
MEPs urge new EU Commission to address systematic delays in public access to documents

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- MEPs want the Commission to urgently resolve the issue of delays in granting public access
 - Commission should disclose documents related to the Emission Trading System
 - Transparency concerns on how the Commission interacts with tobacco industry
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The Petitions Committee commends the EU Ombudsman's work in 2023 on access to documents, fundamental rights, ethical issues and accountability in EU institutions.

On Thursday, the Committee on Petitions adopted with 31 votes in favour, two against and no abstentions, a report evaluating the work of EU Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly in 2023.

Access to documents

Following the [Ombudsman special report](#) that revealed maladministration in the systematic delays of the Commission to grant public access to documents, the Petitions Committee expects a clear commitment by the new Commission to resolve this situation as a matter of urgency.

Stressing the Commission's refusal to disclose documents concerning environmental emissions under the [EU Emission Trading System](#), and to implement the [Ombudsman's proposed solution](#), MEPs call on the EU Executive to guarantee public access to this information. MEPs also criticised the Commission's failure to grant public access to emails and messages related to Covid-19 vaccine purchases, among other issues.

They urge the Council to engage in negotiations to revise [Regulation \(EC\) No 1049/2001](#) on document access and to update the definition of EU documents for the digital age, as well as to improve public access.

Persons with disabilities

On the rights of persons with disabilities, MEPs regret the failure by all Member States to fully comply with the [European Accessibility Act](#) adopted in 2019. They call on the Ombudsman to investigate this situation which severely undermines the rights of persons with disabilities.

Ethical issues, transparency and accountability

MEPs raised transparency concerns over the Commission's [interactions with the tobacco industry](#). They remind the Commission that the EU has signed the WTO's [Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#), which obliges the Union and its member states to protect health policy-making from the interests of the tobacco industry.

Finally, EU institutions should pay close attention to lobbying activities that might compromise transparency and increase the risk of conflict of interest, MEPs noted, referencing the progress made in transparency with the updated MEPs' Code of Conduct following the Qatargate scandal.

Quote

"Today's vote represents overwhelming endorsement of the Ombudsman's 2023 annual report and a strong commitment to uphold transparency, accountability and the highest standard of integrity across all EU Institutions, bodies, offices and agencies. This majority sends a clear message that together we stand by the principles of good governance, essential to maintaining the trust of our citizens," said rapporteur [Alex Agius Saliba \(S&D, MT\)](#).

Next steps

The draft resolution will be tabled for a vote in plenary on December 16. The [election of the new Ombudsman](#) for the 2024-2029 term by the European Parliament is also set to take place during the December session.

Background

Each year, the Ombudsman submits a report to Parliament on the outcome of such inquiries. The top three concerns in the inquiries in 2023 were transparency, accountability and public access to documents and information (34.2%), culture of service (21.5%) and recruitment of EU civil servants (15.3%).

Further information

[Committee on Petitions](#)

[Procedure file](#)


[Ombudsman annual report for 2023](#)

[Study on Regulation 1049/2001 on the right of access to documents](#)

Contacts

Alessio INCORVAIA

Press Officer

 (+32) 2 28 32864 (BXL)

 (+32) 470 68 84 61

 alessio.incorvaia@europarl.europa.eu

 peti-press@europarl.europa.eu

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