

# 'Jacob Söderman: a dynamic Ombudsman' from Tribune pour l'Europe


**Caption:** The Finn, Jacob Söderman, has his mandate renewed for the post of European Ombudsman.

**Source:** Tribune pour l'Europe. Informations du Parlement européen. Octobre 1999, n° 10. [s.l.]. ISSN 0255 - 8815. "Jacob Söderman : Un Médiateur dynamique", p. 1.

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**Last updated:** 06/07/2016



## Jacob Söderman: a dynamic Ombudsman

Standing against Mr Giorgios Anastassopoulos (former Greek Vice-President of the European Parliament), Mr Jacob Söderman has been re-elected for the next five years.

With a solid background stemming from his legal training and his experience — he was the Union's Ombudsman from October 1995 to October 1999 and the Finnish Ombudsman — Mr Söderman emphasised two essential points during his hearing. The first point was that the Ombudsman must be totally independent in the exercise of his duties in order to guarantee that due account was taken of the grievances of European citizens. The second point was the principle of confidentiality that must be applied to the requests submitted. As we know, the European Ombudsman is responsible for examining cases of maladministration in the running of the Community institutions and bodies.

It should be noted that the number of complaints submitted is constantly increasing and that these complaints touch on problems of various kinds (discrimination on the grounds of nationality, moving to a different Member State, non-payment of retirement pensions, border controls, etc.). In Rome, on 30 September, Mr Söderman had emphasised that the complaints should be 'dealt with in an efficient and consistent manner by the Ombudsman, with total respect for the rights of citizens guaranteed.'

But the essential element described by Mr Söderman during his hearing was the drawing up during his first term of office of a Code of Good Administrative Practice. This aims at promoting the relationship between the Community institutions and the public in the hope of improving the conditions of transparency which are essential for any civil service. The Commission is to deliver its opinion on this Code between now and the end of November.

In addition, Mr Söderman argued in favour of greater access to documents by proposing the establishment of a register designed to inform citizens, to be drawn up under the aegis of the Parliament. To the question of the relationship with and the strengthening of ties with national Ombudsmen, Mr Söderman replied that the Ombudsman system has provided most help to individuals, particularly in Latin America.