

Ombudsman steps up pressure on Commission over sex discrimination

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The European Ombudsman, **Jacob Söderman**, today launched a special report on the failure of the European Commission to end its policy of sex discrimination against seconded national experts. In the special report to the European Parliament, he recommends that the Commission act as quickly as possible and calls on the Parliament to consider adopting this recommendation as a resolution.

The Commission insists that seconded national experts work full-time. In the Ombudsman's view, this works to the disadvantage of a much higher percentage of women than men.

The Ombudsman already asked the Commission to change its rules by 30 September 2001 at the latest. The Commission failed to do this, saying that it needed to await certain discussions in the context of its present reform process. According to the Ombudsman, there is no valid reason why sex discrimination should continue until these discussions are finished.

"Almost a year after the Charter of Fundamental Rights was proclaimed, any further delay in putting the matter right is unacceptable", said Mr Söderman.

The discrimination was brought to the attention of the Ombudsman by a UK civil servant who had applied for a secondment to the Commission. She wanted to work part-time, in order to look after her young child.

The Ombudsman's Special Report can be found on the Internet at:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/cases/specialreport.faces/en/381/html.bookmark>

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