



UiO • **PluriCourts** – The Legitimacy of the International Judiciary  
University of Oslo

# Ombuds as an element of Nordic Branding

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## Topics

- 1) Scope and focus
- 2) Historic developments of ombuds in the Nordic area
- 3) Variation in development trajectories of ombuds in the Nordic countries – do ombuds represent Nordic approaches and values?
- 4) Tracing Nordic and country specific efforts at promoting ombuds in other parts of the world

# 1) Scope and focus

- Which institutions?
  - Public vs. private
  - Local vs. national vs. international
  - Based in legislation vs. based in administrative decisions
- Which functions?
  - «Judicial» review: individual and general decisions – «soft power»
  - Promotion of «weak» interests
  - «Neutral» information and research
  - Relationship to parliaments – independence of executive – integrity
  - Person vs. office
- Which formal powers?
  - Investigative, decision-making, monitoring, verification and reporting

## 2) Tracing the historical development

- Parliamentary ombudsmen
  - The Nordics: Sweden 1809; Finland 1919; Denmark 1955; Norway 1962; Iceland 1997
  - Rest of the world: New Zealand 1962, spreading to commonwealth
- Equality and discrimination
  - Norway 1978; Sweden 1980; Finland 1987
- Consumers
  - Sweden 1970; Norway 1972; Denmark 1975
- Children
  - Norway 1981; Sweden 1993; Finland 2005
- Other examples
  - Environment, future generations, bankruptcy, data protection

### 3) Variation in development trajectories

- Establishment
- Mandates
- Funding / resources
- Institutional affiliation – independence
- Recent challenges:
  - Pushback against independence as a general trend?
  - Increased focus on provision of services? Measuring efficiency
  - Increased linking to international norms and processes?
- To what extent and in what senses do current ombudsmen institutions express common Nordic approaches and values?

## 4) Diffusion efforts

- Extensive international activities of at least some ombuds
  - Establish or play an important role in international networks
  - Active promotion of ombuds in other countries
  - Receive delegations from other countries
  - Actively involved in international processes
- Promoted by other institutions of the countries?
  - Ministry of foreign affairs
  - Aid agencies
- Promoted by NGOs?

## Some general issues

- Have ombuds been an important element in branding Nordicity (specificity, strategic promotion, reception)?
- A branding element in decline (stability, competitiveness)?
- If ombuds are to remain an important element, what reforms or strategies would be needed? Staying ahead of the others?
- Nordicity as a means of promoting ombuds internationally
- Project design:
  - Level of ambition
  - Need for cooperating partners
  - How much data is needed and should the project aim at making data available?