TRANSPARENCY (ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS)

The institutions of the European Union have the responsibility of conducting their work as transparently as possible.

Article 15(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union gives EU citizens, as well as any natural or legal person residing or having its registered office in an EU country, the right of access to documents of the institutions.

Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents implements this right of access to documents.

However, it also provides for two types of exceptions:

- absolute exceptions, covering cases where access is automatically refused (for reasons of public security, defence, international relations, economic, monetary or financial policy, or privacy);
- relative exceptions, covering cases where access is refused (for example, to protect the commercial interests of a firm or a private individual, legal advice, the decision-making process or ongoing investigations), except where there is an overriding public interest in disclosure.

Access to documents is facilitated by means of an electronic public register of documents.

In their 2003 ‘Interinstitutional agreement on better law-Making’, the EU institutions agreed to improve transparency and the accessibility of information to the public.

SEE ALSO

- Democratic deficit
- European governance
- Recasting of legislation
- Simplification of legislation
- Transparency and access to documents on the Council of the European Union's website
- European Commission's transparency portal