome four new members in our community. These are:

- [Ombudsman of the State of Rhineland-Palatinate](#)  
Ms. Barbara Schleicher-Rothmund  
Germany
- [Ombudsman of Emilia-Romagna](#)  
Mr. Guido Giusti  
Italy
- [Ombudsman for Children and Youth](#)  
M. Charel Schmit  
Luxembourg
- [Bernese Municipal Ombudsman](#)  
Ms. Mirjam Graf  
Switzerland

At the moment there are 87 members in the IOI European Region.

### **IOI European Regional Strategy Plan 2025 – 2028**

The European Board has adopted a European Regional Strategy Plan 2025 – 2028. Further details and activities will be shared in a next newsletter. Themes that will be addressed during the period of this plan are:

1. Impact of the Venice Principles and UN GA Resolutions  
A comprehensive survey aimed at evaluating how well ombuds institutions in the European region align with the Venice Principles will be conducted and the outcome will be the topic of further discussions amongst the members.
2. Capacity Building for Ombuds Institutions' Staff  
Ensuring that staff members are well-equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge is crucial not only for meeting formal criteria but also for enhancing the overall quality and effectiveness of ombuds institutions.
3. Strengthening the Organisation of the IOI European Region  
Structural organization of the IOI European Region including the establishment of a permanent secretariat for which structural funding must be found.

### **Conferences**

- The 45th Anniversary of Civic Defense in Lazio was celebrated on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at the Lazio Regional Council with the support of the IOI.

The event provided an opportunity to reflect on the history, role, and prospects of this institutional figure, a reference point for the protection of citizens' rights and a guarantor of administrative transparency.

- An international conference was held in Tirana with the theme: National and International Structures to Protect Human Rights: Good Practices and Lessons. The event marked the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the institution and took place on June 24, 2025, at the premises of the Brigades Palace in Tirana.