

How the European Commission dealt with a request for public access to documents concerning the negotiations for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines

Case 2206/2021/MIG - Opened on 26/01/2022 - Decision on 18/07/2022 - Institution concerned European Commission (No further inquiries justified) |

The complainant, a civil society organisation, sought public access from the European Commission to documents concerning negotiations with pharmaceutical companies on the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines. Following a previous Ombudsman inquiry, the Commission began reviewing more of the documents covered by the request and granted the complainant access to parts of those documents it reviewed, but then asked the complainant to reduce the scope of its request. The complainant considers that, given the significant public interest in the negotiations, the Commission should provide wide access to the documents.

In the course of the inquiry, the Commission issued a decision on the remaining documents to which the complainant was seeking access. It also re-assessed documents (advance purchase agreements) it had previously disclosed in part and granted wider access to them, including by publishing them on its website. Against this background, the Ombudsman found that no further inquiries were justified and closed the case, calling on the Commission to continue its efforts towards greater transparency of the vaccine negotiations.