



## **The European Commission's refusal to grant full public access to documents related to meetings of the EU-Canada Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) committees**

**Case** 1264/2021/ABZ - **Opened on** 26/07/2021 - **Decision on** 22/02/2022 - **Institution concerned** European Commission ( No maladministration found ) |

The complainant sought public access from the European Commission to documents concerning meetings of the Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) committees, which bring together representatives of the EU and Canada to discuss the implementation of the agreement. The Commission withheld access to parts of the documents it identified as falling under the request, invoking exceptions under the EU's law on public access to documents, and arguing that disclosure would undermine international relations and privacy. The Ombudsman inquiry team inspected the documents in question and met with Commission representatives to obtain additional explanations. In view of the wide margin of discretion of the EU institutions in considering whether disclosure could undermine international relations, the Ombudsman considered that the Commission's decision to partially refuse access was not manifestly wrong. The Ombudsman therefore closed the case finding no maladministration. However, she drew attention to the need to ensure transparency, so that there can be informed public debate on international agreements.