



## **Ombudsman calls for improved transparency around EU recovery funds**

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The Ombudsman has urged the Commission to treat access to document requests concerning EU recovery funds with greater consistency and to better explain its reasoning if it decides not release the asked-for information.

The Ombudsman's findings followed a complaint by a journalist looking for documents related to how the Commission evaluated the Danish and Swedish plans for money allocated under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF).

When refusing access, the Commission relied on an exception under the EU's transparency law but its arguments were vague and general in nature. The exception allows for documents to not be disclosed if there is a risk that financial, monetary or economic policy is undermined. The Ombudsman noted that the Danish and Swedish authorities – when consulted by the Commission on the access requests - did not identify this as a risk.

The inquiry also showed that the Commission treated the two access requests in a contradictory manner although the wording of each was identical. The request concerning documents related to Sweden's recovery plan was interpreted more narrowly than the request concerning Denmark's plan.



The Ombudsman noted that the RRF forms part of an unprecedented stimulus package meant to help economic recovery after the pandemic and its significance should be matched with high transparency standards.

She asked the Commission to take this into account when dealing with future access requests related to the recovery funds, noting the importance of the public being able to follow how the funds are being used and whether promised milestones have been met.

The Ombudsman has also received complaints concerning access requests related to the French, Dutch and German recovery plans.