The Ombudsman has made a series of suggestions to the European Investment Bank (EIB) to improve its handling of access to documents requests and ensure greater transparency.

In particular, the EIB should assess requests for access to documents on their own merit and not in light of whether it already plans to publish those documents later.

When refusing access, the EIB should explain its reasoning in more detail, specifying how exactly disclosure could undermine interests protected by transparency rules.

Finally, when consulting third parties during an analysis, the EIB should inform them that the public should be granted the widest possible access to EU documents and that reasons for refusal can only be based on exceptions contained in the Bank’s transparency policy.

The Ombudsman’s suggestions are the result of an inquiry into how the EIB handled a request for public access to the summary of a project it is financing on the modernisation of an electricity distribution network in Poland. The Ombudsman found that the EIB’s reasons to deny access were not sufficient to invoke the protection of commercial interests exception in its transparency policy.