



## Ombudsman asks EIB to improve transparency around the projects it finances

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The Ombudsman has asked the European Investment Bank (EIB) to take several transparency steps to enable the public to more easily see the potential environmental impact of the projects it finances.

Three NGOs had complained that the EIB publishes too little information, and too late, about such projects. As a result, the public has little chance to draw attention to potential environmental problems before the EIB takes its financing decisions.

The Ombudsman has asked the EIB to publish lists of the project documents - including internal ones - that contain environmental information. This will enable the public to request public access to such documents. The Ombudsman has also asked the EIB to publish information on the existence of all projects, rather than regularly withholding this information through its current confidentiality practices.

The EIB should also clearly point out whenever a project concerns 'emissions into the environment', because citizens have greater transparency rights when this is the case. The EIB is also asked to publish its online project summaries in the language of the country concerned.

For projects that the EIB finances through other banks, the Ombudsman has asked the EIB to actively publish a list of all the projects that have a significant impact on the environment. The EIB should also publish information on how it - and the banks that it works with - decide whether a project has 'a significant impact on the environment'. This determines whether the



public can rely on the transparency right under the relevant law on access to information on environmental matters.

The Ombudsman finally suggested that the EIB reconsider how it handles specific requests for public access to documents. This followed a separate inquiry into the EIB's refusal to give public access to minutes of the EIB's Management Committee, during which the possible financing of a biomass project in Spain was discussed.

The Ombudsman has asked the EIB to reply to her suggestions within six months.