



# Ombudsman Regulations

Adopted by the Board of Directors of the Nordic Investment Bank  
on 18 March 2021 with entry into force as of 9 April 2021

## Table of Contents

1 SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE .....	1
2 ROLE OF THE OMBUDSMAN.....	1
3 INTEGRITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY .....	2
4 MEDIATION BY THE OMBUDSMAN.....	2
5 FEEDBACK TO MANAGEMENT .....	2
6 ANNUAL REPORT .....	3
7 QUALIFICATIONS AND APPOINTMENT .....	3
8 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW.....	3

## Responsible Department(s)/Unit(s)

HR Services and Legal Department

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# OMBUDSMAN REGULATIONS

## 1 SCOPE AND OBJECTIVE

The Nordic Investment Bank (“**NIB**”) has engaged an independent Ombudsman to advise and counsel the staff on employment related matters.<sup>1</sup> The aim of the Ombudsman function is to improve the overall working environment and resolve conflicts informally and efficiently.

The Ombudsman is impartial and independent and offers a confidential forum for discussing employment related matters. All staff members<sup>2</sup> have the opportunity to consult the Ombudsman and the consultation is free of charge.

Differing views between NIB and a staff member or between staff members shall primarily be resolved internally as set out in the Staff Regulations. Supervisors and HR offer help and support to discuss and solve disagreements and to find ways to improve the working environment. If a conflict cannot be resolved internally, staff are encouraged to seek the Ombudsman’s advice and may also resort to mediation. The Ombudsman may give recommendations but does not conduct any investigations<sup>3</sup> or have decision-making powers in employment matters. For conflict and dispute resolution methods in employment matters, please see the Staff Regulations.

## 2 ROLE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Ombudsman shall:

- 1) advise and counsel staff members regarding their terms of employment and working environment;
- 2) help and support staff members in concerns relating to alleged harassment and advise on available actions as set forth in the Staff Rules<sup>4</sup>; and
- 3) mediate conflicts between NIB and a staff member or between staff members.

The Ombudsman is available for consultation and may be contacted as set out on [NIBnet - Staff - Ombudsman](#).

The Ombudsman does not handle individual salary and performance premium matters or matters that are subject to arbitration proceedings, official investigations, court proceedings or review by an authority.<sup>5</sup>

The Ombudsman may advise the staff on how to commence arbitration in accordance with the Arbitration Regulations. The Ombudsman shall otherwise refrain from assisting in the arbitration, except if he/she may be able to assist in mediating the dispute. The Ombudsman may not be called as a witness or required to provide information in any legal proceedings.

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<sup>1</sup> NIB’s Associated Legal Entities, the Nordic Development Fund and the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation, and their staff have access to NIB’s Ombudsman on the same terms as NIB.

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the Staff Regulations, the President is chief of staff and not a staff member.

<sup>3</sup> The Integrity & Compliance Office handles allegations of staff misconduct.

<sup>4</sup> Currently under updating.

<sup>5</sup> Cases related to official investigations, court proceedings or review by an authority may occur e.g. as a result of the Board of Directors’ waiving the immunity of a staff member.

### **3 INTEGRITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Ombudsman shall act with high integrity and protect the confidentiality of the staff. The Ombudsman keeps the identity of staff members and all matters and discussions with staff members strictly confidential.

The Ombudsman will not disclose the identity or details of the circumstances without the staff member's prior consent. However, in some cases, the Ombudsman may not be able to provide adequate advice or recommendations or mediate the matter if the staff member does not consent to sharing his/her identity or details of the circumstances. It is particularly important to hear both parties when addressing concerns relating to harassment and violations of the Staff Documents.

Staff members shall cooperate with the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman shall have access to information relevant to the exercise of his/her duties. Information and materials received or compiled may only be used for the purpose of the Ombudsman function.

Staff members may contact the Ombudsman or resort to mediation without fear of retaliation.

### **4 MEDIATION BY THE OMBUDSMAN**

Staff members are encouraged to attempt to resolve matters through existing internal channels with help from supervisors and HR. If a conflict cannot be resolved, staff members or NIB may seek mediation facilitated by the Ombudsman. In mediation, the Ombudsman assists the parties in resolving the conflict in a mutually satisfactory manner. Mediation is voluntary, strictly confidential and free of charge to the staff member. NIB is required to attend mediation involving NIB and shall appoint representative(s) for the mediation.

The staff member or NIB shall contact the Ombudsman as soon as possible and at the latest within one year from the date the staff member became aware of the decision or circumstances giving rise to the conflict. A delay in initiating the process may adversely affect the mediation. The mediation shall be initiated within thirty days from the date the Ombudsman was contacted with the request to initiate the mediation. The Ombudsman shall inform the staff member if the conflict does not fall within the role of the Ombudsman and justify his/her decision. The Ombudsman shall inform NIB's General Counsel and Head of HR of the initiation of the mediation.

The procedure and timeline for the mediation shall be decided by the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman shall hear both parties during the process but may also discuss on a confidential basis separately with the parties. Any written material shall be shared with both parties. The Ombudsman may hear other staff members or experts if needed. The staff member may have a representative or counsel present at his/her own expense.

The Ombudsman may give a recommendation how to resolve the conflict, which the parties shall either accept or reject within the timeframe set by the Ombudsman. The mediation is completed when (i) the parties sign a conciliation agreement; (ii) the Ombudsman informs the parties that continuing the mediation is not justifiable; or (iii) a staff member informs the Ombudsman that he/she does not wish to continue the mediation.

### **5 FEEDBACK TO MANAGEMENT**

The Ombudsman may provide observations, views and advice to NIB on employment matters and the working environment in general, including recommendations for development. NIB may also consult the Ombudsman in general employment related questions.

The Ombudsman shall bring to the attention of the President, the Chief Compliance Officer and the Head of HR any systemic or grave issues that become apparent from individual cases.

## **6 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Ombudsman shall issue an annual report specifying the number and general nature of the matters brought to his/her attention and describing in general terms the extent to which the matters were or were not resolved. The annual report shall be distributed to the Cooperation Council, Executive Committee and Board of Directors as well as to the staff.

## **7 QUALIFICATIONS AND APPOINTMENT**

The Ombudsman shall have high professional qualifications, including in-depth expertise in employment law, and excellent communication, mediation and conciliation skills and experience.

The Board of Directors shall appoint the Ombudsman for a term of two years and may extend the appointment upon proposal by the Executive Committee. The Cooperation Council shall endorse the appointment. The Ombudsman is not an employee of NIB and may not be employed by NIB within five years from the end of the Ombudsman's term. Former employees or Presidents are not eligible as Ombudsman.<sup>6</sup>

## **8 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW**

The primary responsibility for the correct implementation of these Ombudsman Regulations remain with the HR Services and the Legal Department. The Integrity & Compliance Office shall monitor adherence to these Ombudsman Regulations.

These Ombudsman Regulations shall be reviewed at least every three years.

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<sup>6</sup> The same applies to the Nordic Development Fund and the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation.