

Ombudsman reports Council for failing to apply rules on openness

Press release no. 22/2001 - 05/12/2001

The European Ombudsman, **Jacob Söderman**, has launched a special report on the failure of the Council of the European Union to grant access to certain documents from its meetings on justice and home affairs. They were requested by Statewatch, a UK body fighting for openness and transparency.

In his draft recommendation in March this year, the Ombudsman asked the Council to release all the relevant documents. According to the evidence in the Ombudsman's possession, the Council has so far failed to do this. In his special report to the European Parliament, the Ombudsman restates his recommendation and calls on the Parliament to intervene.

In its complaint, Statewatch also targeted the Council's failure to maintain a list of all the documents that were put before its meetings. The Ombudsman is of the view that the Council should establish such a list and make it available to citizens. This is vital so that citizens can use their right of access to documents properly, he says.

The new Regulation 1049/2001 on access to documents obliges the Council to keep such a register. Mr. Söderman therefore considers that there is no need to pursue this aspect of the case.

The Special Report can be found on the Internet at:

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/cases/specialreport.faces/en/382/html.bookmark> [Link]

For further information, please call Gerhard Grill, Principal Legal Officer, tel. +33 (0) 3 88 17 24 23.