

Ombudsman's proposal to combat paedophilia in EU crèches implemented by Commission - European Commission adopts procedures for dealing with alleged child abuse in its crèches following Ombudsman's recommendation

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The European Ombudsman, **Mr Jacob Söderman**, has achieved a victory for parents of children attending European Commission crèches. Following a complaint received from the parents of children attending the *Early Childhood Centre Clovis* in Brussels, the Ombudsman had recommended that the European Commission adopt "*an internal procedure to ensure that cases of alleged abuse of children within its crèches are dealt with in an effective, transparent and timely way*". The Commission has now accepted the Ombudsman's draft recommendation and has taken measures to implement it.

The parents had complained to the Ombudsman in May 1998. They claimed that the Commission failed to act in an effective, transparent and timely way after an alleged case of paedophilia at the *Clovis* crèche was reported. Although the Commission had stated in its opinion to the Ombudsman that it did envisage setting up an internal procedure for dealing with such cases, the complainants regretted that over two years after the alleged case came to light, no such procedure was in place. The Ombudsman was informed in November 1999 that the adoption of an internal procedure was imminent. However, further inquiries by the Ombudsman showed that no significant progress has been made since then.

Given the Commission's inaction, the Ombudsman made his draft recommendation on 15 March 2000. The Commission informed the Ombudsman in due time that it would follow the recommendation. This week, after having studied the new procedure set up by the Commission, the parents who had complained to the Ombudsman informed him that they were satisfied with the outcome. The Ombudsman concludes that the Commission has taken satisfactory measures to ensure that any future alleged abuses are dealt with appropriately.

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