



## The time taken by the European Commission to deal with requests for public access to documents

**Case OI/2/2022/OAM - Opened on 04/04/2022 - Recommendation on 24/03/2023 - Institution concerned** European Commission |

The Ombudsman’s own-initiative inquiry looked into how the European Commission deals with requests for public access to documents; in particular, how it complies with the time limits for dealing with requests, which are set out in the EU legislation on public access to documents.

The Ombudsman’s inquiry found that there are systemic and significant delays, particularly in how the Commission deals with requests to review initial decisions on access requests, and that it often fails to meet the time limits set out in the applicable legislation by a considerable amount.

The Ombudsman has consistently taken the view that ‘access delayed is access denied’, as documents and information sought are often time sensitive and can lose relevance to the requester if delays occur. The significant systemic delays and failure by the Commission to comply with the time limits in the legislation amount to maladministration.

While the Ombudsman acknowledged the difficulties faced by the Commission and some of the steps it has already taken, she made a recommendation to the Commission to correct the current situation as a matter of priority. She also made suggestions to address further issues in how it handles access requests.