

Ombudsman asks Commission to end sex discrimination against seconded national experts

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The European Ombudsman, **Jacob Söderman**, has asked the European Commission to end the sex discrimination that exists in the employment conditions that it imposes on seconded national experts from EU Member States.

The Ombudsman's recommendation follows a complaint that he received from a British citizen. The complainant, a UK civil servant working in London, applied for a secondment to the European Commission. Her employer agreed to support her application and to pay her salary for the duration of her secondment. The complainant wished to be able to work at the Commission on a part-time basis, in order to look after her young child. However, after discovering that the Commission insists that seconded national experts work on a full-time basis, she reluctantly withdrew her application.

The Ombudsman upheld the complainant's claim that the Commission's regulation amounted to sex discrimination. He therefore recommended that:

"The European Commission should abolish its rule prohibiting national experts on secondment to the Commission from working part-time".

The Commission agreed to implement the Ombudsman's recommendation when it proceeds to a general revision of its rules. However the Ombudsman sees no reason why the discriminatory rule should continue to be applicable until then. He has therefore called upon the Commission to abolish this rule by 30 September 2001 at the latest.

The Ombudsman's Draft recommendation can be found on the Internet at:
<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/recommen/en/000242.htm> [Link]

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