

Ombudsman opens inquiry into time taken by Commission to deal with access to documents requests

News - 06/04/2022

The Ombudsman has asked the Commission for details on the length of time it takes to deal with public access to documents requests following an increase in complaints regarding delays in the process.

To get an overview of the situation, the Ombudsman asked the Commission how many requests for public access to documents it received in 2021 and the average time it took to deal with them. The Ombudsman also asked for the number of confirmatory requests - when people resubmit the same requests as they are not satisfied with the institution's response - it received in 2021.

The aim of the inquiry is to try to identify a systemic approach for reducing handling time for such requests and is part of the broader goal of supporting the public's fundamental right to access to documents.

The Ombudsman regularly receives access to documents complaints and deals with them under a fast-track procedure. Last year the office published a **guide** for the EU administration on how it can better implement its obligations regarding the public's right to access documents.

The guide says EU institutions should have policies on document publication and retention and should have a 'public register of documents'. It also says that annual statistics should be published on how the institutions handle access to documents requests.