

European Ombudsman to examine complaint about possible racism in recruitment to Community institutions

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The European Ombudsman, **Jacob Söderman**, has agreed to examine a complaint into possible racism in recruitment to Community institutions and bodies. The complainant - a Dutch citizen - points out that while more than 30 million people of ethnic minority origin live in the EU, hardly any of them are employed in the structure of the European Communities. He asks the Ombudsman "Is it possible for you as an Ombudsman of the European Union to start an investigation so the people of Europe could know if racism lies at the core of this exclusion?"

In response, the Ombudsman has asked the European Commission to provide statistics before 31 October 2001 on the proportion of EU citizens who are of ethnic minority origin and the proportion of officials and other servants of the European Communities who are of ethnic minority origin.

Details of the case

The citizen submitted his complaint to the Ombudsman on 16 May 2001, pointing out that while more than 30 million people of ethnic minority origin live in the EU, hardly any of them are employed in the structure of the EU. He underlines the fact that in the United States, ethnic minorities are involved in all facets of government.

Safeguarding the rights laid down in the Nice Charter

The Nice Charter of Fundamental Rights recognises that everyone has the right to work (Article 15) and that discrimination - on the basis of race, colour and ethnic origin, among other elements - 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 of a Community institution or body to respect the rights contained in the Charter may constitute an instance of maladministration. The European Ombudsman has a duty to examine complaints from European citizens about instances of maladministration in the activities of the Community institutions or bodies.

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