



## **Ombudsman makes suggestions to improve the transparency of environmental information about projects financed by the European Investment Bank (EIB)**

News - 10/06/2021

The Ombudsman has set out preliminary findings to the European Investment Bank (EIB) in the context of three ongoing related inquiries into the transparency of environmental information about EIB-financed projects. The preliminary findings include suggestions to the EIB on a series of measures it could take to improve transparency.

The Ombudsman opened the inquiries after receiving a complaint on behalf of three civil society organisations, which sought to access environmental information related to projects financed by the EIB. The complainants were dissatisfied with the information made available by the EIB, and how it subsequently dealt with their complaints about this.

One of the complainants had been refused public access to the minutes of meetings of the EIB's management committee, notably concerning the committee's deliberations related to the decision to finance a biomass project. Based on their attempts to access environmental information concerning projects funded by the EIB in general, the complainants consider that the EIB does not comply with the international rules governing access to environmental information (as set out in the Aarhus Convention) to which the EU has signed up.

The Ombudsman opened inquiries concerning how the EIB deals with environmental information in the context of projects it finances directly, as well as projects that receive



indirect financing, since these are subject to different obligations. The Ombudsman also opened a separate inquiry about access to the meeting minutes requested by one of the complainants.

Based on her inquiry into **projects that the EIB finances directly**, the Ombudsman took the view that the EIB should make public much greater detail about the environmental implications of such projects. Only then, can members of the public attempt to influence ongoing decision-making processes, for instance by making the EIB aware of potential problems in the proposed projects. In her preliminary findings, the Ombudsman made suggestions to this end.

The EIB also relies on other financial institutions to finance a large amount of projects and activities. Based on her inquiry into the transparency of **projects that the EIB finances indirectly**, the Ombudsman took the view that the EIB should do more to ensure that institutions involved in financing these projects also comply with the general transparency commitments of the EIB, in particular concerning environmental information. The Ombudsman set out a series of suggestions with a view to enabling the public to more easily access environmental information and, thereby, hold those responsible for such projects to account.

The Ombudsman has asked the EIB to reply by the end of September.