



Following Ombudsman's proposal, Commission gave access to document dealing with poverty and exclusion in member states

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European Ombudsman Jacob SÖDERMAN succeeded in settling a controversy between the European Commission and an Irish social researcher about access to documents concerning poverty and exclusion policies in the Union. In September 1996, the Commission had refused to give the document to the researcher, explaining that it was not a Commission document but a series of materials originally produced by the Member States and merely put together by the Commission. Applications for these materials should therefore be forwarded to the authors of the documents in the Member States. The document had been distributed in July 1996 to a High Level Group on Social Exclusion set up by the Commission with the participation of national experts from all Member States. The complainant insisted that the document should be considered a Commission document, because, firstly, parts of the material had been translated and the document was with a Commission cover. Furthermore, the document had been circulated as a Commission document in Ireland in the summer of 1996. When asking for the document from the Irish Department of Social Welfare, the complainant got turned down on the grounds that it was a Commission document and the Commission therefore was the authority to decide on access to it. After an inspection of the document in order to assess the nature of the document, the Ombudsman decided to seek a friendly solution to the matter. Referring to the role of the Commission in the preparation of the document and the negative response the complainant had from both the Member States and the Commission, he proposed in the name of transparency that the Commission agree to make the document available to the complainant. The Commission agreed to the Ombudsman's proposal and after asking for an authorization from all Member States released the document. The complainant expressed his full satisfaction to the outcome of the Ombudsman's initiative. He thanked for the work the Ombudsman had undertaken and acknowledged the progress that had been made. *For further information, please call Mr José Martínez Aragon, tel 33 (0)8 17 24 01*