

An end to age discrimination remains top of Ombudsman's agenda

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The European Ombudsman, **Jacob Söderman**, is continuing his campaign to encourage all EU institutions, bodies and agencies to end the age discrimination in their recruitment procedures. Mr Söderman has written to 21 EU institutions, bodies and agencies, asking them to inform him of whether they still use age limits in recruitment. If they do, Mr Söderman would like to know what the limits imposed are and on what objective and legal basis they are justified. A deadline of 31 July 2001 has been set for replying to the Ombudsman's inquiry.

The stepping up of the Ombudsman's action on this issue follows the recognition in the Nice Charter of Fundamental Rights that everyone has the right to work (Article 15) and that discrimination on the basis of age is prohibited (Article 21). The Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission proclaimed the Nice Charter at the Nice Summit on 7 December 2000. "Failure by a Community institution or body to respect the rights contained in the Charter would therefore be an instance of maladministration", according to Mr Söderman.

The age limits imposed in EU recruitment competitions are a problem that have led to many complaints to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman has already successfully acted against such limits in the past. Now, with the Nice Charter supporting his position, Mr Söderman hopes that all unjustified discrimination on the basis of age can be brought to an end. The EU institutions, bodies and agencies will either have to abolish the age limits that have been used up until now or objectively and legally justify their continuation to the Ombudsman.

The Nice Charter of Fundamental Rights can be found on the Internet at:
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/default_en.htm [Link]

For further information, please call Benita Broms, Principal Legal Officer, tel. +32 (0) 2 284 2543.