



How the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) handled a request for public access to documents concerning maritime pollution

Case 129/2022/OAM - Opened on 03/02/2022 - Decision on 06/10/2022 - Institution concerned European Maritime Safety Agency (Solution achieved) |

The complainant asked the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) to grant public access to documents concerning maritime pollution, notably in the context of CleanSeaNet, which is a monitoring system for oil spills and vessel detection. EMSA provided the complainant with various statistical information but failed to provide him with a more detailed breakdown of feedback received following alerts sent via CleanSeaNet. The complainant turned to the Ombudsman, arguing that EMSA had previously published such information and that making such information available is in the public interest.

The Ombudsman took the view that EMSA was wrong to refuse access, based on the reasons it gave. The Ombudsman also noted that EMSA has published similar data in the past and pointed out that the requested data constituted environmental information, which should benefit from greater transparency. Consequently, the Ombudsman proposed as a solution that EMSA reassess the request with a view to granting public access. EMSA accepted the solution proposal and has now published on its website extensive information on CleanSeaNet detections of possible oil spills and verification results for the whole period between 2015 and 2021. The Ombudsman welcomed EMSA's positive response to her solution proposal and closed the case.