



How the European Commission dealt with a request for public access to documents concerning sanctions against Russia

Case 1288/2022/SF - Opened on 11/07/2022 - Decision on 11/07/2023 - Institution concerned European Commission (Solution achieved) |

The complainant asked the European Commission to grant public access to documents concerning sanctions against Russia. The Commission failed to take a final decision on the complainant's request within the applicable timeframe, and did so only after the Ombudsman opened an inquiry. In its 'confirmatory decision', the Commission refused access to the documents it identified. In doing so, it invoked an exception under the EU legislation on public access to documents, arguing that disclosure could undermine the protection of the public interest as regards international relations, defence and military matters.

Based on an inspection of the documents in question by the Ombudsman inquiry team, the Ombudsman was not convinced by the arguments given by the Commission for withholding access. She thus made a proposal for a solution that the Commission review its initial position with a view to granting the widest possible access.

The Commission accepted the Ombudsman's proposal for a solution and the Ombudsman closed the case. While the Ombudsman welcomed the Commission's positive reply to her



solution proposal, she expressed concern about the time the Commission took to provide public access to the requested documents.