Public access to documents – report covering the years 2022 - 2024

2025/2137(INI) - 10/03/2026 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 602 votes to 9, with 8 abstentions, a resolution on public access to documents - report covering the years 2022 - 2024.

Annual Report

Parliament noted that in 2024, the Commission received **6 938 initial access to document requests and 641 confirmatory applications**, representing a 7% increase in confirmatory applications compared to 2023. To respond to these confirmatory applications, the Commission decided to grant partial or full access to documents in 51% of cases in 2022, 85% of cases in 2023 and 60% of cases in 2024.

Among the Union institutions, the Commission received the largest number of requests for access to documents, with its Secretariat-General and Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety receiving the most requests.

In 2024, the Commission issued **5 542 initial-stage replies and 305 confirmatory replies**, while the other EU institutions have also made progress in their efforts to improve transparency. Members welcomed these trends but noted that in 85 % of the reviewed cases, the Commission did not take a decision within the legal time limits and that, in 60 % of the cases, the delay amounted to more than 60 working days.

Recent developments

Members are convinced that a **strong and consistent commitment** to public access to documents and transparency is a fundamental pillar of the EU's democratic system, as it enhances citizens' engagement and participation and contributes to good governance and sound financial management. Given the current context of threats and hybrid warfare, it is important to help combat conspiracy narratives and disinformation.

Parliament is concerned about **several issues**: (i) the persistent overclassification of official documents by the institutions, (ii) frequent refusals of access, (iii) the frequent use of exceptions to refuse full access to documents, (iv) difficulties in accessing documents from certain Union agencies (in particular the European Union Asylum Agency), (v) difficulties in obtaining detailed information from the Commission on the implementation and application of Union law, (vi) the Commission's tendency to respond to confirmatory applications systematically late, (vii) the fact that several legislative proposals put forward by the Commission were submitted without an impact assessment, (viii) the ongoing lack of transparency within the Council, and (ix) the lack of transparency shown by the Commission in publishing the purchase contracts for COVID-19 vaccines.

Members called on the Commission to ensure the transparency of decisions taken concerning the **EU budget**, in particular with regard to EU funding to non-EU countries. They urged the **Council** to improve its rules and procedures on transparency, including the accessibility and classification of legislative documents. They also insisted on the imperative of ensuring full transparency throughout the negotiation process of **international agreements** by granting Members of the European Parliament timely and unrestricted access to all relevant documents.

Recommendations

Parliament invited the Commission and the institutions to:

- adopt accessible procedures for handling **complaints** about refusals and measures to ensure that citizens can challenge decisions where appropriate;

- present an **updated and more ambitious proposal** that incorporates the case law of the CJEU and the European Court of Human Rights, takes into account the recommendations of Parliament, and includes sanctions for failure to respect transparency rules;

- find an immediate solution to the **systemic delays** in handling confirmatory applications;

- publish on their respective websites **advice** on what information should be included in an application for access to documents;

- allow the public to benefit from broad access to **environmental information**, in accordance with the Aarhus Convention;

- develop mandatory and continuing **training programmes** for all relevant staff, in particular those who manage documents and decision-making processes;

- ensure that **decisions denying** access requests are taken following an objective and individual case-by-case assessment, communicated without undue delay and accompanied by a reasoned and specific justification;

- establish an **independent oversight mechanism** that regularly reviews classification and declassification practices;

- ensure **full and swift follow-up** of the Ombudsman's decisions and recommendations following complaints about refusal of access to document requests;

- adopt faster, more accessible and simplified **procedures for handling complaints** against refusals to grant access, as well as measures to ensure that citizens can challenge decisions if necessary;

- grant access to **trilogue** documents, such as the Council's general guidelines, four-columns documents, agendas, summaries of outcomes and minutes of trilogues.

Members stressed that **the European Parliament** should lead by example by proactively disclosing documents in accordance with its established practice on legislative transparency. Ensuring that citizens can understand, follow in detail, and participate in the legislative process is a legal obligation imposed by the Treaties and the Charter, as well as a fundamental requirement for democratic oversight and democracy in general.