

Access Europe

A Journalist's Guide to Making Cross-Border Freedom of Information Requests



By Kevin Gill from Los Angeles, CA, United States - [Globe - Europe From Space](#). CC BY 2.0

Latest update, September 2026. To inform updates, please send necessary corrections, updates, links etc. to alexander.fanta@ftm.nl

Foreword

Freedom of Information laws exist in almost every country in Europe. For journalists who know how to use them, they offer access to a vast trove of government information and untold stories.

But many journalists never use these laws to access information. Even among those who do, the vast majority never requests information beyond their home country.

This guide is meant to offer journalists a tool to harness the power of the right to information across European borders. It offers a country-by-country introduction into local law and how to use it, as well as its limitations.

The guide is meant to offer journalists the means to make requests in other countries on their own, but also provide additional resources and contacts in cases when this proves challenging.

The idea for this compendium was born at the 2025 Dataharvest conference. I would like to thank the team at Arena for Journalism in Europe, and in particular Jelena Prtorić, for helping to develop this idea into a living document and contributing with expertise and editing prowess.

I would also like to thank the more than 30 journalists, legal scholars and practitioners who contributed their expertise to the creation of this guide. Their local knowledge unlocks new possibilities for journalistic investigations that reach beyond countries, and where comparative research may provide new insight.

The guide is, and will remain, a work-in-progress. Some places are better charted than others, and, as ever, the law and situation on the ground are evolving.

Yet, never wishing to let the perfect get in the way of the good, I hope the guide as it is now will become a useful resource for journalists exploring the right to information.

Alexander Fanta

September 2026



How do I make a request?

Requests can be made by any European citizen or legal resident via e-mail, post, or request platforms such as [AsktheEU.org](https://asktheeu.org) or [FragdenStaat.de](https://fragdenstaat.de). There are few formal requirements — all you need to do is send a message mentioning you are making an access to documents request, and specify what documents you are looking for.

Requesters are frequently asked for postal addresses as a means to verify they are European residents.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes. You have the right to make requests in all official languages of the European Union. Although, in practice, making requests in English may speed up the process.

Does it cost money?

No, making requests and obtaining documents is always free.

Under what law can I make requests?

The law governing access to documents requests is [Regulation 1049/2001](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2001/1049/oj). It applies to the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, as well as EU agencies such as the European Food Safety Authority, the European Medicines Agency and Frontex.

Other institutions of the EU, such as the [European Central Bank](https://www.ecb.europa.eu) and the European Investment Bank, have their own rules.

What is the time frame for a response?

The law gives the institution 15 working days to provide a reply, which can be extended by another 15 working days “in exceptional circumstances” when detailed reasons are given.

In practice, however, the European Commission frequently takes a lot longer to provide replies. In case of long delays, you may make a complaint to the [European Ombudsman](https://ombudsman.europa.eu), which can increase the pressure on the institution to reply.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Requesters can file an administrative appeal (known as a “confirmatory application”) in cases where their request is rejected, documents are heavily redacted, or they are waiting for their reply beyond the official deadline. Appeals must be filed within 15 working days of receiving the initial reply. Appeals are usually handled by a more senior person within the same institution.

In case the appeal does not work, requesters can bring a legal challenge to the Court of Justice of the European Union. However, this route is likely costly and decisions take 11 months on average.

Another option, free of cost, is a complaint with the [European Ombudsman](#). The Ombudsman cannot legally compel the institution to release documents, but is allowed to investigate the matter and pressure the institution for their release. The Ombudsman also makes public its decisions, which can become part of a story.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

- **Lobbying documents:** The European Commission is lobbied by thousands of companies, trade associations and other stakeholders. Since the beginning of 2025, the Commission proactively publishes short summaries of high-level lobby meetings on its website. But quite often, additional documents can be obtained via access requests — shedding light on lobby input into the law-making process. For instance, an [investigation](#) based on documents obtained through FOI showed how tech lobbyists secured a secrecy provision in EU law to block public access to critical information on data centres’ environmental impact.
- **Council working documents:** A ruling by the EU’s General Court in a case in 2021 has led to more transparency on the positions taken by member states behind closed doors in the Council of the EU. Working documents with details of the position that individual countries take on legislative files may be obtained through access to documents requests — allowing tracking of the legislative footprint of individual governments.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Here are a few examples of things that journalists have tried to get over the years, but where the chances of success are very low:

- **Commission investigations:** The European Commission says in its rules of procedure that anything from its own ongoing investigations — for instance, in anti-trust and state aid procedures, or investigations of Big Tech companies as part of the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act — are off limits to access

requests. Two court challenges against the rules of procedure are pending, but in the meantime there is little hope to obtain such documents.

- **MEP's spending:** How Members of the European Parliament spend taxpayer money is largely off limits. For instance, a few years ago a group of journalists unsuccessfully sued to find out how [MEPs spend their general expenditure allowance](#), which allocates them a generous €4,950 per month as blanket reimbursement for costs. More recently, journalists with Germany's FragdenStaat scored a victory when suing for the [travel expenses of a Greek MEP](#). But they had to demonstrate a public interest, which can be tricky to do.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Dear *[institution/name]*

Under the right of access to documents in the EU treaties, as developed in Regulation 1049/2001, I am requesting documents which contain the following information:

- XX
- YY

Kind regards,

[name]

[postal address]

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Each EU institution has its own point of contact for access to documents requests.

European Commission: Sg-Acc-Doc@ec.europa.eu

Note: Within the Commission, it is usually best to send requests to the Department-General which is most likely to hold the documents in question. But when in doubt, e-mails to the address above will normally be re-routed to the right place.

European Parliament: AccesDocs@europarl.europa.eu

Council of the EU: Access@consilium.europa.eu

If you make your request via a platform, such as [AsktheEU](#), you don't need to know the e-mail address, as these are added automatically.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

Access Info: [Guide on Access to EU Documents](#)

European Ombudsman: [Q&A on the right of public access to documents](#)

FragdenStaat.de: [Five things you need to know about FOI-ing to the EU](#)

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Alexander Fanta: alexander.fanta@ftm.nl

Access Info Europe: info@access-info.org

**How do I make a request?**

FOI requests can be submitted in writing (email, post, or in-person) to any public authority holding the information. Requests must clearly identify:

- the requesting person (name and contact details),
- the information requested,
- the preferred format (inspection, copy, electronic).

Most institutions accept email requests, and many have designated FOI officers. No justification or explanation of purpose is required.

Information about how to make requests is typically found in the section on official websites called “Programi i Transparences”. There you can find the contact details of the FOI officer and template, if there is one. Using a template is not mandatory, but attaching a copy of an ID card is.

Can I make requests in English?

In practice, requests should be submitted in Albanian. While some institutions may understand English, there is no legal obligation for authorities to process requests in foreign languages. For reliability, submitting in Albanian is strongly recommended.

Does it cost money?

Submitting a request is free of charge.

Fees may apply only to reproduction costs (e.g. printing or copying), but:

- electronic documents are generally provided free of charge,
- fees must be proportionate and communicated in advance.

Under what law can I make requests?

Requests are made under:

- Law No. [119/2014](#) “On the Right to Information” as amended in 2023

This law applies broadly to:

- central and local government institutions,
- independent institutions,
- public enterprises,
- private entities exercising public functions or using public funds (to a limited extent).
- The institutions that fall under the law have a "Programi i Transparences" section on their website with the contacts of the FOI officer (for example: https://idp.al/programi_i_transparences/)

What is the time frame for a response?

- 10 working days from receipt of the request.
- The deadline may be extended by up to 5 additional working days in complex cases (the authority must notify the requester in writing).

Failure to respond within the deadline is considered a refusal.

Sometimes the institutions respond to clarify the request. In some cases, this is done on purpose to extend the deadline, since the 10-day timeframe applies only once you have responded to the request for clarification.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

If an FOI request is explicitly rejected or the authority fails to respond within the legal deadline, the law provides a two-step appeal mechanism.

First step: Administrative appeal - find the template [here](#).

The requester may file an administrative complaint with the [Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data \(IDP\)](#).

- The appeal must be submitted within 30 days from the date of refusal or from the expiry of the response deadline.
- The complaint can be filed electronically and does not require legal representation.
- The Commissioner reviews both procedural compliance (deadlines, justification) and the substance of the refusal, and may order the authority to disclose the requested

information, partially or in full.

- You will always receive a response from the IDP Commissioner.

Second step: Judicial appeal

If the public authority fails to implement the Commissioner's decision, or if the requester disagrees with the Commissioner's ruling, the case can be brought before the Administrative Court.

- Court proceedings focus on the legality of the refusal and the proportionality of any restrictions applied.

In practice, the Commissioner plays a central role in enforcing access to information rights and is often an effective and relatively fast remedy for journalists. Many disputes are resolved at this stage without the need for court action, although enforcement of decisions by public bodies can still be uneven.

Examples of successful requests (practice in Albania)

In Albania, journalists and civil society organisations have obtained information through FOI, but often after delays, partial disclosure, or appeals. Successful requests typically concern documents that are already formally produced and difficult for institutions to deny.

In practice, journalists have most often obtained:

- Public contracts and procurement documentation, especially tender notices, winning bids, contract values, and annexes published or registered in official systems; detailed implementation reports are less consistently disclosed.
- Concession and PPP documents, mainly framework contracts, feasibility studies, and Council of Ministers decisions; full financial models and risk assessments are frequently withheld.
- Data on state advertising and public funding to media outlets, particularly aggregated figures; annual allocations, or contracts with state bodies, though detailed breakdowns may require appeals.
- Staffing numbers and salary scales in public institutions, usually at an aggregate level; individual-level data is commonly refused on personal data grounds.
- Inspection reports, administrative decisions, and fines, especially where these have already produced legal or financial effects.

- Official correspondence and decisions of regulators, when narrowly framed (e.g. final decisions, notifications, or formal opinions), rather than internal deliberations.

FOI has been used — often in combination with leaks, court records, and financial data — in investigations related to public spending, procurement irregularities, concessions, media ownership structures, regulatory capture, and environmental permitting.

However, full and timely disclosure without appeal remains the exception rather than the rule, and persistence is often required.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Certain categories of requests are frequently refused or heavily redacted, even when public interest is clear. Requests are most frequently refused, delayed, or heavily redacted in the following cases:

- Personal data, which is often interpreted expansively and used as a default refusal ground. This includes information related to public officials, decision-makers, and beneficiaries of public funds, even when disclosure would clearly serve the public interest. The lack of consistent public-interest balancing leads to over-redaction.
- Internal deliberations and “working documents”, such as drafts, internal correspondence, emails, meeting notes, and preparatory materials. Authorities routinely argue these are excluded, effectively shielding how decisions are made and limiting scrutiny of policy formation.
- Classified information, national security, or commercial secrecy, frequently invoked without detailed or case-specific justification. “Trade secrets” are often cited broadly, especially in infrastructure, energy, and extractive sectors, even where public funds or public risk are involved.
- Documents held by private companies executing public contracts, concessions, or PPPs, where authorities claim the information is “private” or “outside their possession.” In practice, this significantly restricts access to implementation data, performance monitoring, and compliance reporting.
- Information said not to exist in written form, particularly where decisions are taken through informal meetings, verbal instructions, or undocumented coordination between institutions. This is a recurring obstacle in politically sensitive cases.
- Detailed financial and impact documentation, including cost-benefit analyses, risk-sharing models, feasibility studies, and monitoring or audit reports related to concessions and PPPs. These are among the most contested categories and are

often disclosed only partially, if at all.

Over-classification, non-response, and reliance on data protection arguments are among the most common obstacles.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Dear [Name of institution],

Pursuant to Law No. 119/2014 “On the Right to Information”, I hereby request access to the following information/documents:

– [Clearly and precisely describe the information requested]

I request that the information be provided in electronic format, where possible.

Please inform me in advance of any reproduction costs, in accordance with the law.

Kind regards,

[Full name]

[Email address / contact details]

Requests do not need to justify purpose or public interest.

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

FOI requests are addressed directly to the institution holding the information. The websites of some of the most commonly requested bodies can be found [via this link](#) and [include](#):

- Line ministries (finance, infrastructure, health, environment)
- Municipalities (mayor’s office or FOI coordinator)
- Independent regulators (media, energy, telecommunications, competition)
- Public procurement and concession authorities
- Public enterprises (utilities, transport, infrastructure operators)

Each institution is legally required to designate an FOI coordinator and publish contact details on its website, though compliance varies.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in Albania?

- Commissioner for the Right to Information and Protection of Personal Data:
 - appeal forms, decisions, guidance, annual reports Link <https://idp.al/informimi/>; <https://idp.al/rekomandime-informimi/>; <https://idp.al/per-individin/>
-
- Civil society monitoring reports on access to information and transparency
<https://www.respublica.org.al/>
- Training materials and legal analyses produced by media freedom and anti-corruption organisations
- Case law of the Administrative Courts on FOI disputes
<https://gjykata.gov.al/rrethi-tiran%C3%AB/gjykata-e-shkall%C3%ABs-s%C3%AB-par%C3%AB-e-juridiksionit-t%C3%AB-pergjithsh%C3%ABm-tiran%C3%AB/c%C3%ABshtjet-gjyq%C3%ABsore/c%C3%ABshtjet-civile/>
<https://gjykata.gov.al/rrethi-tiran%C3%AB/gjykata-e-shkall%C3%ABs-s%C3%AB-par%C3%AB-e-juridiksionit-t%C3%AB-pergjithsh%C3%ABm-tiran%C3%AB/programi-i-transparences/kordinatori-per-te-drejtat-e-informimit/>

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in Albania?

For complex or sensitive cases, journalists commonly seek assistance from:

- Media freedom and transparency-focused civil society organisations:
- Investigative journalism networks active in Albania
- Lawyers and legal experts specialising in access to information, media law, and data protection

Local expertise is particularly useful when navigating appeals, data protection objections, or non-compliance with decisions. Contacts below:

- SCiDEV (info@scidevcenter.org)
- BIRN Albania (kristina.voko@biralbania.org)
- Albanian Center for Quality Journalism (rodenhoxha@gmail.com)
- Faktoje (klodianakapa@faktoje.al)
- Association of Journalists of Albania Isa Myzyraj (isamyzyraj@gmail.com);

- Citizens.al, Lorin Kadiu (lorinkadiu94@gmail.com)
- ResPublic Center, Dorian Matlija (dorian.matlija@gmail.com)
- AIS/open data albania (aranita.brahaj@ais.al)



How do I make a request?

Requests can be made by e-mail, but also by post, telephone or in person. [FragdenStaat.at](https://www.fragdenstaat.at) offers a portal that allows users to easily make requests.

The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice require applicants to use their web forms, here: [MoF](#) and [MoJ](#).

Can I make requests in English?

Requests are usually made in German, but some authorities might accept requests made in English. Languages by recognised ethnic minorities, such as Hungarians, Croatians and Slovaks, may also be used for requests. In practice, however, this may complicate things.

Does it cost money?

Making requests is free.

Under what law can I make requests?

Austria's freedom of information law is called [Informationsfreiheitsgesetz](#). It came into force in September 2025. The law covers not just public authorities on all levels of government (federal, regional and local) but also a variety of public entities and companies in which the state owns at least a 50 per cent stake.

When the information sought concerns the environment, requesters are required to use Austria's environmental information law ("Umweltinformationsgesetz") as a legal basis.

What is the time frame for a response?

The official deadline is four weeks, which can be extended by another four weeks if a clear reason is given.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

The only way to appeal against a public authority rejecting a request for information is by bringing a lawsuit at an administrative court. Before being able to bring an appeal, a requester first has to ask for an appealable official decision ("Bescheid"). Once this is done, a formal writ of appeal has to be prepared. A lawyer is not needed, but it is advisable to seek help with preparing the writ. Bringing the appeal is free for journalists, but the

exception for journalists (acting in the public interest) must be invoked in the appeal. A court decision likely takes a few months.

A different process applies to state-owned corporations. No official decision is necessary, the reply can be directly appealed to the appropriate court.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

During the first few months of the law, requesters were [able to obtain a variety of official documents](#), including instructions to registrars officiating at weddings, documents related to a meeting with Afghan government officials, and information related to software procurement.

Austria's freedom of information law also mandates authorities to proactively disclose a wide range of documents, such as information about public procurement worth more than 100,000 euros. The information is disclosed on a central government website, data.gv.at. However, the data quality is varying and it can be hard to find information.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

As Austria's freedom of information law is quite new, the boundaries are yet to be explored by upcoming court decisions. For instance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently rejected a request for text messages exchanged by the Austrian foreign minister with her colleagues in the EU's Council of Foreign Affairs. According to the ministry, text messages were not to be considered documents under the law. A lawsuit is pending.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren,

Hiermit beantrage ich gemäß § 7ff Informationsfreiheitsgesetz (IFG) die Erteilung folgender Information:

- X
- Y
- Z

Für den Fall einer Informationsverweigerung beantrage ich hiermit einen Bescheid gemäß § 11 IFG.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

[Name]

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Austrian Federal Chancellery (prime minister's office): buergerservice@bka.gv.at

Foreign ministry: post@bmeia.gv.at

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

The official translation of the law can be found [here](#).

Forum Informationsfreiheit, the NGO that runs the request platform [FragdenStaat.at](https://fragdenstaat.at), offers a [guide for citizens](#) on how to make requests (in German).

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

The organisation [Forum Informationsfreiheit](https://forum-informationsfreiheit.at) (which runs [FragdenStaat.at](https://fragdenstaat.at)) may be able to help in certain cases, yet it is constrained by limited resources.

Belgium

How to make a request?

Requests can be made by any European citizen or legal resident via e-mail, post or request [platforms such as Transparencia](#) (if the request is sensitive, ensure it is not publicly visible.) There are few formal requirements — all you need to do is send a message mentioning you are making an access to documents request, and specify what documents you are looking for. Be precise and use a timeframe. It's important to cite the correct law and to include a postal address, since requesters must provide one.

Requests can be made in the official language of the region (Flanders = Dutch, Wallonie = French, Brussels Capital Region = Dutch or French), although English also works in practice.

Legal basis

In Belgium, the legal basis depends on the region where the administration is located

[Flanders Region](#) and its lower authorities (provinces, communities, etc)

[Wallonia](#) (and its lower authorities - provinces, communes, etc.), along with Ost-Belgium (which falls under Wallonia and federal transparency legislation)

[Brussels Capital Region](#) (and its 19 communities)

As Belgium is a federal state, [some institutions are federal](#) (e.g., justice, finance, defence)

Timelines

The law gives institutions, depending on their region, 20 or 30 working days to provide a reply, which can be extended by another 15 working days “in exceptional circumstances” when detailed reasons are given.

In practice, however, institutions reply on the very last day or, when the request is complex, announce a delay.

How to appeal

How you appeal depends on the region. You don't have to make an elaborate legal argument, it suffices to state you wish to appeal against the decision. However, it can be useful to mention relevant jurisdiction. The appeal is handled in writing with no options for a hearing.

Below you will find relevant websites for the Commissions for access to documents in different regions:

[Flanders Region](#)

[Brussels Capital Region](#)

[Wallonie](#)

[Federal Institutions](#)

Read the procedure carefully. When lodging a *federal* appeal, you must take two steps on the same day. First, request a reconsideration from the authority that refused the information. On the same day, send the appeals body a request for advice, enclosing your reconsideration request. Failure to do so will render your application inadmissible. [Please note that as of 1 July 2026, this committee is no longer handling requests for advice (because the members have not been reappointed), meaning that this avenue of appeal is **de facto** (temporarily) lost.]

For (federal) environmental issues [there is a different commission](#) with more power. The committee does not merely issue advice, but may take a decision to release the documents when public authorities refuse to do so.

Requesters can file an administrative appeal in case their request is rejected, documents are heavily redacted, or they are waiting for their reply beyond the official deadline. Appeals are usually handled by independent administrative executive councils. However, sometimes these bodies are composed of civil servants or even volunteers.

In case the appeal isn't successful, requesters can bring a legal challenge before the Council of State. However, this route is likely costly (between 3,000 and 4,000 euro for a lawyer) and decisions usually take at least one year.

What you (almost certainly) can't get

There are a number of grounds for exception (state security, economic and commercial interests, internal communications, etc.), but this list is contained in the legislation (links above) — try to avoid possible exceptions when wording the questions.

Templates

Dear *[institution/name]*

Under the right of access to documents as developed in article 32 of the Constitution and (depending of the region use here a different legislation, see above), I am requesting documents which contain the following information:

- XX
- YY

Kind regards,

[name]

[postal address]

Note on the language: Depending on the region, you can submit your request in Dutch (Flanders, Brussels, Federal), French (Walloon region, Brussels, Federal) or German (Ost Belgium). In practice, an English request also works.

Contact addresses

You have to address each FOIA request to the highest civil servant of the organisation

Additional resources

VVJ (Journalist Association): [guidelines and examples of an appeal](#)

Contact points

Steven@apache.be (in emergency, try first the steps in these guidelines)

Bosnia and Herzegovina

How do I make a request?

Requests in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be made in different ways. At the state and entity-level institutions, a signed request sent via email can be enough. However, some institutions still demand a request signed by hand and sent via post, which can slow down the access to information. Usually, the best thing is to call the institution in advance and check their demands. When it comes to cantonal or municipal institutions, they prefer physical submissions.

Can I make requests in English?

The request can be made in English, but the authorities are not obliged to reply to it. The official languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina are Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian, and both the Latin and Serbian Cyrillic scripts are in official use. In order to have the legally correct request, it's best to include the translated version as well.

Does it cost money?

No. The access to information is free based on the existing laws. Copies of up to 10 pages are free; beyond this, you have to pay the copying expenses yourself. The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, used to charge for the CD when giving video materials from trials, but now they are also sending these via a download link.

Under what law can I make requests?

There are four FOI laws in the country. Yes, four.

- State Level: Regulated by the brand new Law on Freedom of Access to Information at the Level of Institutions of BiH (2023). This overhauled the original 2000 law to align more closely with EU standards,
- Federation of BiH (FBiH): Regulated by the entity-level FBiH Law on Freedom of Access to Information,
- Republika Srpska (RS): Regulated by the RS Law on Free Access to Information,
- Law on Freedom of Access to Information in Brčko District of BiH, which was officially adopted and published in the Official Gazette (Službeni glasnik Brčko distrikta BiH No. 38/2025).

What is the time frame for a response?

15 days from the moment an institution has received the request. In that period, according to all the laws, the institution must reply with the information or a rejection. In the case that the requested information is extensive and requires more time, the institution can extend the deadline for another 15 days, but it has to notify the sender.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

If your Freedom of Information (FOI) request is rejected or ignored by a state-level institution, you must file an appeal with the Appeals Council under the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina within 15 days of receiving the decision. The Appeals Council acts as the internal second-instance administrative body responsible for reviewing the legality of the refusal. Should this Council also reject your appeal, your administrative avenues are exhausted, leaving you with a final option to launch a formal administrative dispute before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina within 30 days.

Within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), the appeal process follows a traditional multi-tiered administrative track. When a local or a lower-level body denies access to information, you have 15 days to submit a written appeal to the head of the competent second-instance public body, which is typically the line ministry or superior administrative authority overseeing that specific sector. If this second-instance authority upholds the rejection, you must transition out of the administrative system and file an administrative-judicial lawsuit before the relevant Cantonal Court within 30 days.

In Republika Srpska (RS), the procedure depends heavily on the organisational tier of the public body that holds the information. For lower-level institutions that operate under an explicit supervisor, you have 15 days to file an appeal directly to that supervising authority or ministry. However, if the initial rejection came from a top-tier body like a Ministry itself, the internal administrative route is not available; in these cases, your only legal remedy is to file an administrative dispute directly before the competent District Court within the statutory 30-day window.

In Brčko District, the framework is more restrictive because its localised FOI law completely removed the right to a second-instance administrative review. If a District institution issues a rejection or defaults through administrative silence, there is no administrative council or supervising body available for an appeal. Your sole legal recourse is to escalate the matter immediately to the judiciary by filing an administrative-judicial lawsuit directly with the Basic Court of Brčko District within 30 days.

Independent of these formal jurisdictional tracks, you can also leverage two parallel oversight mechanisms to apply pressure on non-compliant institutions. Filing a complaint with the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsmen of BiH triggers an independent investigation, and while they cannot legally compel disclosure, their formal public recommendations carry significant political and media weight. Alternatively, you can submit a request to the relevant Administrative Inspectorate under the Ministry of Justice; inspectors possess strict legal powers to audit the non-compliant institution, force officials to issue a decision, and initiate misdemeanor penalties against individual public servants who unlawfully block access to data.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

You can usually get information which is of public interest. For example, the indictments, verdicts, budgets, government-held statistical information, public procurement contracts and so on... again, it really depends on the institution.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

One of the most significant structural blind spots in Bosnia's FOI framework is the total absence of an independent Information Commissioner. Unlike its regional peers, BiH relies on the Human Rights Ombudsman, who can only issue non-binding recommendations, and slow-moving administrative inspectorates. This leaves the system without a centralised, executive authority capable of issuing immediate fines or compelling non-compliant institutions to disclose withheld documents.

Another major loophole lies in the vague, expanded exception clauses introduced in recent legislative updates, particularly at the state level. The wording governing what constitutes "harm to national security, defense, or monetary interests" remains intentionally broad. This lack of precise legal definition allows public authorities to classify standard administrative or operational data as exempt, using national security as a convenient blanket shield to avoid scrutiny.

Requests regarding public procurement contracts and tender annexes are also systematically blocked. Public bodies routinely weaponise the "confidential commercial interests" exception, claiming that exposing contract details or bidding documents would harm the competitive edge of private contractors. They consistently fail to apply the mandatory Public Interest Test, which should prioritise transparency in use of public funds over private commercial concerns.

Similarly, requests detailing the salaries, bonuses, and travel expenses of public officials are frequently denied under the guise of "personal data protection". Public institutions regularly misapply data protection laws to hide discretionary spending, official vehicle logs, and performance bonuses. They argue that these records constitute private financial data, deliberately ignoring the legal standard that individuals funded by the public budget have a heavily reduced right to privacy regarding their official compensation.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Each of the institutions has its own template, which can usually be found under the contact button or under the access to information button on the website of each of the institutions.

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Unfortunately, no. Defining the most frequently asked institutions depends on the media organisation or journalist. Contacts can be found on the website of each of the institutions.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

A lot of information is already available online, it is simply buried in different publications. I have found that different AI tools help indicate if the information is already out, which often saves a lot of time and hustle.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Azem Kurtic (azem.kurtic@birnnetwork.org)

Bulgaria

How do I make a request?

Information may be sought in the form of oral or written request/template. You can submit it also by email (to the address officially published on the relevant body website) or via the [ePlatform](#). The latter is maintained by the Ministry of e-governance.

In a written request, you have to include your full name or name and address of the organisation (legal entity), a description of the information that you want to get access to and an address for correspondence. It's not required, but you can also add an email/phone number and indicate how you want to receive the requested information (see the original and receive a copy, just a paper copy, by email etc.)

Can I make requests in English?

There is a general rule that in legal matters Bulgarian is the language that should be used. In practice, some public authorities also respond to requests in English, but they are not obliged to do so. We recommend translating your request in Bulgarian before submitting it.

Does it cost money?

In principle, access to public information is free of charge. Payment is only required to cover the actual costs of copying/printing or the material bearer. The expenses incurred for granting access to public information shall be recovered in accordance with tariffs determined by the Minister of Finance.

Under what law can I make requests?

In Bulgaria the requests are made under the Access to Public Information Act (APIA), which is translated to English by us [here](#).

What is the time frame for a response?

Usually, the relevant public authority should answer in the shortest time possible, but no longer than 14 days after the request was registered in the relevant body.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

The decisions granting access to public information or refusals can be appealed before the competent administrative court, under the provisions of the APIA and the Administrative Procedure Code, within 14-days after the applicant received the decision or denial.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

You can have a look at the Success Stories section on our website [here](#).

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

There is a sample template on our website [here](#) (in Bulgarian).

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

You can look up the most frequently requested institutions on the [Platform for Access to Public Information](#). According to their website, the most requested ones are the [Ministry of Interior](#), the Municipal Administration - [Sofia Municipality](#) and the [Ministry of Education and Science](#).

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

You can look up the Access to Public Information Act on [our website](#), which does have an English translation of the law.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Everyone can visit our [website](#) to find useful information. If you have other questions, you can check the [FAQ section](#) of our website.

You can also refer your case to us: lawyers@aip-bg.org or office@aip-bg.org



Cyprus

How do I make a request?

There is no standardised format for submitting a request. Article 9 of the Law establishes the form, content, and conditions for submitting requests for access to information. Requests for access to information must be submitted in written form (including electronically), include the applicant's name, contact details, and a description of the requested information, and may specify the preferred format of access. The law also allows public authorities to refuse requests that are abusive, manifestly unreasonable, or repetitive within a short period.

Can I make requests in English?

It is not restricted by legislation. In the Republic of Cyprus, the official languages, according to the Constitution, are Greek and Turkish. Many services also communicate or respond in English. A public authority may respond in another language (e.g. English), or it may state that you should communicate in one of the official languages of the Republic. There is no available data on the language choice practice followed by Cypriot public authorities.

Does it cost money?

Article 11 of the Law allows for the possibility of imposing fees, but this provision has not been further specified through secondary legislation or implementing regulations. In current practice, fees do not appear to have been requested. Nevertheless, no official data is available to confirm this practice.

Under what law can I make requests?

You can submit requests under the Access to Information of the Public Sector Law of 2017 (Law 184(I)/2017, Cyprus).

Title in English: THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR LAWS OF 2017 TO 2018 ([Link on Website](#))

Original in Greek language: Ο περί του Δικαιώματος Πρόσβασης σε Πληροφορίες του Δημόσιου Τομέα Νόμος του 2017 (184(I)/2017)

(https://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/2017_1_184/full.html)

Although the law was adopted in 2017, its implementation was set to take place three years later. The delay was attributed to the lack of the necessary institutional and administrative structures.

It entered into full force on 22 December 2020 following the appointment of the [Information Commissioner](#), who acts as an independent oversight authority responsible for examining

complaints, monitoring compliance by public authorities, and issuing binding decisions on access to information.

What is the time frame for a response?

Based on Article 12, a public authority must respond to a request as soon as possible and no later than 30 days from the date of receipt of the application. This period may be extended by up to a further 30 days in cases where the request is complex, or a large volume of information is involved. In such cases, the applicant must be informed in writing of the extension, and the reasons for the delay.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

You can submit a complaint to the Information Commissioner if your request is rejected or if you receive no response within the legal time limit (which is treated as a refusal). The complaint should generally be filed within 60 days from the date of the rejection or from the expiry of the response deadline in cases where no reply was received. The Information Commissioner has the authority to examine the complaint, request relevant information from the public authority, and issue a binding decision requiring the authority to provide the requested information if the complaint is upheld.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Collaborators of CIReN have submitted requests with some success. The most notable case involved a request to the Police for information on whether a study had been conducted prior to the installation of traffic lights. The request revealed that no actual study had been carried out, only a general reference to accident-prone areas within the road network.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Personal data protection remains the most common ground for refusal. Requests involving identifiable individuals are frequently rejected, with public authorities relying extensively on data protection legislation, including GDPR. In practice, the balancing test between privacy and public interest is often applied restrictively, limiting disclosure even in cases of clear public interest. Moreover, personal data arguments are often extended to cover companies, alongside claims of confidentiality obligations or commercial secrecy, particularly in cases where issues of evident public interest are raised. A recent indicative example concerns anonymous donations by business actors to charitable initiatives led by the spouse of the President of the Republic, where transparency concerns were outweighed by non-disclosure arguments.

Across several reports and decisions, the most cited reasons include:

- Protection of personal data (GDPR)
- Confidentiality obligations
- Commercial secrecy

Findings from the Information Commissioner point to a system still struggling to function effectively. Complaints are increasing, yet public authorities continue to rely heavily on personal data and confidentiality arguments, often without carrying out a meaningful public interest assessment. Delays, non-responses, and inconsistent practices suggest that, despite the legal framework, transparency remains uneven and, in many cases, reactive rather than institutionalised.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

To: *[Name of Public Authority]*

Address / Email: *[Official's contact details]*

Subject: *Request for Access to Information under Law 184(I)/2017*

Applicant Details

Name: *[Full Name]*

Contact Address: *[Postal Address or Email Address]*

Request

I hereby submit a request for access to information pursuant to the The Right of Access to Information of the Public Sector Laws of 2017 to 2018 (Cyprus).

I request access to the following information:

[Provide a clear and specific description of the information requested.

Include dates, documents, departments, or any relevant details to help identify the records.]

Preferred Method of Access (optional)

Please provide the requested information in the following format (select one or more):

- ☐ *Copy in electronic format*
- ☐ *Copy in printed form*
- ☐ *Access to inspect the relevant records*

☐ *Summary or digest of the information*

Fees (if applicable)

If any fees apply in accordance with Article 11 of the Law, please inform me in advance of:

- *the amount, and*
- *the method of payment*

Additional Remarks (optional)

[Any clarifications that may assist in processing the request]

Date: [DD/MM/YYYY]

Signature (if applicable): _____

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

While no official ranking exists, oversight practice indicates that requests may concern law enforcement, health regulation, corporate transparency, migration policies, social and environmental governance, with refusal patterns consistently linked to personal data, confidentiality, and administrative constraints.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

Information Commissioner's [website](#)

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

[Oxygono](#)

[OPEK](#)

Cyprus Bar Association: Alexia Kountouri (akountouri@tplaw.com.cy)

Nicoletta Epaminonda (nicoletta@ldlaw.com.cy), <https://ldlaw.com.cy/meet-our-team/>

Czechia

How do I make a request?

You can send it via e-mail to the official email address of the public body (or company governed by the public body). This address should be published on the website of the institution.

You have to state that you are exercising your right under the freedom of information law (106/1999 col.). You have to provide your name, surname, date of birth and postal address.

Can I make requests in English?

No, you are required to do it in Czech.

Does it cost money?

It depends; you can be asked to pay for costs created by your request. You will, of course, not be forced to pay. However, if you don't pay, the information will not be provided.

Under what law can I make requests?

106/1999 col. (general requests) or 123/1998 col. (access to information connected to the environment).

What is the time frame for a response?

15 to 25 days

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

To appeal a rejected or ignored freedom of information request in Czechia, you must file an appeal directly with the same public body that initially denied or ignored your request.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

In most of the cases you'll be provided court judgements and public contracts.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Requests having political implications are often stonewalled as the wrongful rejection of the request is not penalised.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Nope, I can't provide legal advice.

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

It's a lot of work, but you can Google something like "elektronická podatelna" site:.cz

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

There are legal commentaries for the FOIA, most recent is [this one](#).

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

<https://www.transparency.cz/>

<https://frankbold.org/poradna>

Croatia

How do I make a request?

The requests for access to information can be made per e-mail, but also by post, or telephone or in person (in practice, I'd recommend sending an email request). You can also submit it via the website [Imamo pravo znati](https://www.imamo-pravo-znati.hr/) ("We Have the Right to Know").

Requests should include: the name and address of the public authority being contacted; information identifying what is being requested; and your (the requester's) name, surname and address (if you wish to receive your documents by post). It is also good to clarify how you'd like to receive the information (electronically, by post). The person submitting the request is not obliged to state their reasons for requesting the information.

In practice, some institutions might ask you for your postal address even when you ask for your documents to be sent electronically. In that case, you can reiterate that you wish to receive the documents electronically, although, if you're sending the request via email, I'd recommend including your address straight away as it tends to speed up the process. The website Imamo pravo znati doesn't recommend adding your postal address to the requests submitted via their website.

Can I make requests in English?

Requests are usually made in Croatian. While the Access to Information Act doesn't specify a required language, it mentions that all the requesters — domestic or foreign — must be treated equally under the principle of non-discrimination. In theory, this extends to requests in other languages — but in practice, institutions may struggle with foreign-language submissions, and this could lead to delays or no response.

Does it cost money?

Generally, making a request is free, but public bodies have the right to charge a fee for the actual material costs incurred by providing information and for the costs of supplying the requested information (e.g. asking for physical copies and/or large amounts of data). In practice, most electronic or straightforward requests wouldn't incur such a charge.

Under what law can I make requests?

The access to information is regulated by the **Law on the Right of Access to Information** (*Zakon o pravu na pristup informacijama*, ZPPI), adopted by the Croatian Parliament in 2013 and last amended in 2022 (Official Gazette Nos. 25/13, 85/15, 69/22). You can find the text [here](#).

The law covers state administration bodies and other state bodies; bodies of local and regional authorities; legal entities with public powers and other persons to whom public

powers have been transferred; legal entities founded by the Republic of Croatia or a local or regional self-government unit; legal entities and other persons performing public service, legal entities that are fully financed from the state budget or from the budget of local and regional self-government units, as well as companies in which the Republic of Croatia and local and regional authorities have a (majority) ownership.

The law also mandates authorities to proactively disclose a wide range of documents on their websites, such as information about strategies, financing, awarded subsidies, minutes and action points from official meetings, and similar. The information is collected on the central [open data](#) ("Portal otvorenih podataka") website. However, the quantity of data there can be overwhelming and hard to navigate, and the quality varies depending on the type of data and the authority publishing it.

The Environmental Protection Act (OG 80/13, 153/13) (Zakon o zaštiti okoliša) specifically establishes the obligation of public authorities regarding the availability of environmental information. In case a public authority isn't subject to the Access to Information law, but is subject to the Environmental Protection Act, you can invoke the EPA.

What is the time frame for a response?

The deadline for responding to requests is 15 working days in Croatia. If the authority deems your request "incomplete" or "unclear", they will invite you to clarify or correct it within five days of you receiving the request for correction.

If a public authority receives a request for access to information, doesn't have the information, but knows where it can be found, it is obliged to transfer the request to the owner of the information no later than eight days from receipt of the request, and to notify the applicant.

The deadline can be extended by 15 days in certain cases (for instance, if you requested a large number of documents or some information must be redacted), and the public authority should notify you of it.

In practice, you might need to send multiple follow ups and the authorities might end up ignoring you completely.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

If your request is ignored or the authority denies you access to information, you can file a complaint with the **Information Commission** (*Povjerenik za informiranje*), via the institution you initially submitted the FOI request to. The Commissioner is an independent body elected by Parliament. You can reach the office at pristupinfo.hr.

No further complaint can be filed against the Commissioner's decision, but an administrative dispute may be initiated before the High Administrative Court of the Republic

of Croatia (Visoki upravni Sud). In case the Court rules in your favour (within 90 days), the procedure before the Commissioner is repeated.

Also, if you think the information provided wasn't complete, you can ask for it to be completed or collected within 15 days from receipt of the information.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

A couple of successful requests available via the ***Imamo pravo znati*** website are listed below.

A request made by a journalist to the Ministry of Defence about the Contracts with Media Services: [HERE](#)

A request submitted to the Ministry of Environmental Transition by an environmental NGO about the composition of the commission overseeing the environmental impact assessment for a solar energy project: [HERE](#)

An environmental impact study on a tuna farming operation from the Croatian Hydrographic Institute was successfully obtained by a researcher: [HERE](#)

A requester successfully obtained the Ministry of Science and Education's decisions on funding for higher education institutions: [HERE](#)

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Some of the main grounds for refusal are personal data protection, as well as “commercial information” and trade secrets.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

(Subject line): Zahtjev za pristup informacijama

Add the name and the address of the institution you're addressing the request to.

Poštovani,

Temeljem Zakona o pravu na pristup informacijama, ljubazno molim da mi dostavite sljedeće informacije:

- (info 1)*
- (info 2)*
- (info 3)*
-*

Molim Vas da mi dostavite informacije u elektronskom obliku (here you're asking for the info to be sent to you electronically)

Unaprijed hvala.

S poštovanjem,

Your Name, Your Surname

(Address – technically it shouldn't be necessary, but in my experience it speeds things up),

U (name of the city), date

You can also find an official template [here](#) (but you're not obliged to use it).

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

You can find the official list of public authorities maintained by the Information Commissioner [here](#).

The website allows you to filter the public bodies by “Osnivač” (“Founding body”; Republic of Croatia, regional or local authorities, etc.), “Pravni status” (“Legal status”; such as public institution, courts, agencies, public companies etc.), or “Djelatnost” (“Activity” ; such as economy, health, culture, tourism, etc.)

The website [Imamo pravo znati](#) allows you to search the public body by name and send them a message directly.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

Platform [Imam Pravo Znati](#) allows you to make centralised requests to the public authorities in Croatia. The platform functions just like [Ask the EU](#), and allows you to create a profile, find the contacts of authorities easily, and browse requests.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

[Gong](#): a non-profit based in Zagreb, Croatia, has had a lot of experience with submitting FOIs in Croatia. (gong@gong.hr)

[Information Commissioner's Office](#) (*Povjerenik za informiranje*): the official oversight body. They publish annual reports, guidance documents, and are usually happy to help (ppi@pristupinfo.hr)

You are welcome to reach out to me if you need help: jelena.prtoric@protonmail.com

Denmark

How do I make a request?

By letter, email, phone call or in person.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes, Danish authorities usually handle requests in English.

Does it cost money?

Not to ask, but a fee *can* be applied for hard copies (10 DKK for the first page, 1 DKK for the following copies). In digital form, there's no fee if the document contains fewer than 100 pages; 100 DKK if more, or if potential documents are created by data extraction. If extraction is made by a third party their claimed costs can be added. NOTE: fees *can* be applied, often they are not.

Under what law can I make requests?

"Offentlighedsloven" (Law on public access). A tip: If the requested document/s is/are difficult to identify or very extensive, ask for a "journaloversigt", a list of docs relevant for the request.

What is the time frame for a response?

Within 7 working days, within 14 days if extensive or complex. NOTE: Media has a kind of fast lane (Offentlighedsloven §1) and can expect a quicker response than 7 days. Authorities also have an obligation to help journalists formulate a request to identify relevant data.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Appeal to the authority, which should forward the request to a relevant appeal body if the rejection is maintained. The final possibility is to turn to "[Folketingets Ombudsman](#)" (the Danish Parliamentary Ombudsman).

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Requests for access to documents is in many newsrooms a daily journalistic routine.

One example was the release of documents related to the proposed PFAS-ban — all in all 105.3 MB. Besides comments and hearing replies from industry, the batches also contained mails between case officers in different institutions. On the Resilience and Recovery Fund (NextEU cross border project Recovery Files) 123.8 MB were released by the Ministry of Finance.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Several: Preparations for legislation (!), documents that serve members of the government (“ministerbetjeningsdokumenter”), documents exchanged between ministers and individual members of the Parliament, courts, the royal house, calendars, criminal cases, staff cases, plus privacy, foreign relations, defence matters, etc.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Any request should contain information that makes it possible for the authorities to identify the relevant information and a theme (pollution of... or time span for... or reports about...)

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs: aktindsigt@um.dk

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

“Miljøoplysningsloven” (Law on environmental information, Danish implementation of the Aarhus Convention and EU-directive 2003/4/EC)

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

A citizen's [guide](#) at Borger.dk (Citizens’ helpdesk run by the Ministry for Justice), “[Gravercentret](#).” (Danish Centre for Investigative Journalism, a helpdesk and knowledge centre focused to serve small and medium sized media). The centre has published an extensive [guide](#) on FOI in Denmark by legal expert Oluf Jørgensen, free to download.

Also, by the same author “[Offentlighed i Norden](#)” a comparative analysis of access to information and data in the Nordic countries published in 2014 by Nordicom, a centre at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Free to download including a summary in English.

Staffan Dahllöf: staffan@freelancekontoret.dk | Phone/Signal +45 21 46 49 92



How do I make a request?

By contacting the relevant ministry, authority or governmental institution. The general e-mail address (often info@institution.ee) usually suffices. The institution might also have a "Contact us" form on the website. Standard mail is probably inefficient, as most documents in Estonia are created digitally.

Many documents are already available in document registries (*dokumendiregister* in Estonian), which can be found on the webpages of the institutions. A search for "dokumendiregister" on the webpage should lead you to the correct place. An Estonian programmer has also made a [web utility](#) that helps with search for different registries (this is entirely in Estonian).

Can I make requests in English?

The only official language in Estonia is Estonian, but government institutions do not usually have problems answering in English. Just in case, you can use the word "teabenõue" (request for information) in the subject line or body text.

The documents will almost certainly be in Estonian, unless they are diplomatic correspondence.

Does it cost money?

For normal requests, no. If the request requires a very large amount of work — for example when contacting Statistics Estonia with very specific requests — you can be charged. For printouts and copies, 0.19 euros per page may be charged for documents exceeding 20 pages. The first 20 pages are free.

Under what law can I make requests?

The Public Information Act (Estonian short version of name: AvTS), English translation available [here](#).

What is the time frame for a response?

Officially: promptly, but no later than 5 working days. This can be (and often is) extended by an additional 15 working days. In any case, the institution should promptly notify you on whether and how the request will be processed.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

You can turn to the [Data Protection Inspectorate](#) or start court proceedings in an Administrative Court.

Complaints to the Data Protection Authority must be in Estonian. To make a complaint, the applicant must state clearly from which authority they seek information, provide a copy of their request and the reply of the authority, and confirm that no court action is ongoing for the information in question.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Asking for one or two specific documents that you know exist (via verifying through document registry). Requesting data on a very specific topic.

The requests are often redirected to the Communications department who are usually rather helpful. Try to be as clear as possible on what you are requesting.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

There are some blind spots. Institutions can quite freely redact or deny access. Documents that contain or have contained business secrets at any point in time might be very hard to access. Documents created by Estonian government-held companies are not released very often. Random emails are not usually registered.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Simple and short: I wish to access document X. I can be contacted through email at Y.

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

You can start with the Government: valitsus.ee. They have very few documents themselves, but they might be able to redirect you to the correct authority.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

The Data Protection Inspectorate is rather helpful.



Under what law can I make requests?

The right of access to public information is governed by the [Act on the Openness of Government Activities](#).

How do I make a request? Can you provide a template for a typical request?

FOI requests in Finland can be made informally. A request can be submitted by email, by letter, by phone or in person. There is no requirement to mention the law explicitly, but doing so usually helps. You should describe the documents or information you are requesting as precisely as possible. Requests are made directly to the authority that holds the information.

The authorities, in turn, are obliged to advise and assist the requester, utilising resources such as official diaries and indexes to help narrow the scope.

In most cases, the person making the request is not required to provide identification or a reason, unless these details are deemed necessary for the authority's exercise of discretion or to determine the applicant's legal right of access to the document.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes. Authorities are generally able to receive and process requests in English, especially at the national level. However, there is no absolute legal right to receive responses in English. In practice, ministries, agencies, and large cities usually comply. Smaller municipalities or authorities may respond in Finnish or Swedish.

Does it cost money?

According to Section 9 of the Act, everyone has the right of access to an official document in the public domain. The **request is free of charge**.

Fees cannot be charged for searching the documents. Fees may be charged for redacting classified documents and copying or scanning paper documents. The law specifically states that documents that are held in digital form must be delivered free of charge by email, and paper documents must be shown for inspection at the authorities' premises free of charge.

Also, when the requested document falls within the legal duty of the institution to give advice, no charge is levied.

However, **a fee may be charged if the retrieval of a document entails special costs** (due to the scope of the request, or workload caused by an unspecific request). A fee corresponding to the costs may also be charged for copies and printouts of the document.

Under what law can I make requests?

Requests are made under the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999). Requests to general courts are made under the Act on the Publicity of Court Proceedings in General Courts (370/2007). The latter might prove useful, for example, in police investigation reports since less information will usually be redacted under the special law applied to documents in court proceedings, than under the general transparency law applied to the same documents when they are held by the police.

What is the time frame for a response?

As soon as possible, usually within a few days and no later than 14 days for straightforward requests, and up to one month if the request is complex. Delays must be justified. This is enshrined in Section 14 of the Act on the Openness of Government Activity.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

A decision to refuse access to information must always be justified. If access is denied or ignored, you can and should request a formal written decision. This decision can be appealed to an Administrative Court (subject to a court fee). Appeals can ultimately reach the Supreme Administrative Court. Journalists often succeed on appeal.

It is also possible to file a complaint with the Parliamentary Ombudsman or the Chancellor of Justice if a public authority, an official or a private party performing a public task has not complied with the law or fulfilled its duty ([Complaints | The Ombudsman](#)). Unlike proceedings before the administrative court, a complaint is not subject to fee.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Common successful requests include meeting minutes of public bodies, internal memoranda, and even informal email correspondence between civil servants relating to their official duties; salary, benefit, and expense information of public officials; and completed criminal investigation files held by the police.

In principle, all recorded information held by authorities — including entire datasets and databases — constitutes a public document and may only be withheld on the basis of specific exemptions set out in law. Where documents contain classified or sensitive information, authorities are generally required to release them in redacted form rather than refuse access outright.

Can you give examples of loopholes in commonly rejected requests?

Requests are commonly rejected or restricted when they concern ongoing criminal investigations; matters of national security or foreign policy; sensitive personal data lacking a sufficient public-interest justification; internal preparatory documents prior to a final decision; or trade secrets submitted by private companies.

A significant blind spot is that Finland's transparency legislation generally does not apply to limited liability companies, even when they are wholly owned by public authorities that are otherwise subject to the openness regime.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am requesting access to public documents under the Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999).

I request copies of the following documents:

[brief and specific description]

*I prefer electronic copies by email. If documents are not public, I request a copy
Please let me know if any part of the request is unclear or requires clarification.*

Kind regards,

[Name]

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

- **Ministry of Justice** [FOI guidance in English](#)
- [Legal Journalists' Knowledge Base](#) ("Oikeustoimittajan tietopankki" in Finnish) includes summaries of important transparency-related statutes, key decisions affecting public access to information, official complaints and statements by the association, and other practical reference links (in Finnish only)
- **Public Access in Municipal Authorities' Activities:** a guidance page from Kuntaliitto (Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities) explaining how the principle of openness and access to documents applies within municipal government and is mostly applicable to all public authorities (in [Finnish](#) and [Swedish](#))

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Requests are made directly to the authority holding the information. They may be addressed either to a specific official or to the institution more generally. As a matter of best practice, requests should be sent by email to the authority's central registry (kirjaamo in Finnish), which is responsible for the formal handling of incoming documents.

Registry contact details are published on the authority's website and typically follow formats: kirjaamo@[authority].fi, [authority]@[authority].fi, or kirjaamo.[authority]@gov.fi.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Journalists in Finland are generally open to informal peer support on FOI matters. You can for example contact me jarno.liski@iki.fi



How do I make a request?

In France, this right is framed as a right to access administrative documents rather than a broad right to information. The safest approach is to ask for specific existing documents.

French law defines “administrative documents” quite broadly. Article L300-2 CRPA lists files, reports, studies, minutes, statistics, instructions, circulars, notes, replies from ministries, correspondence, opinions, forecasts, source code, and decisions. They can be in written format, sound/visual recording, digital or IT format. Even handwritten meeting notes, or WhatsApp/text messages can be administrative documents if they were produced or received by an administration as part of its public-service mission.

Address the request to the authority that holds the document, ideally to its PRADA — *personne responsable de l'accès aux documents administratifs* — the official in charge of access-to-documents requests. The CADA directory lists hundreds of PRADA contacts and is updated monthly.

You can either navigate it [here](#), or download the database of PRADAs [here](#) (csv form).

You do not need to explain why you want the document. The right applies regardless of nationality and without having to explain your personal interest in the case. You should be precise in your request: specify the document, period, decision, public contract, project, location, authority, or file reference. Under French law, if the authority does not hold the document but knows another public authority does, it must forward the request and inform you.

Requests can be sent by email or post; sometimes there will be an online contact form with the PRADA profile.

Alternatively you can use [Ma Dada](#), the French FOI request platform, launched in 2019 by Open Knowledge France.

It helps users identify the right public authority, formulate a request, send it, and track its status online instead of managing the process through a personal inbox.

The platform has a searchable directory of public authorities (at the time of writing, its homepage lists 51,911 authorities and 50,981 requests). This is useful because finding the correct administration or contact point is often one of the main practical obstacles in France.

By default, requests made through Ma Dada are public: the request, correspondence and documents received can be visible to other users. This creates a useful public archive, helps avoid duplicate requests, and allows you to check whether someone has already obtained a document before you requested it (if access was granted, the document will be

downloadable from the platform in most cases). In practice, visibility may also make some administrations less comfortable ignoring a request, although this is not a guarantee. The public record can also be useful later if you need to show that the administration delayed, refused, or gave inconsistent answers.

The tradeoff is that it can reveal an investigation angle before publication. But for sensitive reporting, Ma Dada offers ways to keep requests private for a period, including through its [pro/group request features](#).

For occasional users, MaDada is easier than writing a request from scratch, finding the right email, tracking deadlines manually, and figuring out the wording. This is especially useful for journalists unfamiliar with French administrative language.

That being said, some administrations may reply by separate email, post, phone, or by asking you to use another portal. That may interrupt the publicly available record of the exchange and require manual follow-up.

Some administrations are not aware of the law. So sometimes it's worth calling them and making them aware of the legal obligations.

Template for a typical request

Subject: Demande de communication de documents administratifs

Madame, Monsieur,

Au titre du droit d'accès aux documents administratifs consacré par la loi n° 78-753 du 17 juillet 1978, je sollicite la communication des documents suivants:

[When the requests touches on environmental matters, add: , l'article 7 de la Charte de l'environnement, les articles L. 124-1 et suivants du Code de l'environnement et la directive 2003/4/CE concernant l'accès du public à l'information en matière d'environnement]

- [Precise name of the document or type of document]*
- [Relevant time period]*
- [Project/Procurement procedure/Decision/Contract (etc.) in question]*
- [Any useful reference: permit number, decision date, etc.]*

Je souhaite recevoir ces documents par voie électronique, de préférence dans un format ouvert, réutilisable et exploitable lorsque cela est possible.

Si certains passages ne sont pas communicables, je vous remercie de me transmettre une version occultée, conformément au principe de communication après occultation des mentions protégées.

Je vous remercie par avance.

Veuillez agréer, Madame, Monsieur, l'expression de mes salutations distinguées.

[Name]

[Email]

[Postal address useful especially for formal follow-up/CADA]

Can I make requests in English?

A request in English may be understood and processed, especially by central bodies or international-facing institutions, but it is safer to send a short French request. French law says the use of French is prescribed in exchanges between the public and the administration. Keep in mind that requests in French already take time to process; using another language is unlikely to make the process smoother.

Does it cost money?

Electronic communication is free when the document is available electronically; so is on-site consultation.

On rare occasions, fees may be charged only for reproduction and postage, for example for paper copies or physical media. In that case, the requester must be informed of the total cost, and advance payment may be required. Staff time for searching, reproducing or sending the documents cannot be charged.

Legal costs may arise if the case later goes to court (not the initial administrative court request, but in case of appeal of an administrative court decision or at the Conseil d'Etat stage, where you will need a lawyer).

Under what law can I make requests?

Short answer: L311-1 du Code des relations entre le public et l'administration (CRPA)

Historically, this right comes from the law n° 78-753 of 17 July 1978, that created the « Cada » (Commission d'Accès aux Documents Administratifs), often still informally called the "Cada law". The 1978 law has since been transferred into the CRPA (Code des relations entre le public et l'administration).

The main legal basis for access to information in France is Book III of the Code des relations entre le public et l'administration (CRPA), especially Articles L300-1 and following + L311-1 and following. Article L311-1 says administrations must publish online or communicate administrative documents they hold to people who request them, subject to legal exemptions.

Environmental information is covered by specific access rules in the Code de l'environnement, especially Articles L124-1 to L124-8. These provisions reflect France's obligations under the Aarhus Convention on public access to environmental information.

What is the time frame for a response?

The administration has one calendar month from receipt of the request. If it does not answer within one month (which happens with a lot of the administrative authorities), silence counts as an implicit refusal. That is only the beginning of a fascinating journey.

Here's the timeline before litigation (see « How can I appeal » for more explanations of each step)

Day 0 — You send a FOI request to the administration.

A month after — Silence = implicit refusal (or you received a refusal earlier)

Within 2 months after that refusal — You refer the matter to CADA. After CADA is seized, it should issue an opinion, legally within one month, though in practice it can take longer. According to a survey in 2025, the average CADA processing time for 2024 was 66 days.

After a new refusal, or two months after CADA registered your appeal: if the administration has still not disclosed the document or explicitly confirmed its refusal, the administration's silence counts as an implicit confirmation of refusal. Then — within two months of that new refusal — you can go to the administrative court.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Level one 1: the CADA

After a refusal or after being ignored for a month, the first step is to refer to the CADA (Commission d'Accès aux Documents Administratifs).

How to do your request to the CADA:

You should usually refer the matter to CADA within two months of either an explicit refusal or an implicit refusal, meaning one month of silence from the administration. Missing this deadline can make the CADA referral inadmissible and may also prevent you from later escalating the case to the administrative court.

The referral is free and can be made online, by email, or by post. You must include the original request and, if applicable, the refusal.

CADA contact:

Commission d'accès aux documents administratifs

20 avenue de Ségur

75007 Paris

Email: cada@cada.fr

(If you made your request through Ma Dada, you can continue on that platform for the CADA step)

The CADA is supposed to issue its opinion within one month of registering the appeal. In practice, CADA processing can take longer.

In practice, the authority may send the documents, partially disclose them with redactions, maintain its refusal, or simply remain silent.

Important: a favourable CADA opinion is not legally binding on the administration. It is persuasive, and often useful (sometimes it even works!), but it does not itself force disclosure. If the administration still refuses, the next step is the administrative court. Note that the CADA route is normally a compulsory preliminary step before litigation.

Before going to court, it is often worth sending one final short follow-up to the PRADA/legal department of the authority after a favourable CADA opinion.

Example:

« La CADA ayant rendu un avis favorable à la communication des documents demandés [name of the document/date of initial request], je vous remercie de bien vouloir me les transmettre sous huit jours, le cas échéant après occultation des seules mentions protégées. À défaut, j'envisagerai un recours devant le tribunal administratif compétent. »

This is not mandatory, but it can sometimes unlock the file and it creates a clear paper trail.

Level 2: Administrative court

After CADA is seized, the administration's refusal may be confirmed either explicitly, through a new refusal, or implicitly, if it remains silent for two months from the date CADA registered your appeal. This confirmed refusal (not the original one) is the decision you challenge before the administrative court, and it sets the starting point for court deadlines. (In ordinary cases, court appeals against administrative refusals are subject to a two-month deadline after the refusal, so do not wait.)

In principle, this means that you can bring the case before the competent *tribunal administratif* once the two-month period after CADA registration has passed, even if the CADA has not yet issued its opinion. In practice, many requesters wait for CADA's opinion, especially if they expect it to be favourable, because it can strengthen the court filing.

At this stage, you are usually around three months after the initial request, often longer: one month for the first implicit refusal, then the CADA stage, then the confirmed refusal stage.

This appeal is usually a request to annul the refusal to communicate documents, often with a request that the judge order the administration to disclose them.

The competent court is usually *the tribunal administratif* in whose territorial area the refusing authority has its legal seat — for example, Paris for a ministry based in Paris, Lyon for the Rhône prefecture, or Marseille for the city of Marseille. The court is determined by the administration that refused disclosure, not by the requester's nationality or place of residence.

How to appeal to the administrative court?

You do not need a lawyer to go to the administrative court. In practice, the court filing should ask the judge to annul the administration's confirmed refusal and to order disclosure of the requested documents, possibly after redaction of legally protected information. The file should include the original request, proof that it was sent, the refusal or proof of silence, the CADA referral, CADA's acknowledgement of registration, CADA's opinion if available, and any proof of the later refusal or continued silence by the administration.

If you can use the online platform [Télérecours citoyens](#) (accessible through FranceConnect login) you can file directly online. If not, (for foreign journalists who cannot access FranceConnect), the case can usually be filed by post or directly with the court registry. Keep copies of everything and clearly identify the decision you are challenging: the confirmed refusal after the CADA stage, not only the first refusal.

Template

« Je demande au tribunal administratif d'annuler la décision par laquelle [name of the authority] a refusé de me communiquer les documents administratifs sollicités le [date], malgré la saisine préalable de la CADA le [date] et l'avis rendu le [date, if applicable].

Je demande également qu'il soit enjoint à [name of the authority] de me communiquer ces documents, le cas échéant après occultation des seules mentions légalement protégées, dans un délai fixé par le tribunal. »

Attach a clean chronology and all proof. Ideally:

- the original FOI request;
- proof of sending, such as email headers, postal receipt, platform confirmation, or Ma Dada page;
- any explicit refusal from the administration;
- your CADA appeal;
- the CADA registration acknowledgement;

- the CADA opinion, if already received;
- any later refusal or proof of silence after CADA;
- the list of documents still missing;
- a short explanation of why the documents are administrative documents and why no exemption applies, or why redaction would be enough to avoid disclosures of legally protected information.

There is no guaranteed deadline for the *tribunal administratif* to decide. As a rough benchmark, French administrative courts reported an average judgment time of around 11 months in 2024, but the timing can vary depending on the court, the complexity of the case, and whether the administration contests the request. FOI cases can therefore take many months, and sometimes longer.

What if I lose?

If the *tribunal administratif* rejects your case, you can try a *pourvoi en cassation* before the Conseil d'État. This is not a full third examination of the facts: the Conseil d'État mainly checks whether the lower court correctly applied the law and respected procedural rules. Again, the ordinary deadline to start a « *pourvoi en cassation* » is generally 2 months from notification of the appeal judgment. You will need a specialised lawyer admitted to practise before the Conseil d'État.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

You will find many successful requests examples available on the Ma Dada platform. Here are some selected examples, from the easiest win to the trickiest cases:

Quick win: local grant data released without CADA (One week)

[Here](#)'s an easy success, where the CADA was not even needed.

In January 2024, Association Transparence Citoyenne asked the Bouches-du-Rhône departmental council for the lists of grants awarded by the department for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023. The request was part of a wider batch sent to 96 authorities. The requester specifically asked for the documents in electronic, reusable format.

The department replied within a week, and provided three Excel files.

When the CADA is enough: Macron's payslips obtained after an initial silence (With a push from the CADA, 3 months)

In February 2024, former journalist Xavier Berne asked the Présidence de la République for President Emmanuel Macron's payslips for December 2023 and January 2024. The request

was initially ignored: after a month of silence, it was treated as an implicit refusal, and the requester referred the case to CADA through Ma Dada.

The referral was successful. In May 2024, the documents were provided: the two payslips were uploaded to the Ma Dada request page. See [here](#).

Turning FOI into open data: Alexandre Léchenet's IPS school inequality case (CADA + administrative court, 3 years)

In 2019, journalist Alexandre Léchenet requested the Education Ministry's IPS data (a social-position index measuring the social profile of pupils by school, relevant for analysing social segregation and school inequality). The ministry refused, arguing in particular that publication could affect privacy or encourage families to avoid disadvantaged schools. CADA issued a favourable opinion in September 2020, but the ministry still refused to release the documents. Léchenet then went to the Paris administrative court, which ruled in his favour in July 2022 and ordered the ministry to communicate the data within three months. The court argued that the IPS data were administrative documents and that the ministry's arguments did not fall under the legal exemptions to disclosure. The impact went beyond the individual request: after the ruling, the Education Ministry published IPS datasets in open data, first for schools and middle schools, and later for high schools as well. This made it possible for journalists, researchers and citizens to analyse social segregation between schools and question the way public resources and priority-education policies are allocated.

Winning the law, losing the scoop: Stefan de Vries and Anne Hidalgo's expense records (CADA + administrative court + appeal + 5 years)

A landmark but bittersweet example: Dutch freelance journalist Stefan de Vries requested the 2017 expense claims and receipts of Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo and her cabinet members as part of an investigation of public spending on Paris's 2024 Olympic Games bid. The City of Paris refused, leading to a five-year legal battle that eventually reached the Conseil d'État. As an independent journalist, Stefan De Vries had already financed much of the litigation himself, and the Conseil d'État stage required a specialised lawyer. The Association des Journalistes pour la Transparence (AJT) launched a crowdfunding campaign to help pay the legal fees and publicised the case as an important transparency battle.

In February 2023, France's highest administrative court ruled in Stefan de Vries' favour, confirming that such expense records are, in principle, communicable administrative documents.

The aftermath was also revealing. When the documents were finally released, Le Journal du Dimanche published the story first as an "exclusive". According to Le JDD's own article, de Vries was allowed to collect the file on a Friday afternoon, while Le JDD had obtained access earlier that morning. This was widely described as a communication move by Paris

City Hall, suggesting that the city had given the documents to Le JDD first and deprived the freelance journalist who had fought the legal case of his scoop.

But the ruling also created an important case law. After, journalists, citizens and transparency advocates used the decision to file similar requests for mayors' expense records across France. One Ma Dada initiative targeted the 30 largest French cities outside Paris; three months later, nine had responded favourably, showing both the practical impact of the ruling and the continuing resistance of many authorities.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

France's main limitation is that the right covers existing documents, not general information or explanations. A request such as "How many police cars does the city have?" may fail if not framed as a request for a document or database containing that information. This "documents, not information" issue is a recurring practical obstacle.

Common blind spots or refusal grounds include:

- Preparatory documents. Documents preparing a decision are often not communicable until the decision has been made.
- National defence, public security, foreign policy, judicial proceedings and protected secrets. These are among the classic exemptions under Article L311-5.
- Privacy, medical secrecy and business secrecy. Documents affecting private life, medical secrecy, business secrets, value judgments about identifiable people, or behaviour whose disclosure could harm someone are only communicable to the person concerned.
- Trade secrets in procurement. Public contract documents are often accessible, but technical details, commercial strategy, unit prices or sensitive business information may be redacted.
- Overbroad, repetitive or systematic requests. Authorities do not have to answer abusive requests, especially by number, repetition or systematic nature.
- Documents already publicly available. The right to communication no longer applies when the document is already publicly disseminated.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country? Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

The Association des Journalistes pour la Transparence (AJT) offers training on French FOI law specifically for journalists and can provide tailored advice on access-to-documents requests. In some cases, it may also help with the cost of legal representation, as it did by supporting the funding of a lawyer in Stefan de Vries's case before the Conseil d'État.

Contact: bureau@ajttransparence.fr

Emails sent to this address are received only by the association board members, and handled confidentially. Your question may be forwarded to individual association members when relevant, with your consent.

Germany

How to make a request?

Requests can be made by anyone via e-mail or via the request platform [FragdenStaat.de](https://fragdenstaat.de). Requests are to be made in German and need to refer to the legal basis (see below).

In cases where the authorities deem a request to be an administrative burden, they may charge up to 500 EUR for delivering a reply. It is therefore advisable to always ask the authority to provide an estimate of the potential costs before going ahead with a request.

Legal basis

Germany's freedom of information law is known as *Informationsfreiheitsgesetz*. It gives access to documents held by German federal authorities, but it does not apply to regional bodies (*Länder*) or municipalities. (That said, most *Länder* have their own access laws.)

If a document can be deemed environmental information, it can also be requested under *Umweltinformationsgesetz*, or, if consumer information is concerned, *Verbraucherinformationsgesetz*. It is generally advisable to name all three laws as legal basis for requests, so the authority itself can examine which should apply.

Timelines

Germany's freedom of information law says that requests must be answered within a month, or the authority must provide a reason explaining a further delay. In practice, replies by Federal ministries can often take much longer. After roughly three months one can go to court (Untätigkeitsklage) if the authority does not show signs of fulfilling your request.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

You can go to court before the local administrative court or complain to the federal ombudsman, the Bundesbeauftragte für Datenschutz und Informationsfreiheit. (poststelle@bfdi.bund.de)

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Federal archives gave access to exchange with federal ministries on the deletion or retention of mail accounts of ministers: [here](#).

Documents around a financial scandal and former chancellor Olaf Scholz: [here](#).

Access to the names of private companies that sponsored federal ministries: [here](#).

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

The authorities often only grant access to documents that they had added officially to the files, excluding other documents. This means that, for example, e-mails or text messages may not be accessible because they have not been archived. Ministries frequently decide against putting certain documents on file, thus removing them from the scope of access laws.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Antrag nach dem IFG/UIG/VIG

Guten Tag,

bitte senden Sie mir Folgendes zu:

- XX

Dies ist ein Antrag auf Zugang zu amtlichen Informationen nach § 1 des Gesetzes zur Regelung des Zugangs zu Informationen des Bundes (IFG) sowie § 3 Umweltinformationsgesetz (UIG), soweit Umweltinformationen im Sinne des § 2 Abs. 3 UIG betroffen sind, sowie § 1 des Gesetzes zur Verbesserung der gesundheitsbezogenen Verbraucherinformation (VIG), soweit Informationen im Sinne des § 1 Abs. 1 VIG betroffen sind.

Sollte der Informationszugang Ihres Erachtens gebührenpflichtig sein, möchte ich Sie bitten, mir dies vorab mitzuteilen und detailliert die zu erwartenden Kosten aufzuschlüsseln. Meines Erachtens handelt es sich um eine einfache Auskunft. Gebühren fallen somit nach § 10 IFG bzw. den anderen Vorschriften nicht an. Auslagen dürfen nach BVerwG 7 C 6.15 nicht berechnet werden.

Sollten Sie Gebühren veranschlagen wollen, bitte ich gemäß § 2 IFGGebV um Befreiung oder hilfsweise Ermäßigung der Gebühren. Ich verweise auf § 7 Abs. 5 IFG/§ 3 Abs. 3 Satz 2 Nr. 1 UIG/§ 4 Abs. 2 VIG und bitte Sie, mir die erbetenen Informationen so schnell wie möglich, spätestens nach Ablauf eines Monats zugänglich zu machen. Kann diese Frist nicht eingehalten werden, müssen Sie mich darüber innerhalb der Frist informieren.

Ich bitte Sie um eine Antwort per E-Mail gemäß § 1 Abs. 2 IFG. Ich widerspreche ausdrücklich der Weitergabe meiner Daten an behördenexterne Dritte. Sollten Sie meinen Antrag ablehnen wollen, bitte ich um Mitteilung der Dokumententitel und eine ausführliche Begründung.

Ich möchte Sie um eine Empfangsbestätigung bitten und danke Ihnen für Ihre Mühe!

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

XX

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

FragdenStaat offers a great [beginner's guide](#) (in German).

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

- [FragdenStaat.de](#), Vera Deleja-Hotko (vera.deleja-hotko@okfn.de)



How do I make a request?

Anybody can submit a request for access to public information, either in person or digitally, to the relevant public authority by clearly stating what information or documents they want and providing their contact details (and organisation details, if applicable). It is good practice to cite the legal basis for your request and specify the response timeframe according to the law, to make your request stronger and encourage a reply, especially given that, in practice, Greek public authorities do not really reply to requests even if they have to by law.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes and no. You can submit requests in English, as the right of access to public information is not limited to Greek citizens and Greek law does not explicitly require requests to be written in Greek. In practice, however, it is not a good idea, because public authorities are not obliged to process or respond in English, risking delays, misunderstandings, or even informal rejection on practical grounds. To avoid these issues, it is generally better to submit the request in Greek, or at least provide a Greek version with the English text.

Does it cost money?

In Greece, submitting a request for access to public information in person or digitally is generally free of charge, as the law does not allow authorities to charge for the application itself or for processing the request. However, limited fees may apply to actual reproduction costs, such as photocopies or physical media.

Under what law can I make requests?

There is no single law in Greece for access to public information. Access to public information is protected first by the Greek Constitution, and implemented through the laws mentioned below.

The right to access public information is mainly protected by the two Constitution provisions:

Article 5A, which establishes the right to information, and Article 10 (paragraph 1 and 3) of the Constitution (freedom of information and the obligation of public authorities to respond to requests and provide documents).

These rights are implemented through these main laws and legislation:

- Article 5 of the Code of Administrative Procedure (Law 2690/1999), which is the main implementing provision of Article 10 (paragraph 3) of the Constitution (see above) and regulates the right of any interested person to access administrative and

private documents held by public authorities. It sets out practical rules for how individuals can request and obtain these documents from the administration.

- Law 4727/2020, which covers transparency and open data through “Diavgeia” and proactive publication of information, Chapters I and IA, which regulate the open availability and digital publication of public sector information, implementing the constitutional right to information under Article 5A of the Constitution. According to the law’s explanatory report, these provisions not only guarantee the right to access information, but also requires the state to facilitate access to electronically circulated information, as well as to support its production, exchange, and dissemination in line with digital transparency and open governance principles.
- Presidential Decree 28/2015, which consolidates rules on access to and reuse of public sector information (Official Government Gazette No. 34, Issue A, 2015).

And additionally by:

- Law 5143/2024 Article 59, which reforms the framework for access to public documents by replacing Article 5 of the Code of Administrative Procedure and aligning it with the Tromsø Convention, introducing anonymous and electronic requests, and simplifying access procedures. It generally removes the requirement to demonstrate “reasonable interest” except in cases involving personal data, expands the scope of authorities subject to access rules based on the exercise of public power, clarifies applicable secrecy exceptions, and introduces an evaluation mechanism through the Ombudsman to monitor implementation,
- Law 4305/2014 (open availability and reuse of public sector data, establishing the principle of “open by default”),
- Law 3448/2006 (on the reuse of public sector information) which led to the issuance of the Presidential Decree 28/2015 (see above),
- Articles 77-81 of Law 4622/2019 (access to archives of the Prime Minister and Ministers),
- Article 215 of Law 3463/2006 (information rights of citizens and municipalities),
- Articles 26 (paragraph 2) and 29 (paragraph 4b) of Law 4938/2022 (access to judicial documents),
- Article 164ΣΤ of the Parliament’s Rules of Procedure,
- Article 32 of Law 5026/2023 and related provisions on transparency of asset declarations,
- Article 66(7a) of Law 4316/2014.

What is the time frame for a response?

According to the Presidential Decree 28/2015, which consolidates rules on access to and reuse of public sector information, the deadline for a response is 20 days.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

After multiple unsuccessful requests one can file a complaint with the Greek Ombudsman, the oversight authority responsible for the right to access public information. You can also challenge an ignored or rejected request before the administrative courts. The case is usually first brought before the Administrative Court of First Instance, and then it can be appealed to the Administrative Court of Appeal. In rare cases, there is possibility of appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, as the Greek non-profit Vouliwatch did in 2023 for the Petsas list – a Greek government list of media outlets that received COVID-19 advertising funds, which was widely criticised for lack of transparency and concerns over political influence in fund distribution.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Most of the time we don't receive any responses to our FOI requests. Often we get rejections based on national security, commercial interests, or personal data. On rare occasions we do receive documents and information. Earlier this year, we investigated how the village of Achlada in Florina was turned into a lignite mine serving private interests, even after the local power plant closed, exposing contradictions in the role of the Mytilineos (Metlen) group and the continued impact on residents. Through FOI requests to three public authorities, we obtained documents that revealed gaps in the environmental licensing process and helped uncover the company's actual plans, which affect the local community.

There are times, however, where filing requests can succeed indirectly. In our story regarding the irregular use of surveillance cameras at the campus of National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), the FOI requests — submitted in collaboration between Reporters United, Vouliwatch, and Homo Digitalis — did not yield the documents explaining the legal framework in which the cameras were implemented. However, they succeeded in another important way: they put pressure on the institution (NTUA) to publish information on its website, from which we were able to obtain data revealing irregularities.

Another example came from Vouliwatch in 2019. The Parliamentary Oversight Committee did not respond to Vouliwatch's repeated FOI requests for a year, regarding the publication of political parties' finances. Vouliwatch took the case to court, and shortly before the hearing, the Committee finally responded with the parties' finances for the years 2016-17. The data revealed, among other things, that the governing party (New Democracy) received nearly €1 million in state funding for research purposes, but used it to service its debts to banks.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

There are several issues with the law. First of all, there is no single legislative act that regulates all aspects of the right of access to information. This is considered necessary to properly implement the constitutional guarantees under Articles 5A and 10(3) of the Constitution. The law should cover all types of documents and information held by public authorities and provide a unified and coherent framework for access across the public sector, including sanctions when the law is not enforced.

Under current legislation, there is a lack of clear definitions. There is a confusion between “document” and “information”. The law focuses more on documents, not the information itself. There is no clear obligation for authorities to compile new information or datasets when needed. This creates legal uncertainty and allows authorities to interpret the law however they want, so requests can be rejected simply because the information is not in an already-made document.

There is also the issue of partial access and “reasonable interest” in cases involving personal data. Until 2024, “reasonable interest” was a general requirement, not limited to personal data cases, requiring applicants to justify why they wanted the information. However, the concept of reasonable interest as we understand it is inherently subjective, which can allow authorities to restrict access however they want. In cases involving sensitive or personal data, authorities are expected to disclose the non-sensitive parts of documents. However, they are not obliged to clearly mark the redacted sections or provide detailed justification for each withheld portion. As a result, entire sections may be removed without explanation, making it impossible to determine whether the withheld information is truly sensitive. There are no proper sanctions when authorities do not respond, nor an authority that can reverse refusals quickly. The Greek Ombudsman as the oversight and monitoring body, defined under the Article 59 of Law 5143/2024, could establish a “task force” that can review how the law is applied and publish findings, but it cannot directly force public authorities to release documents, impose meaningful penalties, or reverse refusals (for that you can appeal to Greek courts, but this can take years). As far as we know, in 2026 there is currently no indication that this type of task force has been established.

There is also bias against anonymous requests. The new 2024 framework allows them (they were not permitted before), but at the same time it states that the public administration is not obliged to respond when a case is rejected or when a request is “clearly vague or repetitive.” Again, this is subjective and suggests that anonymous requests are treated as having fewer “rights” in practice.

Another blind spot that can lead to abuses of power is the lack of specification for fees (given that the authority has provided information). In Greece, submitting a request for access to public information is generally free of charge. However, fees may be imposed to cover actual reproduction costs, such as photocopies or physical media. The legal framework does not specify these fees nor sets a maximum limit.

Overall, Greek authorities do not respond to many requests, and when they do, they almost always reject them on grounds such as personal data protection, commercial interests, or national security.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Location, Date

TO: *[Name of public authority] / [Head of authority]*

SUBJECT: Request for access to public information for *[input more information]*

In the context of my research / journalistic work / exercise of the right of access to public information, I hereby request access to documents and data held by your authority. I rely on the constitutionally guaranteed right of access to public information under Articles 5A and 10(3) of the Greek Constitution, as well as the applicable legal framework governing access to public documents and data, including Article 5 of the Code of Administrative Procedure (Law 2690/1999), Presidential Decree 28/2015, and Law 4727/2020 on transparency and open data.

I kindly request the following information and/or documents:

[Here we clearly and specifically define the list of the documents or information we want, including time period and preferred format like Excel, PDF, machine-readable data where possible etc.]

Please process this request within the deadline provided by applicable legislation (e.g. 20 days as per Presidential Decree 28/2015) and notify me of any applicable extensions or legal grounds for delay, if relevant. [it's important to remind them they have a deadline..]

Sincerely,

[Full name]

[Organisation / role]

[Phone number]

[Email address]

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Greece does not provide statistical data on which institutions receive access to public information requests, so there is no way to know which institutions are most frequently approached.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

Beyond FOI requests themselves, you can also get help from journalists, NGOs, and other transparency organisations that often share guides, templates, and practical advice and support for finding information. If an authority refuses or simply ignores an FOI request, the Greek Ombudsman is another place to turn to for complaints and review, since it's the

oversight authority. In some situations, European-level rules or institutions can also help point you in the right direction when national practice doesn't work.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Stefanos Loukopoulos and Maria Nathanail from Vouliwatch, a non-profit organisation

(press@vouliwatch.gr)

Lefteris Helioudakis from Homo Digitalis, a non-profit organisation (info@homodigitalis.gr)

Andreas Pottakis from the Greek Ombudsman (press@synigoros.gr)

EELLAK (Open Technologies Alliance) (info@eellak.gr)

Hungary

How do I make a request?

Anyone can submit an FOI request orally, in writing, or electronically. Information may be requested by email, and a qualified electronic signature is not required. It can also be submitted anonymously, but then the authorities are not obliged to respond.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes, though it's better to write it in Hungarian.

Does it cost money?

No. Authorities can charge you only the cost of postage or USB drive, and only if you agree to receive the information in that form.

Under what law can I make requests?

Act CXII of 2011 on the right to informational self-determination and on the freedom of information ([official translation](#)).

What is the time frame for a response?

You must receive a response within 15 days, but the deadline may be extended by a further 15 days if you request a large amount of data. The 15-day period is calculated in calendar days, and the deadline expires even if it falls on a public holiday.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

There are two remedies available.

You may turn to the court within 30 days from the refusal or from the expiry of the deadline. Legal representation is mandatory when filing against authorities with nationwide competence (for example ministries or the police).

If you prefer not to risk litigation, you may instead turn to the National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information ('information commissioner') within 1 year. This is an ombudsman-type procedure. The Authority's procedure is free of charge and does not require a lawyer. At the end of the procedure, the Authority issues a non-binding decision, after which you may go to court within 30 days.

While a court case can be concluded within 6 months, proceedings before the Authority may take up to 1 and a half years.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Contracts whose metadata public bodies are required to publish proactively (such as contracts or grants worth 5 million HUF) can generally be successfully requested. It is therefore worth checking the public body's website, where you will usually find a lot of information on public spending. This provides a good starting point for drafting your data request.

Public bodies not controlled by the central government (for example municipalities or courts) show more willingness to answer FOI requests properly.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Public bodies often claim that they do not have the requested information or do not have it in the format you are asking for.

In principle, they are supposed to inform you about what information is actually available. In practice, however, this does not always happen. In such cases, it is up to you to prove that the information does exist and is held by the public body. The easiest way to do this is to check, while drafting your request, whether the relevant legislation provides for the category of data you want to request.

You can also request that they inform you which authority has the requested data. They are obliged to inform you under Article 5 of the Tromsø Convention, to which Hungary is a contracting party.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

(ADDRESSEE AGENCY)

(EMAIL ADDRESS OF THE UNIT RESPONSIBLE FOR DATA REQUESTS)

Dear Sir/Madam,

Pursuant to Section 28 (1) of Act CXII of 2011 on the right to informational self-determination and on the freedom of information (hereinafter: the FOI Act), I hereby submit a request to access the following public interest data.

I kindly request that you provide me with (SPECIFY THE REQUESTED INFORMATION).

If you find my request unclear, please contact me to clarify the details of my request pursuant to Section 28 (3) of the FOI Act.

I request that the data be sent electronically to (EMAIL ADDRESS).

If the information I requested is already publicly available online, I kindly ask that you provide the data by indicating the open source containing it, in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the FOI Act.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,

(REQUESTER NAME)

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Ministry of Agriculture: adatigenyles@am.gov.hu

Ministry of Interior: ugyfelszolgalat@bm.gov.hu

Ministry of Energy: ugyfelszolgalat@em.gov.hu

Ministry of European Union Affairs: tarsadalmikapcsolatok@eum.gov.hu

Ministry of Construction and Transport: info@ekm.gov.hu

Ministry of Defence: kozerdeku@hm.gov.hu

Ministry of Justice: tarsadalmikapcsolatok@im.gov.hu

Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development: kozadat@ktm.gov.hu

Ministry of Culture and Innovation: ugyfelszolgalat@kim.gov.hu

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade: kozadat@mfa.gov.hu

Prime Minister's Cabinet Office: adatigenyles@mk.gov.hu

Prime Minister's Office: kozerdekuadatigenyles@me.gov.hu

Ministry of National Economy: adatigenyles@ngm.gov.hu

Hungarian Central Bank: info@mnbb.hu

Hungarian State Treasury: kasz@allamkincstar.gov.hu

National Directorate General for Hospitals: adatigeny@okfo.gov.hu

Hungarian Railways: kozadat.mav@mavcsoport.hu

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

The following resources are in Hungarian only.

[Contract repository](#) for public spendings. It contains only metadata of the contracts concluded by public bodies. The search engine is limited to searching by the names of public bodies.

“[Ki Mit Tud?](#)”, online investigative outlet’s site to help citizens with an FOI submit form. Public bodies’ responses are published automatically.

K-Monitor’s [site](#), dedicated to helping citizens with guides and templates.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Hungarian Civil Liberties Union’s legal aid contact: jogsegely@tasz.hu

K-Monitor: info@k-monitor.hu

Transparency International Hungary: info@transparency.hu



How do I make a request?

Send the request to the relevant authorities. In most cases, it is sufficient to send it to the general catch-all email addresses provided on the websites of those authorities. Most public bodies have designated Information Officers (“upplýsingafulltrúi” in Icelandic), and ministers have assistants (“aðstoðarmaður”) who can receive and handle requests.

The Act applies to all government agencies, municipalities, and companies in which the state or municipalities own 51 per cent or more of the share capital. By a specific decision, the Prime Minister’s Office may exempt a private company in which the state holds a majority stake from the scope of the Act. This applies, for example, to Landsbankinn (in which the state owns a 99.9 per cent stake) and to certain energy companies, which are often municipally owned. A [short guide](#) is available in Icelandic.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes.

Does it cost money?

No.

Under what law can I make requests?

[“Upplýsingalög. nr. 140/2012”](#)

You can refer to Information Act No. 140/2012.

You do not have to refer to the law when sending your request. It automatically applies to any request you make.

What is the time frame for a response?

A decision on whether to release the data/information should be made within 7 days. If it takes longer, the law stipulates that you should receive an explanation for the delay and a timeline for when a decision will be made and/or the data and information will be released. The process may take up to 20 days in total.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

If a decision has not been made within 30 working days, or is denied, you can appeal the matter to the Information Appeals Committee. You can give a brief explanation of your request and explain why you are appealing and send it to unu@unu.is.

More information is available in Icelandic at unu.is.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Every decision is published online at unu.is. The appeals committee is notorious for taking a long time to make decisions, but it is independent and has multiple times reversed decisions so as not to hand over information.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

The laws contain several limitations that can restrict meaningful access. Authorities are often allowed to withhold internal documents, drafts, and ongoing case materials. Authorities are generally only required to provide existing documents, not to compile data or answer analytical questions, limiting the usefulness of requests. This has often been the reason given for denial of handing over information.

Information that exists outside formal record systems, such as in informal communications through texts or Facebook Messenger (widely used in Iceland), may fall outside the scope of the law altogether.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Subject: Request for access to information under the Information Act No. 140/2012

I hereby request access to information on the basis of the applicable legislation on public access to information.

Specifically, I request access to the following documents and/or data:

- *[Describe documents/data as precisely as possible]*
- *[Include relevant time period, if applicable]*
- *[Include names of cases, persons, or departments if known]*

This request includes, but is not limited to:

- *Emails and other correspondence*
- *Internal memoranda and notes*
- *Reports, attachments, and related documents*

If any part of the requested material is considered exempt from disclosure, I kindly request:

- *That I be provided access to the remaining parts of the documents, with exempted information redacted, and*
- *That the legal basis for any refusal or redaction be clearly specified, with reference to the relevant provisions of law.*

If the requested information is already publicly available, please indicate where it can be accessed.

I also request that the information be provided in electronic form, if possible.

Please confirm receipt of this request and inform me of the expected timeframe for a response.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your contact information]

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

As of 1 April 2026, these are the “upplýsingafulltrúar” for each of the ministries:

- Dúi Jóhannsson Landmark – Ministry of Industries – dui.j.landmark@atrn.is
- Pórdís Valsdóttir – Ministry of Justice – thordis.valsdottir@dmr.is
- Sigríður Víðis Jónsdóttir – Ministry of Social Affairs and Housing – sigridur.jonsdottir@frn.is
- Hrefna Rós Matthíasdóttir – Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs – hrefna.ros.matthiasdottir@fjr.is
- Sighvatur Arnmundsson – Prime Minister’s Office – sighvatur.arnmundsson@for.is
- Margrét Erlendsdóttir – Ministry of Health – margret.erlendsdottir@hrn.is
- Þórmundur Jónatansson – Ministry of Infrastructure – thormundur.jonatansson@irn.is
- Hrafnhildur Helga Össurardóttir – Ministry of Culture, Innovation and Higher Education – hrafnhildur@mnh.is
- Þorbjörg Alda Marinósdóttir – Ministry of Culture, Innovation and Higher Education – thorbjorg.marinisdottir@mnh.is
- Hjalti Andrasen – Ministry of Education and Children – hjalti.andrasen@mrn.is
- Hildur Björg Hafstein – Umbra (Government Service Centre) – hildur.b.hafstein@rfs.is
- Anna Sigríður Einarsdóttir – Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Climate – anna.einarsdottir@urn.is

Using the [staff directory](#) of the government ministries, you can also search for “upplýsingafulltrúi” (Communications Officer) or “aðstoðarmaður” (Assistants to the ministers) to get up-to-date contact information.

Using the [map](#) provided on the website of the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities, you can find emails for every municipality in Iceland.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

The National Archives of Iceland (Þjóðskjalasafn Íslands) can give access to older documents under archival legislation. They provide access on request, but you will have to be on site to go through the physical documents yourself.

The Administrative Procedures Act No. 37/1993 (Stjórnsýslulög) provides general rights that apply to administrative proceedings, including the right of parties to access documents in their own cases, the obligation of authorities to provide reasoning for decisions, and rules on equality and proportionality. In practice, this means that even if access is restricted under FOI legislation, individuals who are considered parties to a case may still have broader access rights under administrative law.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Aðalsteinn Kjartansson, deputy editor of Heimildin (adalsteinn@heimildin.is)



How do I make a request?

In Ireland, you make a Freedom of Information request in writing (letter or email) directly to the public body that holds the records, clearly stating that it is a request under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and describing the records you want in as much detail as possible. You can normally do this in English or Irish, and if your request is unclear the public body must assist you in refining it so the records can be identified.

Can I make requests in English?

Requests can be made in English or Irish; many public bodies provide forms in both languages.

Does it cost money?

There is no application fee for a standard FOI request for records under section 12, and no fee for requests for your own personal information or for amendments/correction of your personal data; fees can arise for internal reviews (30€), appeals to the Information Commissioner (50€), and for search and retrieval once a free allowance is exceeded.

Under what law can I make requests?

The current law is the Freedom of Information Act 2014, which repealed the earlier 1997 and 2003 FOI Acts and sets out who can request, which bodies are covered, and the procedures and exemptions.

What is the time frame for a response?

A decision (grant, partial grant, or refusal) must usually be issued within 20 working days (excluding weekends and public holidays).

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

If ignored or refused, you can seek an internal review by a more senior officer of the same body if you are dissatisfied or if no decision is issued on time, generally within a set period (often 4 weeks from decision, or from when a decision should have been issued).

If still unhappy, you can appeal to the Office of the Information Commissioner, which independently reviews FOI decisions; guidance from many bodies notes that this is the next step after internal review and that decision timelines for internal review are typically 3–15 working days depending on the body.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

TheStory.ie has many examples of successful FOI requests that enabled public-interest reporting. Frequent topics are public expenditure and human rights issues.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

- Records affecting third-party personal privacy, where section 37-type personal-information protections lead to refusals or heavy redactions of names and identifying details.
- Information deemed commercially sensitive or given in confidence to public bodies (for example, tenders or private-sector data), where commercial-sensitivity and confidentiality exemptions are often relied upon.
- Certain records relating to Government meetings, law enforcement, security, or deliberative processes, which are often covered by specific exemption provisions in the 2014 Act.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Below is a short, jurisdiction-appropriate template you can adapt for any Irish public body (replace brackets with your details):

Subject: Freedom of Information request under the Freedom of Information Act 2014

Dear FOI Officer,

I wish to make a request for access to records under the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

I am seeking:

- *[Describe the records as precisely as possible: subject, dates, departments, file names if known.]*

I would prefer to receive the records in [email / electronic / paper] format.

This request concerns [non-personal / my personal] information. My full name is [name], and my contact details are [postal address / email / phone].

[If seeking personal records: I enclose/attach a copy of photographic identification as required.]

Please acknowledge receipt of this request.

Yours faithfully,

[Name]

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

[The Department of the Taoiseach](#) (prime minister)

[The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#)

What additional resources exist for using FOI in Ireland?

The Office of the Irish Information Commissioner offers comprehensive help on how to make requests, as well as giving [guidance](#) on how to interpret exceptions.

Irish government departments offer FOI disclosure logs, which show what information has been released under the FOIA.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

The NGO [RightToKnow.ie](#) partners with news organisations in public-interest investigations.



How do I make a request?

Requesters need to be Italian citizens or legal residents of Italy. Proof of ID is required to make a request.

Here are the steps to make a proper request:

1) Identify what you want to request

You must clearly describe one of the two options:

- document(s) (e.g. contract, resolution, report)
- data (e.g. lists, figures, statistics)

2) Identify the correct public authority

The request must be sent to the authority that actually holds the document, such as:

- Municipality, Region, Ministry
- Local Health Authority (ASL), University, public body
- Publicly controlled or publicly owned companies (in certain cases)

3) Draft and submit the FOIA request

The request can be submitted by filling a request form by Certified Email (PEC) (better option) or by ordinary email.

The request should include:

- your name and surname
- your full address with street name/number, postal code, city and country
- an email or PEC address to receive the reply
- a clear description of the requested data or documents
- date of the documents
- a reference to the FOIA legal basis
- attachment of your ID card

Can I make requests in English?

As far as I know it's not possible. Requests are accepted only in Italian.

Does it cost money?

It's free of charge.

Under what law can I make requests?

Italy's law on general civic access (*Accesso Civico Generalizzato*) allows every citizen or resident to request data or documents held by an Italian Public Administration, even if they are not published on the institution's website, without having to demonstrate a personal interest.

The Freedom of Information Act in Italy is regulated under the [Article 5, paragraph 2, Legislative Decree 33/2013](#) (as amended by the [Legislative Decree 97/2016](#)).

What is the time frame for a response?

The public authority must reply within 30 days.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

You can file an appeal (request for review) after your initial FOIA request if any of the following situations occur:

1) Explicit refusal (denial)

- The public authority formally rejects your FOIA request.

This includes cases where:

- access is denied entirely;
- the refusal is based on FOIA exceptions (e.g. privacy, public security, economic interests);
- the reasoning is generic, insufficient, or unclear. In these cases, you may challenge whether the refusal is lawful and proportionate.

2) Partial disclosure

The authority grants access to only part of the requested documents or data, for example where documents are released with extensive redactions; some datasets are withheld. You may appeal if you believe:

- the redactions are excessive;
- the balance between transparency and protected interests was not correctly applied.

3) No response (silent refusal)

The authority does not reply within 30 days of your FOIA request. Under Italian FOIA rules, silence after 30 days equals a refusal. This automatically entitles you to request a review.

4) Improper handling of the request

You may appeal if the authority:

- wrongly reclassifies your FOIA as another type of request;
- asks you to justify a personal interest (which FOIA does not require);
- requests unnecessary documents or information;
- claims the request is too generic without asking for clarification first.

5) Failure to consider partial access

If the authority denies access entirely without assessing whether: partial disclosure, anonymisation, or redaction could allow access, you can appeal based on the principle of maximum disclosure.

6) How does the appeal work (second instance)?

Internal review (recommended first step) - You may submit a request for review to the Transparency and Anti-Corruption Officer (RPCT) of the same authority.

- Deadline: no strict deadline, but it is advisable to act promptly, within 20 days
- Legal basis: Article 5, paragraph 7, Legislative Decree 33/2013

External remedies (if needed):

If the review is rejected or ignored, you may file a case before the Administrative Court (TAR)

Can you give examples of successful requests?

One of the most significant ongoing successes involves the information and data on the EU funded PNRR (National Recovery and Resilience Plan) obtained by the [Openpolis foundation](#).

NGOs and journalists sent multiple FOIA requests to the Italian government to release granular data on how billions of euros in EU recovery funds were being allocated. After initial resistance, the government released datasets on [OpenCantieri](#) and the [Italia Domani](#) portal. These datasets now include project locations, implementing bodies, and funding amounts for over 200,000 projects, allowing citizens to monitor local PNRR spending.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Requests that are mostly rejected are the ones with too broad a scope, or that are unclear and lack precise details, like the date of when a document was produced or a meeting happened. Keep in mind there are legal exceptions by which the public authority can refuse access. Sometimes the information you request may be collected from a private agency (as for example Invitalia on behalf of the Ministry of Made in Italy), therefore the authorities may invoke an exclusion clause.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

A template in Italian can be found at this [link](#).

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Presidency of the Council of Ministers (PCM)

Civic access, FOIA, administrative transparency

- Department “Casa Italia”, general access: accessogeneralizzatoDCI@governo.it

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI)

- Standard email for FOIA / civic access: FOIA@esteri.it
- PEC for FOIA / civic access: urp.foia@cert.esteri.it
- [Guidelines and register of requests](#)

Ministry of Education (MIM)

- Email for civic access / FOIA: urp@istruzione.it
- PEC (Anti-Corruption and Transparency Officer – RPCT): rpct@postacert.istruzione.it

Ministry of Labour and Social Policies

- dginnovazione@pec.lavoro.gov.it

Ministry of Made in Italy (Ministry of Economic Development)

- Non-certified email: urp@mise.gov.it
- PEC for FOIA / civic access requests: urp@pec.mise.gov.it

Civil Protection Department (Presidency of the Council of Ministers)

- PEC for FOIA / civic access requests: protezionecivile@pec.governo.it
- Non-certified email: accesso.generalizzato@protezionecivile.it

Ministry of the Interior

- PEC for FOIA / civil access request:
responsabiletrasparenzaecorruzione@pec.interno.it
- [Guidelines and department-specific email addresses](#)

Ministry of Environment

- trasparenza@pec.minambiente.it
- [Guidelines](#)

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

[Guidelines from the Anticorruption authority](#)

[Questions and answers](#)

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

I can be available: Lorenzo Di Stasi, independent journalist: lorenzodistasi@gmail.com



How do I make a request?

Applications for access to a document shall be made in any form that enables the public institution to identify the document.

Can I make requests in English?

The law says that citizens, as established under the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, shall exercise their rights as set out in the present Law, in their respective language.

The Constitution of Kosovo says that the official languages in the Republic of Kosovo are Albanian and Serbian.

Does it cost money?

There are various tariffs that are almost never applied in practice.

Under what law can I make requests?

[LAW No.03/L –215ON Access to Public Documents](#)

What is the time frame for a response?

7 days.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Appeals may be lodged with Before the Agency for Information and Privacy.

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

[Office of the Prime Minister](#)

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Flutura Kusari, media lawyer (fluturakusari@gmail.com)



How do I make a request?

The most common method is to submit the request electronically by email, attaching a digitally signed information request.

Can I make requests in English?

The safest option is to submit requests in Latvian. In practice, some institutions may accept and respond to requests in English, but they are under no legal obligation to do so.

Does it cost money?

Generally, no fee is charged. However, in certain cases, institutions may charge for providing information if the request is extensive and significant time is required to redact personal data, trade secrets, or other sensitive information from the documents.

Under what law can I make requests?

[Law On the Press and Other Mass Media](#): Article 5 provides that media organisations have the right to obtain information from government and public institutions.

[Freedom of Information Law](#): This applies to documented information held by institutions and says information is public unless the law provides otherwise.

However, the law also allows requests for restricted-access information. Article 11 provides that a person requesting restricted-access information must justify the request and specify the purpose for which the information will be used. If restricted-access information is disclosed, the recipient undertakes to use it solely for the purpose for which it was requested.

What is the time frame for a response?

The response deadline is up to 15 days. In exceptional cases, where additional information must be collected, the deadline may be extended to 30 days. The institution must notify the requester within the initial 15-day period if the deadline is extended.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

You must first appeal the refusal to the head of the institution that issued the decision or to the relevant higher authority. For example, if the Health Inspectorate refuses to provide

information, the appeal should be submitted to the Minister of Health. In the appeal, explain why the information should nevertheless be disclosed, for example by arguing that, in this particular case, the public interest outweighs the right to privacy.

If the higher authority upholds the refusal, the decision may be further appealed before the Administrative Court.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

It is difficult to give universal examples, because successful requests often depend on the specific sector and institution involved. However, there have been cases where journalists, by providing strong legal justification for the public interest — and in some cases by going to court — have succeeded in obtaining materials from closed administrative cases, detailed reports on public spending by state institutions, and other documents that were initially withheld.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Access is most commonly denied in relation to restricted-access information (the Freedom of Information Law specifies what falls within this category). However, institutions often interpret the GDPR overly broadly and refuse to disclose information that is not in fact restricted, making such refusals worth appealing. Where the public interest is sufficiently justified, it may even be possible to obtain recordings of closed Cabinet meetings and other information that would not normally be disclosed.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Include the recipient and sender details, followed by the following wording:

*“Pursuant to Articles 5, 6, and 7 of the Law ‘On the Press and Other Mass Media’, as well as the Freedom of Information Law, I request the following information: **XXXX**. The requested information is needed for an upcoming investigation by **XXXX media outlet**, which will be published **on/in XXX (for example, on a website, in a television programme, or in a newspaper)**.”*

The information request must be signed using an electronic signature.

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

All government institutions maintain websites available in English that include contact details for public relations departments, agency heads, and other staff members.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

In Latvia, a significant amount of information and many official documents are publicly available online, including on the websites of government institutions and ministries. The Latvian Company Register also provides extensive information on businesses and company ownership.

Before submitting a freedom of information request, it is advisable to check whether the information is already publicly available, as this may save considerable time.

If you are unsure where to look or whether the information is publicly available, it is often helpful to contact local journalists, who are generally responsive and willing to assist.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

There is no single institution dedicated to assisting journalists with such requests, but organisations such as the [Latvian branch of Transparency International](#) may be helpful in some cases.

However, the most effective approach is often to contact local journalists. They are generally responsive and willing to assist or direct colleagues to the appropriate contacts. For example, the investigative journalism centre [Re:Baltica](#).

Lithuania

How do I make a request?

To make a request, you should contact the relevant ministry, authority, or government institution directly. For the best results, avoid general email addresses and instead target contacts for media or communications teams, which can easily be found by Googling the institution's name alongside the phrase "media contacts". If you struggle to find English contact details, translating your search keywords into Lithuanian using an online translator should lead you to the right page. Furthermore, when reaching out to official bodies like the Police, the Prosecutor General's Office, or the Bank of Lithuania, it is highly recommended to follow up with a phone call or explicitly request an email acknowledgment, as inquiries sent from abroad can sometimes be blocked by strict government spam filters.

Fortunately, communications staff at these institutions speak English, so a quick call is a safe and efficient way to ensure your request was successfully received.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes, you can. The only official language in Lithuania is Lithuanian, but government institutions have no problem accepting and answering inquiries in English.

To ensure your email is processed correctly by internal registry systems, you can include the Lithuanian phrase "Dėl informacijos žiniasklaidai" (Request for information) in the subject line or body of the text. However, please keep in mind that official response documents, data sheets, and formal statements will almost certainly be provided in Lithuanian, unless they involve specific diplomatic correspondence or international co-operation agreements.

Does it cost money?

No.

Under what law can I make requests?

Requests for information in Lithuania are primarily governed by the [Law on the Provision of Information to the Public](#) (*Visuomenės informavimo įstatymas*)

While local journalists rarely cite this law explicitly in their routine daily inquiries, it is highly recommended to include a formal legal disclaimer at the end of your request, especially if you are dealing with sensitive topics rather than basic statistics.

"Šią informaciją naudosime griežtai Lietuvos Visuomenės informavimo įstatymo ir kitų teisės aktų nustatyta tvarka, žurnalistiniais tikslais, nepažeidžiant asmens duomenų naudojimo, tvarkymo ir viešinimo sąlygų bei reikalavimų."

In English, this translates to: "We will use this information strictly in accordance with the procedures established by the Republic of Lithuania Law on the Provision of Information to the Public and other legal acts, solely for journalistic purposes, and without violating the conditions and requirements for the use, processing, and public disclosure of personal data."

What is the time frame for a response?

The standard response time for journalistic inquiries in Lithuania is usually 3 working days. However, if your request contains a large number of questions or requires extensive data collection and administrative work, the institution may take anywhere from a week to 10 working days to provide a full reply. If a delay is expected, communications officers will typically inform you beforehand, but it is always good practice to state your deadline clearly in the initial email.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

If your request is ignored or rejected, you can file an appeal with the Office of the Inspector of Journalists' Ethics (*Žurnalistų etikos inspektoriatas tarnyba*), which typically reviews such cases within about a week to determine if the institution's refusal was justified. The process is quite straightforward: you need to send them an email explaining the situation, including the topic of your story and why you need the requested data. In your appeal, you should explicitly state that you are requesting access to this information for public information purposes and commit to complying with the Law on the Provision of Information to the Public and other relevant legal acts. Finally, ask the Office to evaluate whether the specific institution's refusal to answer is legally grounded, list the exact questions you asked, and attach a PDF document containing your full email correspondence with the institution so the Inspector can objectively assess the situation.

If you're providing unanswered specific questions to the Inspector, you should anonymise any personal data or identities. For instance, replace actual names with initials (e.g., 'X.X.') and specify the person's role instead.

Contacts [here](#).

Email: zeit@zeit.lt

Can you give examples of successful requests? (Requests that usually work)

Asking for one or two specific documents that you know exist. Requesting data on a very specific topic.

If you know or suspect that the requested document contains personal data, it is highly recommended to proactively state in your email that the institution should redact this sensitive information before sending it to you. By explicitly emphasising that you are strictly interested in the core content of the document rather than any personal details mentioned

within it, you remove potential legal hurdles regarding data privacy and significantly increase your chances of a quick approval.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

There are several notable blind spots in the legislation that allow institutions to deny access entirely. Requests are most frequently rejected if the documents contain commercial secrets or personal data; for instance, if a document was signed or handled by a regular, non-public employee rather than a public figure, obtaining access can become extremely difficult. Because the law leaves room for broad interpretation regarding what constitutes private or proprietary data, institutions often use these privacy and confidentiality clauses as a convenient shield to withhold public interest documents at any point in time. Therefore, it is essential to state in your request that if the document contains confidential or personal data, you ask for it to be redacted; this will narrow down the scope of your inquiry and eliminate room for institutional interpretation.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Subject: Request for information.

Dear [Institution Name] communications department,

I am writing to you as a journalist, [Your Name], representing [Your Media Outlet]. We are currently working on a story regarding [Topic] and for public information purposes, in order to verify and clarify our information, we would like to access the following documents / receive the following data: [List items].

If the requested documents contain confidential information or personal data, we kindly ask that you redact (cover) them, so that it does not interfere with accessing the general content of the documents.

We will use this information strictly in accordance with the procedures established by the Republic of Lithuania Law on the Provision of Information to the Public and other legal acts, solely for journalistic purposes, and without violating the conditions and requirements for the use, processing, and public disclosure of personal data.

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

[Lithuanian central bank](#)

[Office of the Government](#)

[Criminal police bureau](#)

Use Google Translate to translate the name of the institution into Lithuanian, then add the phrase "kontaktai žiniasklaidai" (contacts for media) next to it. By using these exact

Lithuanian keywords in your search, you will almost always find the direct media or public relations contact page instantly.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

The Inspector of Journalists' Ethics is helpful.

The public procurement database for all Lithuanian institutions, where you can also search for foreign companies and find all relevant procurement documents:

<https://viesiejipirkimai.lt/epps/home.do>

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Gabrielė Navickaitė g.navickaite@15min.lt

Jūratė Damulytė j.damulyte@15min.lt

Karolis Juršys k.jursys@15min.lt



How do I make a request?

The easiest way to make a Freedom of Information request is via the platform [myguichet](#). It is the Luxembourg platform for administrative procedures. This page explains how FOI requests work.

Documents can also be requested in writing, for example by emailing the relevant administration. The contacts can be found most easily by consulting the annuaire.

Documents that have been requested, and where the request is granted, must also be published on this page. However, many administrations tend to forget this.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes, requests can generally be made in English, French, German or Luxembourgish.

Does it cost money?

No, it is free.

Under what law can I make requests?

Under the "[Loi du 14 septembre 2018 relative à une administration transparente et ouverte](#)."

The legislation has recently [been updated](#). Changes include:

- a broader definition of "document";
- a new obligation for administrations to help requesters identify the documents they need;
- a mandatory acknowledgment of receipt stating the estimated processing time;
- clarified refusal/appeal procedures;
- an expanded list of administrative bodies covered;
- the possibility of partially redacted documents;
- an explicit right of access to information for professional journalists.

What is the time frame for a response?

The administration has 1 month; this can be extended by another month under certain circumstances.

The updated legislation includes a paragraph requiring administrative bodies to take account, "within reasonable limits", of professional journalists' particular time constraints when handling their requests.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

You can write to the "[Commission on Access to Documents](#)" (CAD), who are in charge of reviewing rejected requests. I also contact them when my requests remain unanswered. They can give opinions when requests are rejected, but these are not legally binding.

In one instance, for example, they agreed that I should get access to requested documents, but the administration still refused. I then appealed the decision [before the administrative court](#); the case is ongoing. We [filed the appeal](#) in September 2024, the hearing before the Court is scheduled for January 2027.

Appeals can be made by writing directly to the CAD or via the platform myguichet. Here, the CAD [explains](#) how you can do this. I use the appeals also when deadlines are not met by the requested administration.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

- I requested, for example, the travel costs (bills, tickets, receipts, hotel bills...) of all Luxembourg Ministers to see how much they spend on their travels, and to check whether there is reimbursement of costs that could be considered personal. I published a series on it:
 - [Exklusiv: Die Spesen des Franz Fayot - Reporter.lu](#)
 - [Exklusiv: Die Spesen-Bilanz von Blau-Rot-Grün - Reporter.lu](#)
 - [Exklusiv: Die Spesen des Großherzogs - Reporter.lu](#)
- Colleagues looked at how much Ministers [spend on their offices](#).
- The organisation ZUG wanted to get access to an analysis/database of the security of road crossings by the City of Luxembourg. They had to sue before the Administrative Court but [ultimately got partial access](#).

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Requests pertaining to internal communications or national security receive blanket rejections, and the interpretation is sometimes very "liberal". Also, the administrations have become stricter in applying the exception pertaining to "requests being too broad". They argue that the request "is excessive in terms of its number, systematic nature or repetitiveness." This can be problematic if you don't know the exact name and nature of the document(s) you are asking for.

The legal exceptions are the following:

- foreign relations, Luxembourg national security or public order;
- the safety of persons or their right to privacy;
- the conduct of proceedings before judicial, extra-judicial or disciplinary bodies, or operations carried out prior to the start of such proceedings;
- the prevention, detection or prosecution of punishable offences;
- intellectual property rights;
- legally protected secrets or confidential matters;

- the administrative bodies' remit of oversight, verification and regulation;
- the confidential nature of business/trade information communicated to those bodies;
- the ability of the administrative bodies to implement their economic, financial, fiscal and trade policies, if publishing the documents could hamper the related decision-making processes;
- confidential discussions within the Government.

Rejections are also legally possible if the request:

- pertains to documents which are unfinished or still being drafted;
- pertains to a document that has already been published, or which was produced for commercial purposes;
- is excessive in terms of its number, systematic nature or repetitiveness;
- pertains to internal communications.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

This is an example of a successful request I made via myguichet to the Ministry for Sports. As you can see, it is very informal:

Dépenses détaillées du Ministre (transport, hôtel, restauration etc.) et de sa délégation (y inclus garde(s) du corps) lors du déplacement sur le Tour de France en juillet 2022.

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently requested institutions?

The contacts for government administrations can be found [here](#).

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

Here is an explanation by the government on [how to file an FOI request](#).

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

The Luxembourg journalism association [ALJP](#).

Alternatively, there is the [Service information presse](#).



How do I make a request?

Using the [FOI.gov.mt](https://foi.gov.mt) platform. Non-residents of Malta cannot make FOI requests. That was successfully [challenged](#) by AccessInfo, but since Malta is not a common law jurisdiction, each new FOI request by a non-resident would have to go through the same process.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes.

Does it cost money?

No.

Under what law can I make requests?

The FOI Act (Cap. 496 of the Laws of Malta).

What is the time frame for a response?

21 working days or 40 working days with an extension.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

To the Information & Data Protection Commissioner (IDPC).

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Requests for contracts awarded by public tender and related invoices are usually successful.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

It really varies, but the government of Malta will generally abuse the appeals process to stall any request that is politically sensitive.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

This is no longer necessary as the form on [FOI.gov.mt](https://foi.gov.mt) is used.

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Yes, [here](#).

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Amphora Media, for investigative journalism collaborations (editorial@amphora.media)

or

The Daphne Caruana Galizia Foundation, for legal and advocacy support
(contact@daphne.foundation)

Montenegro

How do I make a request?

Access to public information in Montenegro is regulated by the [Law on Free Access to Information](#). Any domestic or foreign individual, or legal entity, may request information held by public authorities without having to explain why the information is sought. Requests may be submitted in writing or orally. Written requests can be filed in person, by post, fax, or electronically in accordance with e-government regulations. One request may cover several documents or datasets. Authorities are required to confirm receipt of the request.

A request should include:

- identification of the requested information
- the preferred form of access
- the applicant's contact details needed for delivery of the decision or information.

Although the [Agency for Personal Data Protection and Free Access to Information \(AZLP\)](#) provides standard forms, authorities must also process requests submitted in other formats. Applicants may request access by inspection, scanning, copying or electronic delivery, and authorities must provide access in the chosen format whenever technically possible.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes. The law grants access rights to both domestic and foreign persons. In practice, requests in English are usually accepted, particularly by ministries and institutions that engage with international organisations or foreign applicants. However, some institutions may request, or respond more efficiently, if the request is submitted in Montenegrin. For urgent or sensitive matters, bilingual requests are often the safest option.

Does it cost money?

Submitting an FOI request is free, and no administrative fee is charged. Authorities may charge material costs related to copying, scanning or delivery of documents. Electronic access is often free. Importantly, applicants do not bear costs for information that authorities were legally obliged to publish proactively but failed to publish.

Under what law can I make requests?

Requests are made under the [Law on Free Access to Information](#). The law applies to state institutions, local authorities, public institutions, state-owned companies and entities exercising public authority or financed predominantly from public funds.

What is the time frame for a response?

Authorities must decide without delay and no later than 15 days from receipt of a complete request. The deadline may be extended by 8 additional days where the information is exceptionally extensive, where the authority must conduct a harm and public interest test, or where locating the information significantly disrupts regular work. The institution must notify the applicant and explain the reasons for extension within 5 days. Requests concerning protection of life or liberty, public health or environmental protection, particularly information concerning environmental emissions, must be answered within 48 hours. The new law also allows authorities to grant access without issuing a formal decision where the request is fully granted and no restriction applies.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Applicants may appeal against a refusal, a partial refusal, a notification that information is already published, or administrative silence where the institution fails to respond on time. Unlike under the previous law, appeals are now filed directly with the Agency for Personal Data Protection and Free Access to Information (AZLP) within 15 days of receiving the decision or notification. In cases of administrative silence, the applicant submits the original request and proof that it was delivered to the authority. AZLP must decide on the appeal within 30 days, and the authority must implement the Agency's decision without delay, and no later than 8 days after receiving it. If the information is classified or the applicant remains dissatisfied after the appeal procedure, an administrative court dispute may be initiated.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

FOI is frequently used to obtain:

- public procurement documentation and contracts;
- public spending and budget execution data;
- salaries and compensation of public officials and managers;
- information on subsidies, grants and state aid;
- lists of public employees and organisational structures;
- contracts involving state-owned enterprises and infrastructure projects.

Specific, document-based requests usually work best. For example, requests asking for identifiable contracts, reports or payment records tend to succeed more often than broad questions or requests requiring analysis.

Can you give examples of loopholes in requests that are mostly rejected?

Authorities may restrict access after conducting a harm and public interest test. Common grounds for restriction include:

- privacy and personal data;
- national security and classified information;
- criminal investigations;
- internal consultations during decision-making;
- commercial secrecy and competition concerns;
- intellectual property and tax secrecy;
- intelligence and defence information.

Authorities may also reject requests that require creating a new document, giving legal opinions, producing analyses or answering abstract questions not based on existing records. In practice, NGOs have long criticised administrative silence and overly broad use of confidentiality exceptions. [MANS](#) and other civil society groups continue to monitor these patterns and support strategic use of FOI.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Subject: Request for Free Access to Information

To: [Institution]

According to the Law on Free Access to Information of Montenegro, I request access to the following information/documents:

[Describe the requested information or documents as precisely as possible.]

I request access in the following form:

[Inspection / electronic copy / scanned copy / postal delivery]

Applicant:

Name

Address / Email

Date and signature

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Most institutions publish FOI contacts and guides on their websites. Appeals are handled by:

Agency for Personal Data Protection and Free Access to Information (AZLP)

Bulevar Revolucije 11, Podgorica

Email: azlp@azlp.me

Phone: +382 20 621 506

Note that Government ministries and agencies also maintain dedicated FOI pages and official email addresses.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in Montenegro?

Several organisations provide assistance and guidance:

- MANS (Network for the Affirmation of the NGO Sector) [offers](#) legal assistance, monitoring and the “Ask the Institutions” service for FOI requests;
- Centre for Civic Education (CGO/CCE) offers [guides](#) and training materials on transparency and access to information;
- Centre for Monitoring and Research (CEMI) offers a [guide](#) to FOI
- AZLP has official guidance, forms and appeal procedures.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists?

Journalists frequently seek assistance from civil society organisations experienced in transparency and anti-corruption work. [MANS - Ask the Institutions](#) provides support with drafting requests and using FOI strategically in investigative reporting. Journalists may also contact media-support organisations working on transparency, accountability and freedom of expression in Montenegro.

Netherlands

How to make a request

A Freedom of Information request, known as a “Woo” in Dutch, can be submitted to any “bestuursorgaan” (administrative body) of the Dutch state, provinces, municipalities, water boards and many independent administrative bodies (zbo’s) such as De Nederlandsche Bank, UWV, TNO).

You can submit a request orally or in writing (including by email or web form), but written submissions, preferably by e-mail or registered post, are strongly advised because of detail, and proof of submission if the case ends in legal proceedings later.

Your request should contain:

- a statement that it is a Woo request;
- a detailed description of the documents you want and/or specific topic you want documents about;
- your name, address and contact details;
- date;
- your signature.

Can I make requests in English?

The Woo explicitly grants the right of access to anyone, regardless of nationality or place of residence.

The guidance does not prescribe language, but Dutch is the working language of Dutch administrative bodies; in practice, requests are expected (and processed more smoothly) in Dutch, so it is advisable to submit in Dutch or at least to add a Dutch version. However, requests submitted in English are also processed in the regular manner.

Does it cost money?

No, submitting a Woo request does not cost any money. Both the initial request stage and the administrative appeal stage are free of charge. No fees will be charged if you receive the information in digital format. If you request paper copies, you may be charged the actual copying costs.

If you need to go to court because the authority fails to respond in time, or because you disagree with the decision on your administrative appeal, you will have to pay a court fee (griffierecht). The court fee is currently €200 for individual applicants and €397 for organisations.

You will be reimbursed for these court fees if you do not lose the case entirely.

Under what law can I make requests?

Requests are made under the Wet open overheid (Woo), successor to the Wet openbaarheid van bestuur (Wob).

The Woo applies to documents held by Dutch administrative bodies, including many national institutions, provinces, municipalities, water boards and certain high constitutional bodies (States General, Council of State).

Time frame for a response

The authority must decide “as soon as possible”, and in any case within 28 days of receiving the request. This period can be extended once by 14 days, but you must be notified of the extension in writing before the first deadline expires. The response time may also be extended by a few weeks to allow third parties to submit their views.

In practice, ministries often take far longer to reply: research (2025) showed an average of 143 days, and a processing time of around half a year is described as “more the rule than the exception”.

How to appeal ignored or (partially) rejected requests

- If there is no timely decision, you can send a “ingebrekestelling” (notice of default) after the deadline has passed; the authority then has 2 more weeks to respond.
- If there is still no decision, you can file a direct appeal with the court; the court can set a new deadline and impose a penalty payment (dwangsom).
- If you disagree with a decision, you can file a bezwaarschrift (administrative objection) within 6 weeks, challenging the exceptions applied and/or the quality and scope of the search.
- After the objection decision (18 weeks after the primary decision), you can go to court (beroep) and then appeal at higher court (hoger beroep); each judicial phase takes about a year.
- Journalists and other professionals can also turn to the Adviescollege Openbaarheid en Informatiehuishouding (Advisory Board on Public Access and Information Management), which has a mediation role in Woo disputes. However, it cannot make binding decisions.

Examples of successful requests

The broad nature of Dutch FOI law means that, in most cases, at least some documents are disclosed. It thus allows reconstruction of the policy-making process of Dutch authorities.

Because the definition of “document” is broad (notes, emails, videos, attachments, underlying data, drafts), journalists may trace how decisions were made, by targeting the right bodies.

Loopholes and often rejected areas

Numerous bodies and sectors remain harder to access because of special laws (lex specialis): for example, De Nederlandsche Bank and the Financial Markets Authority may refuse information under supervisory laws; intelligence services AIVD/MIVD have their own regime under the intelligence services act.

The semi-public sector is a significant blind spot: foundations and companies that perform public tasks but are organised privately (including government-owned companies) are generally not covered by the Woo, unless they exercise public authority or the government exercises decisive control over their operations. For instance, public universities are covered but the private Radboud and VU universities are not.

Some exceptions are structurally used to withhold information, such as:

- the protection of personal privacy;
- the economic or financial interests of public authorities;
- inspection, control and supervisory activities;
- internal deliberations.

Template for a typical Woo request

A typical formulation looks like this:

Subject: Request under the Wet open overheid (Woo)

*To: [Name of body / Minister / College van B&W etc.]
[Postal address or e-mailaddress]*

[Place], [Date]

Dear Sir/Madam,

*With reference to the Wet open overheid (Woo), I request a copy of **all documents held by or otherwise under the control of your organisation** relating to **[clearly defined subject]**, for the period from **[start date]** to **[end date]**.*

By “documents” I mean emails, notes, reports, attachments, minutes, internal memoranda, presentations, datasets and any other recorded information related to this subject.

This request includes, among other things (waaronder):

- *[specific document or type]*
- *[specific document or type]*

I request that the documents be provided in digital form (PDF or a machine-readable format where possible) and sent to me at the email address below.

*I also request that an **inventory list** be included in the decision, indicating for each document whether it is fully released, partially withheld or fully withheld, and on which exception each withholding is based.*

My contact details are:

Name: [name]

Address: [postal address]

Telephone: [number]

Email: [email]

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name]

Some additional tips::

- Use the official terminology for the subject and documents (adopt the government’s jargon).
- Limit the time period of your request sensibly, but make sure it starts early enough to include the preparatory phase of the decision-making process.
- If relevant, explicitly state that the request concerns **environmental information** and, if applicable, emissions data, and remind the authority that exceptions may not apply or can be applied only restrictively to such information.

Contact addresses for frequently targeted institutions

A good overview of administrative bodies can be found [here](#).

The [Woo-generator](#) allows you to choose a body from a list, and automatically inserts its address, but you should check whether this address is still current.

For up-to-date contact details, check the website of the relevant institution, where Woo/Wob pages and addresses for Woo requests are typically listed.

Additional FOI resources in the Netherlands

- **Active publication portals and document sites** (to check before filing a request):
 - Rijksoverheid [documents page](#) and [archive](#)
 - [Officiële bekendmakingen](#)
 - [Parliamentary documents search](#)
 - [National legislation](#)
 - [Local regulations](#)
 - [Generieke Woo-voorziening](#)
 - [WooZM](#)
 - [oPub.nl](#)

Contact points for help for journalists

Within the Netherlands the chapter highlights one main journalistic support structure and one official body:

Vereniging van Onderzoeksjournalisten (VVOJ) – Woo working group

VVOJ has a **Woo workgroup** that organises meetings and is explicitly aimed at helping journalists with Woo practice. The working group is explicitly aimed at helping journalists with Woo practice.

Expertisecentrum SPOON

SPOON is an NGO organisation that advocates for the exercise of this right to access public information. On their website you can [find](#) step-by-step modules for how to deal with various issues coming up during Woo-procedures (in Dutch). It has developed two tools for journalists using the Woo:

- the [Woo-generator](#)
- the [Woo-button](#)

[Adviescollege Openbaarheid en Informatiehuishouding \(ACOI\)](#)

Journalists and other “people with a professional interest in the Woo” (such as researchers) can submit complaints to this advisory body about the handling of their Woo requests or about lack of transparency. ACOI can mediate and/or issue an advisory opinion.

North Macedonia

How do I make a request?

You can submit a request:

- In writing (recommended), by email or post.
- Orally — but written requests are better because they create evidence.
- You should submit it directly to the institution holding the information (“information holder”).

Can I make requests in English?

No. The right to free access to information is exercised in the official language of the state. Macedonian is the official language, as well as the languages of other communities comprising more than 20% of the population (this means that requests may be submitted in Albanian in all central-level institutions, or in municipalities where the Albanian community exceeds 20%). Legally, the law does not exclude foreign applicants. In practice, requests in English are sometimes accepted, but responses may be delayed or ignored.

Does it cost money?

Access to information under the Law is free of charge. You may pay only for material costs, such as photocopying, printing, or scanning) Reviewing documents is free of charge (standard FOI principle reflected in the law and practice). Ask for electronic copies to avoid fees.

Under what law can I make requests?

Law on Free Access to Public Information (Official Gazette No. 101/2019).

Constitutional basis: Article 16 of the Constitution guarantees free access to information.

Oversight body: Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.

What is the time frame for a response?

20 days from receiving the request.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

If: (1) you receive no answer, or (2) the request is rejected, you may file a complaint with the Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information. Deadline: within 15

days after the initial deadline expires or after receiving a rejection. Authorities are meant to provide an official complaint form.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

So far we have submitted access-to-information requests to institutions concerning statistical indicators of their work for the previous year, specifically related to the implementation of the Law (how many requests they received, how many were answered, how many were rejected, etc.). The responses are a successful example.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Exceptions are stipulated in the Law.

Article 6: (1) The holders of information may reject the application for access to:

- 1) information which, based on the law, represents classified information with an adequate degree of classification;
- 2) personal data the disclosure of which would mean violation of personal data protection;
- 3) information the disclosure of which would mean violation of the confidentiality of the tax procedure;
- 4) information acquired or compiled for the purposes of an investigation, a criminal or misdemeanor procedure, for conducting an administrative or civil procedure, and the disclosure of which would have harmful consequences for the course of the procedure;
- 5) information that endangers the rights arising from industrial or intellectual property (patent, model, sample, trademark and service mark, designation of origin of the product).

Refusals also occur due to an overly broad interpretation of what personal data is, for example. Institutions sometimes misinterpret what qualifies as classified information, leading to over-classification of information — meaning they deny access even though the information is not classified under another law.

Some of the implementation problems are delays, administrative silence (mute refusal), over-classification.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

A standard form has been established for submitting a request for free access to information. For example, a good request would include following:

Please provide information on the total number of appeals submitted by applicants against your institution for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2025 in procedures related to free access to public information, as well as a breakdown of the number of appeals in cases where there were:

- *rejected or dismissed requests, with the reasons stated for each rejected or dismissed request;*
- *failure to act upon the request, i.e. unanswered requests (administrative silence);*
- *appeals submitted against first-instance decisions issued by your institution (including a description of your decision and the reasons for that decision in cases of repeated refusal to provide the requested information).*

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Most requests are submitted to the Government, ministries, and municipalities. All their addresses and email contacts are available on their websites in dedicated sections for free access to information, as well as on the website of the [Agency for Free Access](#) (although at time of writing the website is currently not functioning).

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

Guides for applicants on how to exercise the right of access to information more easily are available [here](#).

[This is a useful guide](#) for journalists, although it has not been updated recently.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Our organisation can assist applicants (especially journalists), as we have done previously, in formulating and submitting requests for free access to information. You can contact us at info@metamorphosis.org.mk.

Norway

How do I make a request?

Requests can be made by anyone. You do not need to be a citizen or even a resident.

Requests can be made by any means of contact with a public office. E-mail, postal requests or searchable public records-portals such as elnnsyn.no are common.

Norwegian journalists do practise right-to-information requests in the same way as colleagues in other countries. But there is another option in Norway which is very popular, and country-specific to here.

Approximately 500,000 information requests every year in Norway are document-specific requests made through online portals like [elnnsyn](https://elnnsyn.no) that allow the user to browse metadata from millions of public documents. Requests done in this manner with precise archive references are time-saving and allow the user to know in advance that a document is actually there.

In Norway, a postal address is not necessary to include in the request unless you ask them to provide paper copies of the documents in question. The minimum requirement is to provide an email address. It is recommended that you use your name and title as a journalist, but if you feel a need to protect your identity while asking for documents, you are allowed to.

Can I make requests in English?

All official languages in Norway can be used, as well as English.

Does it cost money?

No.

Under what law can I make requests?

The law governing access to documents requests is Act of 19 May 2006 No. 16 relating to the right of access to documents held by public authorities and public undertakings (short title: [Freedom of Information Act](#)). It has been in force since January 2009.

It covers all levels of Norwegian public sectors such as municipalities, counties and government agencies. It also covers many of the companies that are 50% or more owned by public authorities, although there are exceptions to this rule.

What is the time frame for a response?

The law gives the institution 1-3 working days to provide a reply. Failure to give a reply within 5 working days can be considered a refusal (without legal basis). When a request is

considered to be “complicated”, a public institution may indicate to the requester that a few extra days are needed.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Requesters can file an administrative appeal in case their request is rejected, documents are heavily redacted or they are waiting for their reply beyond the official deadline. Appeals are usually handled by a more senior person within the same institution.

An appeal must be filed within 3 weeks after receiving a refusal to the original request.

An appeal in Norway should be filed with the public institution which refused the first request. It is they who prepare the appeal case for a superior public institution in Norway.

This kind of decentralised appeal system works up until a government ministry eventually refuses a request. At this point, the next level is to bring the appeal before the government itself, which is a dead end. No person has ever been heard with an information request in a Norwegian government meeting, and if you try this, you will be barred from trying the case with ‘the Ombudsman’. After being refused by a ministry, Norwegian journalists go directly to [The Parliamentary Ombud for Scrutiny of Public Administration](#) as a last resort.

The Ombudsman also makes public its decisions, which can become part of a story.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Here are a few examples of things that journalists have tried to get over the years, but where the chances of success are very low:

Documents from Cabinet meetings: While a number of decisions of the Cabinet are published openly, the routine for the rest of the Cabinet meetings in Norway is that they are archived and remain under seal for the period determined by each prime minister. The seal usually lasts 30 years after a prime minister leaves office.

Documents from ongoing police investigations: Police investigation documents are exempt from the right-to-information law in Norway. There are some opportunities to ask to see those in other legislation, but those requests are typically denied as long as the investigation is ongoing. Chances are higher in closed cases. However, even in such instances documents will not be released – journalists might be invited to view them at the police station.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Dear *[institution/name]*

Under the right of access to documents in the Norwegian law (offentleglova) of 2006, I am requesting documents which contain the following information:

- XX

- YY
- *preferably between this year [20xx] and this year [20xx]*

I would like the documents to be sent to me by e-mail at the following address:

xxxx@xxxxx.xx

Kind regards,

[name]

[add phone number if you feel you can – it is a good idea to be open to discuss the details of the requests with archivists]

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Each Norwegian institution has its own point of contact for access to documents requests.

The best way to find the direct email to the archive, or people dealing with right-to-information-requests in every arm of Norwegian bureaucracy, is this:

1. Go to the [official portal](#);
2. Choose English language interface;
3. Click on the “State” button to see the list of government institutions, and select the one of interest to you;
4. Click on any listed document from that institution in the list of document metadata, which will then show more information;
5. The window that opens contains more information about the government institution that holds the document you just clicked on, including physical address and e-mail directedly to their archive. This is the best email to use when filing an RTI request in Norway.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

The Norwegian Press Association has a [guide](#) on the use of right to information tools in Norway.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Tarjei Leer-Salvesen (tarjei@leer-salvesen.no)

Sindre Granly Meldalen, journalist and lawyer, Norwegian Press Association
(sindre.granly.meldalen@presse.no)



How do I make a request?

Usually it's enough to send an e-mail, which should include:

1. the general legal basis (the law on access to public information);
2. your preferred method of receiving the information (paper or electronic correspondence, or personal access to documents);
3. your name.

When an institution wants to refuse your request, it will ask you to send a signed version on paper or with a virtual signature (via ePUAP platform).

Can I make requests in English?

No.

Does it cost money?

The process is generally free of charge. However, the disclosing entity can charge you a fee corresponding to any additional costs incurred due to the requested method of disclosure, or the need to convert the information into a specified format.

Under what law can I make requests?

[The law on access to public information](#) or in cases related to the environmental information, the [law on access to information on the environment and its protection, public participation in environmental protection, and environmental impact assessments](#).

What is the time frame for a response?

14 days, but it can be extended to 2 months.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

If a body ignores a request, you can also notify the prosecutor's office. Failure to disclose information "contrary to the obligation" is punishable by up to 1 year in prison. Sometimes it is enough to inform the body that if you do not receive a response, you will file a complaint and notify the prosecutor's office, and the information will magically appear.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Thanks to the law on access to public information and rulings by the Supreme Administrative Court, it was possible, for example, to secure free access to all Supreme Court rulings. In the process, it came to light that judges had previously earned substantial sums from their work with a publishing house.

I collected [a few other examples](#) given by Polish journalists 4 years ago.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

The most common grounds for refusal are “business secrecy” and grounds (established by legal precedent) that “internal documents” are not to be considered public information.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Dear Sir or Madam,

Pursuant to the Act on Access to Public Information, I kindly request answers to the following questions:

- 1.
2. ...

Please send the above information to xyz@zyx.com

Yours sincerely,

Name

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Office of the prime minister: bip@kprm.gov.pl

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

This NGO specialising in access to public information, [Sieć Obywatelska Watchdog Polska](#), helps journalists and activists with writing requests and appealing to courts.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

You can also contact my outlet: Frontstory.pl founded by Fundacja Reporterów, or me personally (Daniel Flis, daniel.flis@fundacjareporterow.org or d.flis@protonmail.com)

Portugal

How do I make a request?

Although some requests can be made verbally, they must generally be submitted in writing to the official (physical or digital) address of the institution. Institutions must make a (non-mandatory) request form available, but most do not. Institutions should publicly list their FOI Officer, but most do not.

Requests should identify a precise document or set of documents, and include your name, relevant personal identification data, and contact information. Whilst you can request information, institutions only have to provide documents which they already possess and have no duty to "create or adapt documents [...] nor to provide extracts of documents, if that entails a disproportionate burden that goes beyond simply manipulating them." (Lei 26/2016, art.13, 6)

Requests do not need to state a reason for access. But if any legal exclusions may be applicable, you'll need to either argue why they're not, or defend an overriding public interest reason to access it nonetheless, as detailed below.

Can I make requests in English?

No, generally not.

Does it cost money?

Not if you're consulting the documents in person, or if the documents have already been digitised and you request them digitally. But institutions can charge (any amount) to digitise documents, provide photocopies, or for the labour of redacting information. Practices vary, particularly at a local level.

Under what law can I make requests?

Through the Access to Administrative Documents Law, known as LADA (Lei n.º 26/2016), or the "regime de acesso à informação administrativa e ambiental e de reutilização dos documentos administrativos".

But note that:

1) Some bodies are exempt from LADA (including the Ombudsperson, the Provedoria de Justiça);

2) Some types of documents held by institutions subject to LADA are not subject to

LADA, in particular police and court proceedings related to specific cases (even though the management of the court or the police force itself is subject to LADA);

3) Some documents are subject both to LADA and more restrictive legislation on the classification of documents, including Lei Orgânica 2/2014.

What is the time frame for a response?

Legally, 10 working days, although institutions can justify extending that deadline to up to 2 months (60 calendar days) "in exceptional cases, if the volume or complexity of information justifies it". If a request is not considered precise enough, bodies should ask for clarifications within 5 working days. These deadlines are very rarely respected.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

You have 20 calendar days to appeal, running from the date at which the response deadline expires or you are notified of a refusal.

Whilst you can go directly to the courts, it's better to first file a free written complaint (by post or email) to the oversight body, Comissão de Acesso a Documentos Administrativos, explaining your request, and why you believe the institution did not comply, fully or in part. CADA generally emits an opinion on requests by journalists (which are considered urgent) within 2 to 6 months. Institutions then have 10 working days to deliver a "final justified Decision".

Statistically, most institutions voluntarily comply with CADA's recommendations. But, in case they still refuse, or only partially comply, you must get a court order by filing a "petição de intimação para a prestação de informações, consulta de processos ou passagem de certidões" in the local administrative court within 20 calendar days of the refusal.

The court should reach a decision within about 3 months (for journalists) but delays mean the proceedings at times extend beyond 2 years, without counting the appeal process.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Documents relating to the environment enjoy particular legal privilege, so requests are often successful. Most public contracts with private companies or other public institutions are accessible, and a lot of them should be proactively published through BASE. Requests for purely statistical data (which has already been compiled by institutions) are generally successful, and some institutions share open data through dados.gov.pt, a consolidated platform. Documents on financial management and yearly activity reports should also be proactively published, and are made available.

Requests to access documents in historical archives (contents also under Decreto-Lei 16/93) are generally successful, and institutions often list those catalogues online. Requests aimed at larger institutions, and regulatory bodies, are more likely to be successful, since they're better equipped to respond.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Most requests, to most institutions, are ignored, no matter what they're about, because organisations haven't set up any structure to deal with FOI laws. This often means requests must be followed up on, and you should explain your right to access (which also explains why most decisions by CADA are complied with once institutions learn of their existing obligations).

When requests are considered, refusals often provide no legal justification, as they're based solely on institutions not wanting to release documents.

When there's a reason provided, the biggest limitation is the current definition of "personal data": since 2016, documents containing any personally identifiable information may be argued to fall under privacy limitations, which previously applied only to documents containing sensitive personal information. So the privacy waiver has been used, for example, to deny access to a public contract because it included the name of the contractor's contact person, or to make it impossible to access disciplinary proceedings. If documents contain any personal data, you may be asked to include an authorisation from everyone mentioned in it, or you'll have to argue you have a "direct, personal, legitimate and constitutionally protected interest" in accessing documents, which, for journalists is often done through the constitutional right to inform and be informed, and the Journalists' statute (Lei n.º 1/99, article 8, point 3).

Whilst documents should simply be redacted to remove such personal data, institutions at times argue this would create "a disproportionate burden" which they're not legally obliged to bear. The same excuse is given to make other, existing exemptions more far reaching — in particular, to refuse to provide even redacted versions of documents which "may bring into question the fundamental interests of the State", or are "susceptible" to:

- a) "affect the effectiveness" of supervision or oversight;
- b) "jeopardize the operational capacity or security of facilities or personnel of" the Armed Forces, the intelligence services, security and police bodies, adult and juvenile prisons, diplomatic and consular representations, or critical infrastructure;
- c) "cause serious and difficult-to-reverse damage to the property or financial interests of third parties that exceeds the property and interests protected by the right to access Information".

These limitations (LADA, article 6, point 7) should apply only "for the time strictly necessary

to safeguard other legally relevant interests", but institutions at times claim documents are classified indefinitely. Classification of documents, as CADA pointed out in the past, is often done without regard for the actual stipulations of the state secrets law. There's a high likelihood that any requests aimed at institutions named in the Article 6 exclusions will be refused.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

To the Responsável pelo Acesso à Informação of [Y]

I'd like file a request to consult the documents/datasets in your possession pertaining to [X] which fall under the remit of administrative documents, regulated by LADA, Lei [26/2016](#). [Include, if available, the exact title of documents, the date they were produced, and the specific department within an institution which possesses them]

If this request does not clearly identify documents in your possession, I'm available to provide further information on what I'm looking for, to make it more precise.

I'd appreciate if the documents/data were sent digitally to the email I'm submitting this request from. Please inform me in case there's a need to extend the response deadline, from 10 working days to 2 months.

[If data or documents may fall under a legal waiver, including privacy laws, explain why the waiver would not apply, or lay out the public interest reason to access them nonetheless, specifically referencing the constitutional right to information.]

Thank you,

[Your name]

[Your address and contact information]

[Digital signature]

Ao cuidado da pessoa nomeada Responsável pelo Acesso à Informação

Gostaria de submeter um pedido para consultar os documentos/bases de dados na vossa posse que tratem [X] e se encontrem sujeitos ao regime de acesso à informação administrativa, regulado pela LADA, lei [26/2016](#). [Include, if available, the exact title of documents, the date they were produced, and the specific department within an institution which possesses them]

Se este pedido não identificar de forma suficientemente clara documentos na vossa posse, estou disponível para providenciar mais informação sobre aquilo que procuro, de forma a torná-lo mais preciso.

Apreciaria se os documentos/dados fossem submetidos por via digital para o email desde o qual estou a submeter este pedido. Por favor informe-me caso não seja necessário prorrogar o prazo de resposta, de 10 dias úteis para dois meses.

[If data or documents may fall under a legal waiver, including privacy laws, explain why the waiver would not apply, or lay out the public interest reason to access them nonetheless, specifically referencing the constitutional right to information.]

Obrigada/o

[Your name]

[Your address and contact information]

[Digital signature]

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Whilst all public institutions should list the direct contact of an FOI Officer, only 5% have filled in the centralised form made available by CADA. The official (digital and physical) addresses for most public institutions are centralised in the State Organization Information System, SIOE — Sistema de Informação da Organização do Estado .

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

Besides CADA, which provides some resources explaining LADA, and is fairly responsive, I'm not aware of any organisation dedicated to FOI in Portugal.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

I'll help! gagodacamaraviegas@gmail.com

Romania

How do I make a request?

In Romania, FOI requests can be submitted by email, post, fax, or delivered in person. Email is the standard and most efficient method. Requests do not need a specific format, and you don't have to justify your interest. You simply specify the information you want and reference the FOI law (Law 544/2001).

Can I make requests in English?

No, generally not.

Does it cost money?

Filing a request is free. Institutions may charge copying/printing fees if you request physical documents, but that happens very rarely and digital delivery is free.

Under what law can I make requests?

Law 544/2001 on Free Access to Public Information.

What is the time frame for a response?

- 10 days for straightforward requests
- 30 days if the institution needs more time

They must notify you within the first 10 days if they want to extend the deadline. Ignoring the request is a violation of the law.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

In two steps:

1. Administrative Complaint (reclamație administrativă) – the complaint needs to be filed within 30 days after the deadline expires or after refusal.
2. If ignored again, you can sue the institution under administrative law (Tribunalul București or the local tribunal). Courts generally rule quickly in FOI cases, and journalists often win.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

- Obtaining DIICOT or police procedural decisions (with personal data redacted);
- Access to procurement contracts and budgets of public institutions;

- Obtaining disciplinary decisions of public servants;
- Data sets on pollution, fishing quotas, public spending, infrastructure projects, etc.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or frequently rejected requests?

- Anything involving ongoing investigations (prosecutors often over-classify);
- State-owned companies sometimes avoid transparency, claiming “commercial secrecy”;
- National security institutions use broad exemptions (SRI, SIE, Army);
- Personal data is heavily redacted, sometimes excessively;
- Some institutions ignore the law hoping the journalist won’t appeal.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

English:

To: *[Institution]*

Subject: Request for public information under Law 544/2001

Dear Sir/Madam,

According to Law 544/2001 on free access to public information, I kindly request access to the following information:

[Describe clearly and precisely what you need]

Please provide the information in digital format by email.

Thank you,

Name

Email

Phone (optional)

Romanian:

Către: *[Instituție]*

Subiect: Solicitare de informații publice în baza Legii 544/2001

Stimată doamnă / Stimate domn,

În conformitate cu prevederile Legii 544/2001 privind liberul acces la informațiile de interes public, vă rog să îmi puneți la dispoziție următoarele informații:

[Descrie clar și precis informațiile solicitate]

Vă rog ca informațiile să îmi fie transmise în format digital, prin e-mail.

Vă mulțumesc,

Nume

Email

Telefon (opțional)

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

- Ministry of Interior: comunicare@mai.gov.ro
- Ministry of Justice: relatii publice@just.ro
- Ministry of Environment: solicitari544@mmediu.ro
- Bucharest Court of Appeal: infocabuc@just.ro
- Tribunal Bucharest: trb-birp@just.ro
- Romanian Police: legea544@politiaromana.ro
- Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT):
presa@diicot.ro

What additional resources exist for using FOI in Romania?

- [Centrul pentru Jurnalism Independent \(CJI\)](#) – FOI guides
- [Freedom House Romania](#) – transparency projects
- [Rise Project](#) – FOI survival tools
- [Funky Citizens](#) – public budget transparency tools

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in Romania?

- Matei Bărbulescu, independent journalist: matei.barbulescu@gmail.com
- FOI specialists from Funky Citizens



How to make a request

You can submit a written request to the public authority. The request must include:

- The name of the authority;
- Your name and address (or the name and address of your organisation);
- A precise description of the information you are seeking.

You are not required to provide a reason for your request. While authorities may provide a specific form, they must still consider requests submitted without it. You can also make an oral request, which an authorised person will record in a special register.

Can I make requests in English?

No, according to the law, you may try, but the institution is not obligated to respond to requests in English.

Does it cost money?

Inspecting a document is free of charge.

Copies and mailing involve a fee to cover the necessary costs of production and delivery, based on a schedule set by the Government.

Exemptions: Journalists (for professional use), human rights organisations, and individuals requesting information about public health or the environment are exempt from these fees. An exception is [The Business Registers](#), that charge for documentation even to journalists.

Under what law can I make requests?

Requests are made under the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance (Zakon o slobodnom pristupu informacijama od javnog značaja).

What is the time frame for a response?

- **Standard requests:** Authorities must respond without delay, and no later than 15 days.
- **Urgent requests:** If the information concerns the protection of life, freedom, public health, or the environment, the response must be provided within 48 hours.
- **Extensions:** If the request involves a large volume of documents, the authority may extend the deadline to 40 days, provided they notify you within 7 days.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

If your request is ignored ("silence of administration") or rejected, you can file an appeal with the Commissioner within 15 days of receiving a refusal, a response or after the deadline expiring.

Note: For specific high-level bodies—such as the National Assembly, the President of the Republic, the Government of the Republic of Serbia, the Supreme Court of Cassation, the Constitutional Court, the National Bank of Serbia, or the Republic Public Prosecutor — you cannot appeal to the Commissioner. Instead, you must initiate an administrative dispute (lawsuit) in court directly.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Obtaining criminal complaints or indictments, as well as judgments, will in most cases not be a problem in Serbia, especially when it comes to Misdemeanor or Commercial Court.

The same applies to documentation from the business register (except for copies of ID cards, which the business register has recently stopped providing to journalists). Inspections conducted by ministries should also not pose a problem.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

In practice, it is almost impossible to obtain documentation from the prosecutor's office concerning the most important ongoing proceedings in the country, or those related to political and other scandals, as well as contracts and contract annexes that the Government has concluded with foreign investors in the country. In specific cases, such as projects of public interest or those that are particularly important — like the Rio Tinto mine — it is nearly impossible to obtain information from any institution.

The Ministry of Defense generally does not provide information, citing secrecy. More and more institutions reject requests, claiming it would jeopardise national security.

Contracts that government institutions make with private companies are rarely released through FOI requests, often using NDAs as an excuse.

Access may be denied if providing the information would endanger national security, criminal proceedings, privacy, or professional secrets. Authorities may also reject requests if they consider the number of requests to be an abuse of the right to information.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Please find it online under the “ЗАХТЕВ ЗА ПРИСТУП ИНФОРМАЦИЈИ ОД ЈАВНОГ ЗНАЧАЈА” [here](#).

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Based on the Commissioner's 2024 annual report, the following institutions are among those that received the highest number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests:

- Republic Geodetic Authority (RGZ): pp@rgz.gov.rs
- Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Niš: uprava@nis.apjt.rs
- Belgrade City Administration: ovlascenolice@beograd.gov.rs
- Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP): informacijeodjavnogznacaja@mup.gov.rs
- Ministry of Internal Affairs: dubravka.djurisic@mfa.rs
- Ministry of Education: informacijeodjavnogznacaja@prosveta.gov.rs
- Ministry of Construction: zahtev.iojz@mgsi.gov.rs
- Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure: zahtev.iojz@mgsi.gov.rs
- Ministry of Environmental Protection: ijz@eko.gov.rs

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

Commissioner's Website: The [official site](#) serves as a central hub for FAQs (Questions and Answers), downloadable official forms, and summaries of the legal framework.

Address Book: TA website that contains institutional addresses for FOI requests for all institutions, [Public Information Handbook](#).

Note: In some cases, the addresses are not accurate, and should still be additionally verified.

Information Manuals (Informator o radu): Almost all public authorities are required to publish a Public Information Handbook. These documents contain detailed data on the authority's budget, organisation, and also instructions on how to submit a request for information, including relevant contact addresses.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Dina Đorđević / Center for Investigative Journalism of Serbia (CINS): dina@cins.rs



How do I make a request?

Procedure for requesting information under Act No. 211/2000 Coll. on Free Access to Information (the "Freedom of Information Act"):

- **Submission of a request**

A request for information may be submitted by any of the following means:

- in writing (by post or in person),
- orally,
- by fax,
- by email,
- in any other technically feasible manner.

The request must contain the particulars required by law. If it does not, the obliged entity shall invite the applicant to remedy the deficiencies within at least 7 days. If the applicant fails to remedy the deficiencies, the request will be set aside.

- **Mandatory parts of the request:**

- Addressee: clear identification of the obliged entity (for example, the name of the ministry, municipality, or state agency);
- Applicant: full name and address of residence (if a natural person), or the trade name/company name and registered office (if a legal person);
- Subject matter: precise specification of the information requested;
- Requested method of disclosure: by e-mail, by post, or inspection of the file).

- **Processing of the request**

Time limit: The obliged entity is required to process the request without undue delay. The standard time limit for processing is 12 working days from receipt of the request (or from completion of any required supplementation).

Extension of time limit: For serious reasons (e.g. searching large volumes of records or technical difficulties) the obliged entity may extend the time limit by no more than 8 working days. The obliged entity must inform the applicant without delay of the extension and its reasons.

Referral of the request: If the obliged entity to which the request was addressed does not hold the requested information but knows which entity does, it shall refer the request to the competent authority within 5 days and notify the applicant thereof.

Manner of disclosure and payment of costs: Information shall be disclosed in the manner proposed by the applicant, if possible. If that is not possible, the obliged entity shall agree with the applicant on an alternative manner of disclosure. The obliged entity may charge reimbursement of reasonable material costs incurred (making copies, procuring technical media, and dispatching the information). Upon request, the obliged entity shall inform the applicant of the estimated amount of such reimbursement.

Remedies (appeal): If the obliged entity refuses the request by a formal decision, or fails to decide within the statutory time limit (i.e. deemed refusal), the applicant may lodge an appeal.

Time limit for appeal: An appeal must be lodged within 15 days from receipt of the decision, or from the expiry of the time limit for issuing the decision.

Where to file the appeal: The appeal is filed with the obliged entity that was to decide on the request. The appeal shall subsequently be decided by that entity's superior authority. The appeal may be sent by email or by post. If the appeal is sent by email, it must be accompanied by the physical version of an appeal by post in 3 days.

Can I make requests in English?

Act No. 211/2000 Coll. Free Access to Information (the Freedom of Information Act) does not expressly specify the language in which a request must be submitted.

Notwithstanding the Act's silence on language, general legal rules must be taken into account. The official language on the territory of the Slovak Republic is Slovak, and communication with public authorities is ordinarily conducted in that language.

In practice, this means that:

- The obliged entity (office) is not required to process a request submitted in a foreign language;
- If a request is submitted in English, the obliged entity may regard it as unintelligible or incomplete, and call upon the applicant to supplement or translate it into Slovak, which may cause unnecessary delay;
- The sole statutory exception concerns the right of persons belonging to a national minority to communicate in their language, subject to the statutory conditions; this provision does not apply to English.

To ensure smooth and expeditious handling of your request, it should be submitted in Slovak.

Does it cost money?

Pursuant to Section 21 of Act No. 211/2000 Coll., information is provided free of charge except for reimbursement of material costs. The obliged entity (the office) may require payment of costs actually incurred in preparing the information for you.

Such costs may include:

- Making copies: e.g. costs of paper and printing;
- Procuring technical media: e.g. costs of a USB drive or CD/DVD if you choose such means of delivery;
- Dispatching the information: e.g. postage.

Reimbursement may not exceed the amount of these material costs. The obliged entity is also entitled to waive the fee.

Upon request, the obliged entity must inform you in writing in advance of the estimated amount of the charge for providing the information. In practice, fees are typically waived for small amounts (e.g., a few pages of copies). Detailed fee rates for specific acts are set out in Decree No. 481/2000 Coll. of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, and in the tariff schedule of the relevant obliged entity.

Under what law can I make requests?

Act no. 211/2000 Coll.

What is the time frame for a response?

The time limit for processing a request for access to information is expressly laid down in Section 17 of Act No. 211/2000 Coll. on Free Access to Information.

Standard time limit: The obliged entity (office) must process your request without undue delay, but no later than 12 working days from the date of submission, or from the date on which you remedied any deficiencies.

Extension of the time limit: For serious reasons the obliged entity may extend this time limit, but by no more than 8 working days. Serious reasons include, for example:

- searching for and collecting information at a location other than the office's seat,
- searching for and collecting a larger number of different pieces of information within a single request,
- demonstrable technical difficulties in the search.

The obliged entity must inform you without delay of the extension and its reasons, and must do so before the expiry of the initial 12-day period.

The maximum time limit for processing a standard request is $12 + 8 = 20$ working days.

A special time limit applies for providing information to a blind person in an accessible form (Braille): 15 working days, with the possibility of extension by a further 15 working days.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

The procedure for filing an appeal against a decision of the obliged entity (the office) is governed by Section 19 of Act No. 211/2000 Coll. on Free Access to Information. It is important to distinguish between a request that has been set aside for formal defects and a request that has been refused on its merits. If the obliged entity does not grant your request (even partially), it is required to issue a written decision to that effect. You may also file an appeal where the office fails to decide within the statutory time limit (a deemed decision of refusal).

Procedure:

- **Time limit for filing:** An appeal must be lodged within 15 days of receipt of the decision of refusal, or within 15 days of the expiry of the time limit for issuing the decision.
- **Where to file:** The appeal is filed with the obliged entity that issued — or was required to issue — the decision (i.e. the same office to which you addressed the original request).
- **Who decides:** The appeal is decided by the superior authority of the obliged entity. For example, if the municipal office issued the decision, the appeal is decided by the mayor.
- **Time limit for decision on the appeal:** The appellate authority must decide on the appeal within 15 days of its receipt.

No appeal is available against a set-aside request. Setting-aside a request is not a decision in the proper sense. The obliged entity sets aside the request when it lacks the prescribed particulars (for example, your address is missing or the information requested is not specified), and you fail to remedy the deficiencies within the time allowed after being invited to do so. If your request has been set aside, the remedy is to submit a new, complete request containing all particulars required by law.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

The application is often denied if there is a request for information that needs to be created, such as a chart, a list, or a dataset that doesn't yet exist and would need to be created to satisfy the application. When submitting a request, specify the information in a way that makes it clear that it already exists.

Be careful when formulating requests for multiple pieces of information.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Contact information of the authority

Application for information

*In accordance with § 14 and subsequent provisions of Act No. 211/2000 Coll. on Free Access to Information (hereinafter referred to as the “Freedom of Information Act”), I hereby request the **NAME OF THE AUTHORITY**, as an obliged entity under § 2(1) of the Freedom of Information Act, to provide the following information:*

SPECIFICATION OF THE REQUESTED INFORMATION

I request the requested information to be made available in electronic form sent to [email/postal address]

Information about the applicant:

Name and surname

Address of residence

Contact

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic

Address: Štefanovičova 5, Bratislava, Slovak Republic

Email: info@mfsr.sk (general contact; FOI requests typically directed via official channels on the website)

[FOI contact page](#)

Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic

Address: Pribinova 2,812 72 Bratislava

Email: info@minv.sk (general info, including FOI requests)

[FOI request info](#) (search for FOI or contact details)

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic

Address: Stromová 1,813 30 Bratislava, Slovak Republic

Email: info@minedu.sk

Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic

Address: Ministerstvo spravodlivosti SR, Referát zmluvných vzťahov a prístupu k Informáciám, Račianska 71, 813 11 Bratislava

Email: informacie211@justice.sk

[Website](#)

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

Although Act No. 211/2000 Coll. (the FOI Act) is the fundamental and most well-known instrument for access to information, there are several other important means and legal regulations that ensure transparency and access to public administration data. These instruments often focus on proactive disclosure or specific areas.

Mandatory Disclosure of Information

Much information is publicly available without requiring a formal request. Obligation bearers publish them automatically, as required by law.

Central Register of Contracts: The state, municipalities, regions, and their organisations are required to publish contracts in this publicly accessible online register. A contract not published in the CRC (except for statutory exceptions) is not considered valid. This obligation derives directly from the FOI Act, but functions as a separate and very important tool for transparency.

Websites of Obligation Bearers: Offices and public institutions are required to publish basic information about their activities, organisational structure, decision-making, and the ways to request information from them on their websites.

Open Data: The public administration is supported in publishing information in open, machine-readable formats, facilitating further use. This approach is part of the modernisation and digitalisation of the public administration.

Specific legislation

For certain types of information, separate laws govern access in more detail than the general FOI Act.

Archive Information: Access to archival documents is governed by the Archives and Registries Act, which is also directly referenced by the FOI Act.

Public Registers and Records: The state maintains several publicly accessible registers online, allowing users to obtain specific data without submitting a request under the FOI Act. Each register is governed by its own legislation. Some of the most important include:

- Commercial Register of the Slovak Republic
- Trade License Register of the Slovak Republic
- Real Estate Cadastre
- Register of Financial Statements

Access to Court Decisions

Court decisions are generally public. After anonymisation (removal of personal data), they are published on the websites of the Slovak Ministry of Justice, enabling public oversight of the judiciary.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

[VIA IURIS](#), [Foundation Zastavme Korupciu](#), [Transparency International Slovakia](#), [Platforma pre Demokraciu](#), [Investigatívne centrum Jána Kuciaka](#), etc

Slovenia

How do I make a request?

The request should contain the name of the authority to which it is sent and the name and address of the applicant, the information the applicant wishes to access and the method of delivery (transcript, photocopy, electronic format etc.). There is no need to specify legal grounds, and no further formalities are required.

Government and National Administration, Legislative and Judicial Bodies, private bodies and state-owned companies (both only regarding activities that fall within the scope of their mandate to exercise public duties) fall within the scope of the right of access to information.

In Slovenia all kinds of information can be obtained, even large volumes of documents or formerly classified information. But in some cases the requests require time and patience as some institutions are inclined to deny access by default.

Can I make requests in English?

The law states that administrative procedures, such as formal FOI requests, shall be conducted in the Slovenian language.

Does it cost money?

No, it's free of charge, but the authority may charge material costs exceeding 20 EUR. It can legally do so only if it had published prices of access to documents.

Under what law can I make requests?

They are covered by the [Public Information Access Act](#).

What is the time frame for a response?

Immediately, but no longer than 20 working days from receiving a complete request. In exceptional circumstances, e.g. due to the complex nature of the request, the time limit can be extended by 30 working days. The public body must make the decision on extending the deadline within 15 days of receiving the appeal.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Regarding a freedom of information request that was ignored for more than 20 working days, the applicant should file a [complaint](#) with the Information Commissioner.

Regarding a rejected request, the applicant should file an appeal within 21 days with the requested authority, not the Information Commissioner. Appeal forms — which applicants are not obliged to use — can be downloaded [here](#). Using a draft form prepared by the Information Commissioner is usually the most straightforward way to appeal as the forms ensure that appeals contain all legally prescribed data and information.

If the authority, after receiving the appeal, persists in denying access it must forward the appeal to the [Information Commissioner](#). Its decision must be issued in 1 or 2 months, depending on the case.

If the authority is a company under prevailing influence of the state, the appeal should be filed within 15 days with the Information Commissioner directly.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

The Information Commissioner has a searchable database of previous decisions. It is accessible [here](#).

Examples:

<https://www.ip-rs.si/informacije-javnega-zna%C4%8Daja/iskalnik-po-odlo%C4%8Dbah/pr-osilec-mestna-ob%C4%8Dina-ljubljana-1760958750>

<https://www.ip-rs.si/informacije-javnega-zna%C4%8Daja/iskalnik-po-odlo%C4%8Dbah/pr-osilec-policijska-uprava-koper-1761822220>

<https://www.ip-rs.si/informacije-javnega-zna%C4%8Daja/iskalnik-po-odlo%C4%8Dbah/pr-osilec-medicinska-fakulteta-v-ljubljani-1761120171>

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Requests for access to documents that contain personal data or classified information are usually (partly) rejected. The law also stipulates that authorities can only make decisions about access to public information they are actually in possession of. If they are not (e.g. if the document is not properly stored in the official archive), the Information Commissioner can't access it either.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

The appeal form can be downloaded [here](#).

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

The Communication Office of the Government (gp.ukom@gov.si or Info.Ukom@gov.si)

Each public body has a dedicated official for FOI requests. Their email addresses are available on authorities' websites (i.e. in the Public Information Catalogues).

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

<https://podatki.gov.si/>

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

[Information Commissioner](#) of the Republic of Slovenia, Phone: +386 1 230 97 30

E-mail: gp.ip@ip-rs.si

Slovene Association of Journalists (pisarna@novinar.com, generalni@novinar.com, stik@novinar.com)

Oštro (Slovenia), Center for investigative journalism in the Adriatic region (contact@ostro.si)



Spain

How do I make a request?

Requests can be made by any European citizen or legal resident via official websites. The Spanish institutions provide a 'Transparency Portal' through which requests can be made electronically.

[This](#) is the portal of the Spanish Government and its agencies. In order to submit requests digitally through the portal, you must verify your identity using a Spanish system for electronic ID, or an equivalent from another European country (an eIDAS system).

The rest of the Spanish public bodies and institutions (regional governments, local councils, etc.) have their own digital transparency portals for receiving requests. Each one has its own characteristics and requirements, but they generally request some form of European identity verification system, which excludes non-EU citizens.

Requests are free and are usually submitted digitally via these portals. Responses are usually sent digitally as well, although some institutions (a minority) still send responses by post.

If you cannot use an electronic ID, post is often the only practical option to file a request. It is not a widely used method, but if necessary, requests for information can also be sent [through Spanish post offices or Spanish embassies abroad](#). That system does allow anyone to make requests.

Can I make requests in English?

No. Requests must be made in Spanish or in the country's co-official languages in regions where these are spoken (such as Catalan in Catalonia, Basque in the Basque Country, or Galician in Galicia).

Does it cost money?

No. Depending on the organisation and the type of information you request, they may charge a fee for copies, but this is not common practice.

Under what law can I make requests?

The law governing access to information requests is [Law 19/2013](#). It applies to the Spanish Government and Administration, regional governments and administrations and local councils, as well as many other institutions such as public companies, autonomous bodies,

professional associations or public foundations. FOI requests can also be made, for example, to public media outlets or public universities.

The autonomous communities (the regions into which Spain is divided) have their own transparency laws. They may change the deadlines or the body to which a refusal can be appealed, for example, but this does not mean that the core of the state law no longer applies in those regions. A request can be made to any body, agency or institution in Spain (regardless of the region) by citing Law 19/2013 only.

The judicial power and the legislative power have their own regulations, but they can also receive requests for information under the regulations governing access to information for them. FOI requests can be made, for example, to the [Congress of Deputies](#) or the [General Council of the Judiciary](#).

What is the time frame for a response?

The law gives the institution 1 month (calendar days) to respond. The period begins when the public body formally registers/admits your request.

The period may be extended by another month if the information requested is considered 'complex' or 'voluminous'.

In some regions of Spain, regional laws vary slightly when it comes to time frames, and the institutions and public bodies in those areas must comply with them. The changes are not usually very significant, and in no case can a different time frame exceed the 1 month stipulated by the Spanish national law. For example, institutions in the Community of Madrid have a period of 20 working days to respond.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Requesters can file an appeal (known as a 'reclamación' in Spanish) if their request is rejected, partially rejected, or if they are waiting for their reply beyond the official deadline. You can also appeal if you are not satisfied with the information provided or with how it was provided.

Appeals must be filed within 1 month (calendar days) of receiving the reply. If there has been no response, the appeal may be lodged at any time, once the legal deadline has expired (in practice, after at least 1 month in the state-level system).

Appeals must be submitted [to the Transparency Council](#) ('Consejo de Transparencia y Buen Gobierno' - 'CTBG').

Some regions have their own body, in which case the Transparency Council has no role and the appeals have to be referred to the regional body. For example, [this](#) is the body for the Community of Madrid, and [this one](#) for Catalonia.

If the initial requests are addressed to a regional or local institution and this region has its own appeal body, the complaint must be made to that body. If the requests are addressed to national institutions or to regional or local institutions that do not have their own appeal body, the complaint must be made to the Transparency Council. In any case, if you appeal to the Transparency Council and it is not the competent body, it will usually refer the case to the appropriate body.

In case the appeal does not work, requesters can bring a legal challenge to the Spanish courts. However, this route is likely costly and decisions can easily take more than 1 year.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

In Spain, FOI requests have been used to obtain information about official government travel (such as the [use of official aircraft by prime ministers](#) or [ministers' companions on such trips](#)). They have also made it possible to reveal public salaries that had previously been kept secret, such as those of [public television hosts](#) or executives of public companies, such as [Renfe](#) or [Adif](#).

Similarly, requests are a very good tool for accessing information and documents on contracts or public tender files or specific public expenditure, such as [how much the government spends on advertising in each media outlet](#).

They also enable political oversight by providing access to information such as the [identities and salaries of government advisers](#), and [administrative sanctions imposed on political parties](#).

Requests to access databases held by public institutions, such as data on foreign nationals who come to Spain for certain medical procedures ([such as abortion](#)) or data on companies that rent properties in the country (making it possible to identify [the landlords with more properties](#)) may also be successful.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Despite some exceptions, the law does not usually allow requesters to obtain communications such as emails, letters or text messages, as they are considered internal communication and, therefore, “auxiliary information”, which cannot be obtained via FOI in Spain.

A further common issue concerns datasets that may contain personal data on individuals. Personal data protection in Spain is very strict, and unless the case concerns senior public officials or elected representatives, it is difficult to obtain information that identifies individuals.

The limitations related to ‘economic and commercial interests’ and ‘public safety’ are also among the most commonly used grounds for rejecting requests. Even so, the limitations in Spanish law should not be applied automatically, and partial access can always be an option.

There are further limitations, 12 in total. They are all listed in [Article 14 of Law 19/2013](#) and are different from other grounds for not satisfying requests, such as the auxiliary information exception or the protection of personal data.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Estimado/a [name of the institution or body as specifically as possible],

Al amparo de la Ley 19/2013, de 9 de diciembre, de transparencia, acceso a la información pública y buen gobierno, solicito la siguiente información:

- XX
- YY

[clarifications about the information you request if needed]

Muchas gracias,

Quedo a su disposición para las aclaraciones que estimen oportunas.

[Name]

[mail/phone]

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

In Spain, the units responsible for FOI are called UIT (Transparency Information Units). The email addresses of the UITs of the Spanish ministries and some of the main government agencies can be found [here](#). If you want to contact another agency, you will need to find the contact details for its UIT or transparency department.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

Transparency Portal of the Spanish Government: [Guide on Access to public information](#)

Transparency Portal of the Spanish Government: [Transparency Portals and Transparency Laws of the regions and main cities](#)

Spanish Transparency Council: [Where to appeal in each region](#)

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Sergio Sangiao: ssangiao@infolibre.es, and Access Info Europe: info@access-info.org

Sweden

How do I make a request?

A request for an official document in Sweden does not require a specific format and can be submitted orally or via email. The core legal requirement is that the request must be "sufficiently detailed" to allow the public authority to precisely identify the document.

Authorities have an obligation to assist the requester, utilising internal records and indexes to help narrow the scope.

Most authorities have a register of internal, ingoing and outgoing documents, called *diarium*. The registries are run by a "registrator", to whom you turn. The address will typically be `registrator@....se`.

It usually works to make requests in English.

Does it cost money?

Not to ask, but authorities have a right to charge a fee for printed copies, and in some cases for handling electronic documents. Usually, the first 9 printed copies are free. Authorities have no obligation to provide documents in digital form, but most of them do. (*Tip*: Claiming environmental reasons when asking for digital formats can help.) There is no fee if you meet up in person to read at the offices.

Under what law can I make requests?

Sweden has the oldest law on freedom of information in the world. Sweden's Freedom of the Press Act, or *Tryckfrihetsförordningen*, was first passed in 1766 and is considered one of four constitutional laws. The law establishes the principle of access to all official documents, in Swedish: *offentlighetsprincipen*. Though in reality, you will often bump into *Offentlighets-och Sekretesslagen*, OSL (the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act) a very extensive list of exemptions from the general principle in the constitution.

Find here an official [introduction](#) to the law in Swedish.

What is the time frame for a response?

Short. A request to access an official document must be examined *promptly* (Swedish: *skyndsamt*) by the authority. Often, if not always, from one day to the next.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

A rejected request will always be accompanied by instructions on how to appeal, either to a higher level or to an administrative court. If ignored, you can turn to Justitie Ombudsmannen, [JO](#), the Parliamentary Ombudsmen.

Note: a request to a ministry, (Swedish: *departement*) can be appealed to the government's weekly meetings, which have the final say. If rejected, this political decision cannot be appealed, as Sweden does not have a constitutional court.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

There are numerous examples, for a recent report by Transparency International see [press release](#) (for the report itself with lots of graphics follow the [link](#) in the release).

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Foreign relations, privacy (GDPR). Also, the Aarhus Convention granting wide access to environmental information by overruling secrecy regarding emissions, is a weak spot in Sweden. This was recently [criticised](#) by the UN-body Aarhus Compliance Committee in Geneva. Sweden will now be under observation for a follow up until 2029.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Not necessary, but the balance between being specific and risk missing relevant info and being too broad will always be there. There is also a right to remain anonymous. For a discussion on how to do it, see [this website](#) and/or [this](#) (a help desk for journalists, in Swedish only).

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

[Skatteverket](#) (tax authority), [Försäkringskassan](#) (social security), [Migrationsverket](#) (migration), [Arbetsförmedlingen](#) (employment service), [Polisen](#) (the police) plus regions and municipalities.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

[Handlingar.se](#) is a platform for making and accessing requests.

[“Offentlighed i Norden”](#), a comparative analysis of access to information and data in the Nordic countries published in 2014, by Danish legal expert Oluf Jørgensen. Free download including a summary in English.

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Staffan Dahllöf, staffan@freelancekontoret.dk, +45 21 46 49 92 (phone, Signal, WhatsApp)

Switzerland

How do I submit a request?

Switzerland has a multi-level system with different laws and procedures:

- Federal level: Federal Act on Freedom of Information in the Federal Administration (BGÖ);
- Cantonal level: 26 different cantonal public access laws, some with significant differences;
- In two cantons (Lucerne and Graubünden), municipalities sometimes have their own regulations governing access to their administrative documents.

Federal level:

- Requests under the Freedom of Information Act at federal level can be made informally, meaning: by e-mail, via post or an online form;
- There is an online portal with a [good overview](#) and an [application generator](#);
- There you will also find all the direct contact addresses for the federal offices and an overview of all the authorities and their sub-units;
- The application must be sent directly to the competent federal authority.

Important: At federal level, access is generally free of charge; any fees incurred must be announced in advance.

Cantonal level:

- Procedures vary greatly depending on the canton – there are 26 cantons in Switzerland. They all have different public access laws.
- Some cantons have online forms for access requests, others require written applications, some of which (unlike at federal level) are not informal.
- [This site](#) lists all cantonal contact points and provides an overview of cantonal laws.

Tip: Formulate your request as precisely as possible and limit yourself to specific documents/information. Requests that seem "fishy" are more likely to be rejected. This also applies in some cases to requests that require many documents. However, according to the law, the latter is not a reason for rejection and should be contested. It is often helpful to talk to the responsible authorities and be willing to narrow down the request.

Can I submit requests in English?

No. The official languages are German, French and Italian (in exceptional cases, Romansh).

- Submit applications in the language of the region (DE/FR/IT).

- For follow-up correspondence: Many federal authorities understand English. However, there is no legal requirement for them to process correspondence in English.
- As a rule of thumb, communication works well via tools such as DeepL (or similar).

Are there any costs involved?

Federal level (BGÖ):

- Access to documents is generally free of charge;
- Fees for access to official documents may be charged if the work involved for the authority exceeds eight hours;
- Copying fees may apply (usually CHF 0.50-1 per page) if you request a dossier (physical copies);
- Conciliation proceedings and proceedings for the issuance of a ruling are always free of charge;
- A 50 per cent reduction in fees is granted to members of the media.

Cantonal level:

- The handling of fees varies greatly. In some cantons, it's completely free of charge. In others, the regulations are similar to the federal government ones;
- In this case, you should ask for a cost estimate for extensive requests.

On the basis of which laws can I submit applications?

Federal level:

BGÖ (Federal Act on Freedom of Information in the Administration)

- In force since 1 July 2006;
- Applies to: Federal administration, federal agencies, organisations with administrative tasks;
- <https://www.oeffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch/deutsch/das-gesetz/ueberblick/>

Exceptions to the BGÖ:

- Parliament (parliamentary administration only);
- Federal courts (law applies in administrative matters, not in proceedings);
- Office of the Attorney General (law applies in the administrative sphere, not in proceedings);
- Intelligence service (law applies in the administrative sphere);
- National Bank;
- Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA).

Cantonal level:

All 26 cantons have different regulations:

For an overview, we recommend consulting the cantonal register [here](#).

How long will it take to receive a response?

Federal level:

- Response should arrive within 20 days, 40 days in exceptional cases. However, if you indicate that your request is urgent, you may receive a faster response;
- Complex enquiries can take up to 2-3 months, sometimes longer;

Tip: Mention urgency in your request.

Cantonal level:

- Varies greatly. Many cantons have a statutory deadline of 20-30 days. Some cantons have up to 60 days for complex requests, others have no deadlines at all. A postponement is possible in the case of time-consuming research.

Challenges: Delays can occur, especially with politically sensitive issues. Unlike at the federal level, there is not always a low-threshold arbitration body at the cantonal level.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Federal level:

Step 1: Conciliation procedure with the Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner (FDPIC – German: EDÖB) ([Contact](#))

- Free;
- Duration varies, it can be very quick, but can also take several months;
- Recommendation, but not binding: physical presence is often necessary for mediation;
- Previous decisions can help with formulation. An overview can be found [here](#).

Step 2: Appeal to the Federal Administrative Court

- Note the deadline
- Costs: court fees (several hundred or even thousand CHF, refundable if successful)
- Duration: 1 to 2 years.

Step 3: Appeal to the Federal Supreme Court (especially if arbitrariness can be claimed)

Cantonal level:

- Different legal channels;
- Usually: appeal/complaint to the cantonal appeal authority;
- Then: administrative court of the canton;

- Finally: Federal Supreme Court.
- [Overview](#) of the laws

Tip: If your enquiries are ignored, first send a friendly reminder, then a formal complaint for denial of justice. The [Jusline service](#) provided by Öffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch can help with advice.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

General: A collection of over 1000 searches that have been carried out in Switzerland with the help of public access laws is available [here](#).

Federal level:

- Disclosure of lobby contacts by Federal Councillors
- Expert opinions on draft legislation
- Correspondence between federal offices prior to political decisions
- Contract documents for public procurement (partially redacted)

Cantonal level:

- Police operation reports (e.g. during demonstrations)
- Emails from government councillors on specific projects
- Expert reports on construction projects
- Subsidy award documents

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are usually rejected?

Common reasons for rejection:

Federal level (Art. 7 BGÖ):

- Protection of internal/external security;
- Implementation of a measure in line with its objectives;
- Relations with foreign countries (very broadly interpreted);
- Economic, monetary and currency policy (often applied excessively), both the National Bank and the Financial Market Supervisory Authority (FINMA) are exempt from the principle of public access under federal law;
- “Competition-damaging” requests;
- Documents in preparation for decisions (very problematic for journalists);
- Data protection of private individuals and/or legal entities.

Cantonal level:

- Police/justice: often very restrictive;
- Personal data: very extensively protected, including for politicians and companies (legal entities).

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

[Öffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch](https://www.oeffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch) has a handy application generator for both cantonal and national requests. It also contains the most important contact addresses.

Template for federal authorities:

Subject: Request under the Freedom of Information Act (BGÖ)

Dear Sir or Madam,

Based on the Federal Act on Freedom of Information in the Administration (BGÖ), I hereby submit the following request for access to official documents:

[Precise description of the desired documents, e.g.:

- All email correspondence between [Office X] and [Organisation Y] in the period from [date] to [date] concerning [specific topic]*
- Expert opinions/reports on [specific project]*
- Minutes of meetings of [committee] from [date]]*

Please let me know if any fees are payable.

As a journalist, I work for [publication] and request a fee waiver or reduction in accordance with standard practice for journalistic enquiries.

[Optional: I request prompt processing, as the information is needed for current reporting.]

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

[Contact details]

Template for cantons:

Subject: Request under [*cantonal public access law*]

Dear Sir or Madam,

Based on [*name of cantonal law, e.g. "the Information and Data Protection Act (IDG) of the Canton of Zurich"*], I hereby submit the following request:

[*Description of documents*]

Please inform me of any costs involved.

Yours sincerely,

[*Name*]

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently requested institutions?

Federal level – Most important authorities:

Federal Chancellery

- Email: info@bk.admin.ch
- FOIA requests: oeffentlichkeitsgesetz@bk.admin.ch

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)

- Email: info@eda.admin.ch

Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP)

- Email: info@ejpd.admin.ch

Federal Department of Finance (FDF)

- Email: info@efd.admin.ch

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)

- Email: info@seco.admin.ch

Ombudsman:

Federal Data Protection and Information Commissioner (FDPIC)

- Address: Feldeggweg 1, 3003 Bern
- Tel: +41 58 462 43 95
- Email: info@edoeb.admin.ch
- [Website](#)

Cantonal contact points:

A [complete list](#) can be found at [Öffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch](http://oeffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch)

What additional resources are available for exercising freedom of information in your jurisdiction/country?

Central platform: [Öffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch](https://www.oeffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch)

- Comprehensive information on the federal government and all cantons;
- Sample letters and templates;
- Overview of cantonal laws;
- Court decisions and precedents.

Can you name any contact points for people who want to help journalists in your country?

For expertise on applications and legal support:

- www.oeffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch
- For legal advice, the [Jusline service](#) provided by Öffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch.
- For expertise in the Freedom of Information Act and journalistic research experience: Martin Stoll (info@oeffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch)

For support with research or collaboration:

- [WAV Research Collective](#) (or directly to Balz.oertli@wav.info or Lorenz.naegeli@wav.info)
- Verein Öffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch, www.oeffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch (info@oeffentlichkeitsgesetz.ch)

Turkey

How do I make a request

FOI requests in Turkey are primarily submitted through the Presidential Communication Center ([CİMER](#)) or directly to the relevant public institution.

In practice, filing a request requires a valid Turkish identification number:

- Turkish citizens must provide a Turkish ID number (T.C. Kimlik Numarası);
- Foreign nationals who legally reside in Turkey must have a Foreign Identification Number (Yabancı Kimlik Numarası) in order to submit requests via CİMER or institutional systems.

Requests can be submitted:

- Online via CİMER (the most commonly used channel);
- In writing (by post or in person);
- Electronically via institutional email addresses, where accepted.

Requests must clearly identify the requested information or documents. No justification is required, but clear and specific wording significantly increases the likelihood of success.

Can I make requests in English?

Requests must be submitted in Turkish.

Requests in English are usually ignored or rejected. Journalists who do not speak Turkish typically need assistance from a local partner or translator.

Does it cost money?

Filing an FOI request is free of charge. However, institutions may request a nominal fee per page for copying or printing documents, especially for large files. These fees are generally minimal and are not charged when information is provided in digital format.

Under what law can I make requests?

FOI requests in Turkey are governed by Law No. 4982 on the Right to Information, which came into force in 2003.

Law No. 4982 establishes the general principle that everyone has the right to access information held by public institutions and bodies, subject to certain exceptions defined by law. It applies to:

- Central government institutions;
- Local authorities and municipalities;

- Public universities;
- Regulatory and supervisory bodies;
- Professional organisations with public institution status.

The law allows individuals to request documents, data, and records held by public authorities. Applicants are not required to demonstrate a legal interest or provide justification for their request. However, foreign nationals legally residing in Turkey are generally expected to limit their requests to matters that relate directly to their personal situation or field of activity. Requests perceived as falling outside this scope may be rejected or left unanswered.

However, Law No. 4982 contains broad exemption clauses, including for:

- National security and state secrets;
- Ongoing investigations;
- Internal regulations and preparatory documents;
- Trade secrets and personal data;
- Information whose disclosure could harm the economic interests of the state.

In practice, these exemptions are often interpreted expansively, which can limit access, particularly for journalists working on sensitive topics.

What is the time frame for a response?

Authorities must respond within 15 working days.

If the request requires additional processing or involves multiple institutions, the deadline may be extended to 30 working days, provided the applicant is informed in writing.

In practice, delays and non-responses are common, especially for sensitive topics. According to the [IPI Freedom of Information Tracker](#), between 1 January 2015 and 28 September 2026, journalists and civil society organisations in Türkiye submitted 726 FoI requests.

Of these requests:

- 32% were rejected
- 19% remain pending with no response
- 11% received a partial response

However, the quality of responses remains a major concern. In 63% of cases where a response was provided, the requested information was not disclosed at all, with authorities providing evasive, incomplete, or generic replies instead. Only 8% of all responses fully and comprehensively provided the information requested.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

If a request is rejected or not answered within the legal time limit, journalists have several options.

If the request is explicitly rejected or no response is received within the statutory deadline, an appeal may be filed with the Board of Review of Access to Information ([BEDK](#)) within 15 days of the rejection or the expiry of the response period.

Appealing to BEDK is optional but strongly recommended, as the Board has 30 days to issue a decision and may order the administration to disclose the requested information.

If BEDK rejects the appeal or fails to respond within its own 30-day deadline, journalists may file a lawsuit before the administrative courts.

Importantly, journalists are not required to appeal to BEDK before going to court. Even without filing a BEDK appeal, applicants retain the right to initiate judicial proceedings directly.

The time limit to file a lawsuit before the administrative courts is 60 days, calculated from:

- the date of the rejection decision, or
- the date on which the administration's response deadline expires.

Appeals to BEDK are free of charge and can be submitted online or in writing.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

In September 2024, IPI published [a kick-off report](#) examining how the right to access information is used in practice in Turkey, with a particular focus on journalists and civil society organisations.

The study aimed to understand how FOI works on the ground, identify key challenges, and stimulate debate around a right that remains under-discussed and insufficiently understood, despite being a cornerstone of democratic societies.

The following examples are drawn from this report, which includes additional case studies based on interviews, survey data, and document analysis.

A notable example concerns an FOI request made by journalist Elif İnce following the devastating earthquakes that struck southeastern Turkey on 6 February 2023.

As part of a months-long investigation by The New York Times into the collapse of the Rönesans Residence in Antakya — a building that reportedly killed more than 300 people — journalists sought to understand why a structure marketed as earthquake-resistant had failed so catastrophically.

In March 2023, Elif İnce filed a freedom of information request with the Hatay Governorate, asking:

- which company had been responsible for the building’s construction inspection, and
- requesting access to the relevant inspection documents.

The response came from the Construction Inspection Unit of the Hatay Provincial Directorate of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. While the authority shared information about the inspection company and its staff, it stated that the actual inspection documents were not held by the ministry and should instead be requested from Antakya Municipality, which was identified as the competent authority.

Based on this response, Ince contacted the Zoning Department of Antakya Municipality by phone, shared the ministry’s written reply, and formally requested the inspection records.

Within a few days, the municipality sent more than 120 detailed construction inspection documents via a WeTransfer link.

These records revealed that:

- inspection logs had been kept in a highly irregular manner, contrary to applicable regulations, and
- engineers whose signatures appeared on the inspection documents later denied having carried out the inspections in media interviews.

The documents obtained through FOI requests thus provided critical evidence of negligence during the construction process and became a key factual basis for the investigation.

This case illustrates how:

- persistence across institutions,
- careful use of official responses to identify the competent authority, and
- document-focused requests can lead to substantial and impactful disclosures, even in politically and legally sensitive contexts.

[*Here you can read her NYT story.*](#)

Another illustrative example comes from journalist Emre Kizilkaya, who used FOI requests to report on large-scale internet surveillance practices in Turkey.

In 2022, after reading reports that the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK) had begun collecting and storing all internet traffic in Turkey linked to users’ identities, Kizilkaya submitted several freedom of information requests to the authority. He later reported on the responses in *Journo*.

In his reporting, Kizilkaya noted that an allegation of this magnitude — one that could seriously shake a political authority in a “normal” democracy — had largely gone unnoticed by mainstream Turkish media.

The initial reporting was based on a “confidential” document indicating that BTK had requested internet service providers to submit traffic data for all users in Turkey. Against this background, BTK’s decision not to deny the existence of such a practice in its FOI response was itself significant.

In its reply, BTK defended the data collection scheme and effectively confirmed the core claim of the reporting, while arguing that the content of communications was not being recorded. The authority stated that it did not store information such as:

- visited website names,
- downloaded files,
- written comments or messages, or
- other content-related data.

Kızılkaya later emphasised that the fact that BTK had responded substantively rather than remaining silent was itself an important outcome of the FOI process.

In a subsequent FOI request, he asked how the collected data was being secured. BTK replied that the data was stored on offline archive servers with the highest level of security, located in facilities under constant camera surveillance, and accessible only to authorised personnel via a card-based access system.

This case demonstrates how FOI requests can:

- force authorities to publicly acknowledge controversial practices,
- extract official positions and justifications even when full disclosure is denied, and
- create a documented public record that strengthens investigative reporting.

[*Here you can read his Journo story.*](#)

Can you give examples of loopholes in frequently rejected requests?

The implementation of Turkey’s Freedom of Information Law contains significant limitations and structural weaknesses that frequently hinder effective access to information. In practice, public authorities often rely on broad and vaguely worded exemption clauses to reject requests, sometimes in an arbitrary manner.

Five provisions of the law are most commonly used to deny requests:

Article 7 – “Separate or special work”

Article 7 excludes requests that would require “separate or special work.” The law states that institutions may reject requests for information or documents that would need to be created through additional research, analysis, or compilation.

This vague formulation is frequently used as a blanket justification to deny access, even when the requested information already exists in fragmented or raw form within the institution.

[A concrete example](#) of the misuse of Article 7 involves journalist Elif İnce:

In May 2020, while contributing to COVID-19 coverage for The New York Times, İnce submitted an FOI request to the Turkish Ministry of Health asking for daily COVID-19 case numbers and COVID-related deaths in the provinces of Gaziantep, Rize, and Batman between 14 April and 14 May 2020.

The Ministry rejected the request, arguing that the information would require “separate research and analysis” and therefore fell outside the scope of the law under Article 7. İnce appealed the decision to the Board of Review of Access to Information (BEDK) but received no response. With pro bono legal support, she then filed a lawsuit against the Ministry.

In June 2021, the administrative court ruled in İnce’s favor, finding that the requested data fell within the Ministry’s core duties and should naturally exist in its records. The court held that the data amounted to simple grouping of existing information and did not require special work, warning that a contrary interpretation would enable arbitrary refusals and effectively block access to non-exempt public data.

Article 8 – “Published or publicly disclosed information”

Under Article 8, information or documents that have already been published or made public cannot be subject to an FOI request. Institutions are only required to inform the applicant where, when, and how the information was published.

In practice, authorities sometimes invoke this article without providing clear or verifiable references, effectively shifting the burden of locating the information onto the applicant.

Article 25 – “Practices not concerning the public”

Article 25 excludes information related to:

“Practices that do not concern the public and relate solely to internal personnel or institutional arrangements.”

This provision is often interpreted overly broadly, allowing institutions to classify matters of clear public relevance — such as administrative decisions or internal guidelines affecting public services — as purely internal.

[A further example](#) illustrating the frequent use of Article 25 (“practices not concerning the public”) comes from the work of the Civil Society in the Penal System Association (CİSST).

According to Ahmet Kavruk, Project Network Coordinator at CİSST, the organisation submits around 50 FOI requests per year related to prison conditions, prisoners’ rights, and

the functioning of the penal system. When satisfactory responses are received, the organisation shares the information both with the media and with incarcerated individuals.

However, Kavruk notes that meaningful responses from public authorities have become increasingly rare in recent years.

Between 2020 and 2023, CİSST submitted 251 FoI requests. In 74 cases — nearly one third of all applications — authorities refused to disclose information, citing the exemption for “information not concerning the public” under Article 25 of Law No. 4982.

Article 26 – “Internal opinions and preparatory documents”

Article 26 excludes internal documents such as opinions, information notes, recommendations, and draft materials unless the institution decides otherwise.

The phrase “*unless the institution decides otherwise*” grants authorities wide discretionary power, making this article one of the most frequently cited grounds for refusal. It is commonly used to deny access to policy-making documents, risk assessments, and preparatory materials, even after decisions have been finalised.

Article 23 – “Commercial secrets”

Under Article 23, information and documents containing commercial secrets are excluded from the scope of the right to access information.

In practice, this provision is frequently invoked in cases involving:

- public procurement and tenders,
- public–private partnerships,
- construction and infrastructure projects, and
- privatisation processes.

Authorities often rely on Article 23 to reject requests without conducting a proportionality or public interest test, even when the information concerns the use of public funds or has clear implications for public accountability. As a result, the concept of “commercial secrecy” is applied broadly and inconsistently, creating a significant transparency gap.

Taken together, these provisions create systemic blind spots in the Turkish FOI regime. While the law formally recognises the right to access information, its broad exemptions and discretionary clauses often allow institutions to withhold information of clear public interest, posing a persistent challenge for journalists and civil society actors.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Pursuant to Law No. 4982 on the Right to Information, I kindly request access to the following documents/information:

[Clearly describe the document or data requested, including dates and departments if possible.]

I request that the information be provided in electronic format.

Kind regards,

[Name]

[Here is also a draft form to fill in](#) and send to related institutions.

Can you provide contact addresses for frequently requested institutions?

Most requests are routed through **CİMER**, which forwards them to:

- Ministries,
- Governorates and municipalities,
- Regulatory authorities,
- Public universities,
- State-owned enterprises.

The [DETSİS platform](#) can be used to locate email addresses of public institutions, although coverage is incomplete.

What additional resources exist for using Fol in your jurisdiction/country?

- CİMER online platform and guidance notes,
- International Press Institute's (IPI) [useful resources Drive folder](#),
- IPI's [Fol webpage](#),
- Freedom of Expression Association's (İFÖD) [website](#).

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Journalists seeking assistance may contact:

- IPI Turkey team: turkiye@ipi.media
- İFÖD: iletisim@ifade.org.tr
- Ahmet Kavruk: ahmetkavruk.96@gmail.com
- Gökhan Tekşen: mgokhanteksen@hotmail.com



How do I submit a request?

A request for public information may be submitted by any individual, legal entity or citizens' group. Ukrainian citizenship, residence in Ukraine, a press card or accreditation are not required.

A request may be submitted:

- by email;
- via the online form on the authority's website;
- by post;
- by telephone;
- in person.

The most convenient method for a foreign journalist is email. In the subject line, please state: "Public Information Request / Запит на публічну інформацію".

The request must contain only the following:

- the name or company name of the requester;
- an email or postal address for a reply;
- a sufficiently precise description of the information or document;
- the date and a signature (for paper requests).

There is no need to explain why you need the information, to provide a copy of your passport, to prove your status as a journalist or to provide an electronic signature.

It is important to request information that is already available and on record: a copy of a contract, decision, report, list, table or statistics that are already being maintained.

Requests to explain 'why the authority made a decision' or to produce a new analytical document may be treated not as a request for public information but as a citizens' petition, and will therefore take longer to process.

If a request is sent to the wrong authority, but the recipient knows who holds the information, they must forward the request to the relevant authority and inform the requester accordingly.

Can I submit requests in English?

Yes. The law does not require requests to be submitted exclusively in Ukrainian, and the use of a foreign language does not constitute a ground for refusal under the law.

At the same time, Ukrainian is the official working language of public authorities, so the authority is entitled to reply in Ukrainian. However, where possible, the authority may also reply in the language of the request.

Nevertheless, to minimise the risk of delay, it is advisable to include a Ukrainian translation or to submit a bilingual request.

Are there any costs involved?

Information is provided free of charge upon request. However, if responding to the request requires the production of more than 10 pages of paper copies of documents, you must reimburse the actual costs of copying or printing.

You do not need to reimburse these costs if the information relates to you or is in the public interest. An exception applies to information relating to the registration of emissions and the transfer of pollutants and waste.

On the basis of which laws can I submit applications?

The main legal acts are:

1. [Конституція України](#) (The Constitution of Ukraine) – first and foremost, Article 34 on the right to collect, store, use and disseminate information;
2. [Закон України “Про доступ до публічної інформації”](#) (The Law of Ukraine “On Access to Public Information”) – the main procedural law;
3. [Закон України “Про інформацію”](#) (The Law of Ukraine ‘On Information’) – general guarantees of the right to information and the concept of information of public interest.

How long will it take to receive a response?

Up to 5 working days from the date the administrator receives the request.

Up to 48 hours – if the request concerns information necessary to protect a person’s life or liberty, the state of the environment, or emergencies threatening the safety of citizens, etc.

If the request concerns a large volume of information or requires searching through a significant amount of data, the processing period may be extended to 20 working days. You must be notified of this in writing within 5 days.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Three mechanisms, which are parallel in nature, can be utilised:

1. Lodge a complaint with the head of the body or with a higher-level body;

2. Contact the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights. The Ombudsman may open proceedings, demand a review and initiate administrative proceedings against the official;
3. Bring a claim before an administrative court to have the refusal or failure to act declared unlawful and to compel the provision of information.

You may lodge an appeal against:

- a full or partial refusal;
- failure to respond to a request;
- delay;
- an incomplete or inaccurate response;
- an unjustified postponement;
- a requirement to provide a passport, accreditation, justify the purpose of the request or use an electronic signature;
- a response that does not address the substance of the request;
- a simple link to a website instead of providing the requested document.

In practice, it is best to first contact the Ombudsman and then, if necessary, take the matter to court. Once a court claim has been filed, the Ombudsman will usually discontinue consideration of the same case.

The complaint should be accompanied by the request, proof of its dispatch or registration, the authority's response, and a brief description of the breach that has occurred. A complaint to the Ombudsman must be lodged within 1 year of the violation being discovered; in exceptional circumstances, this period may be extended to 2 years. The general time limit for bringing a case before an administrative court is 6 months from the date on which the person became aware of the violation.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

Examples of successful requests can be found on the website [“Доступ до правди”](#) (Access to the truth).

In practice, requests that are often successful are those that clearly specify:

- contracts, supplementary agreements and certificates of completion;
- the use of budget funds;
- salaries, bonuses and allowances for heads of state bodies;
- decisions, minutes and voting results;
- the staffing levels and structure of the body;
- the results of audits and inspections;
- statistical data already collected by the body;
- environmental measurements;
- state or municipal property;

- procurement and recipients of public funds.

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are usually rejected?

From a legal perspective, these are generally not legitimate ‘loopholes’, but problematic practices.

- 1. The information needs to have already been created.** The law provides access to information that has already been recorded. Therefore, requests such as ‘analyse’, ‘explain’ or ‘identify the reasons’ are often rejected. It is better to request documents and source data.
- 2. Reclassification as a citizen’s petition.** If a letter contains a request to take action, carry out an investigation or provide a legal assessment, it may be considered for up to 30–45 days, rather than 5 working days.
- 3. References to martial law or national security.** Most often, access to information may be restricted on the grounds of martial law and the need to protect national security interests, even though the information in question may not directly fall within this category.
- 4. The ‘for official use only’ classification.** An internal list of official information is not, in itself, sufficient grounds for refusal.
- 5. Personal data.** Documents containing medical, banking or tax data, home addresses, contact details and private information are often withheld. However, the authority must redact the confidential sections and provide the rest of the document.
- 6. Materials relating to criminal and court proceedings.** Participants’ access to case files is governed by procedural codes; therefore, a request for public information cannot replace the specific procedure.
- 7. Temporary deferrals due to hostilities or loss of access to archives.** These may be legitimate only in the presence of genuine, insurmountable circumstances, rather than as a general reference to the war.
- 8. The absence of a rapid, binding order.** The Ombudsman can monitor the situation and take action, but Ukraine does not have a dedicated Information Commissioner who, through a streamlined procedure, would immediately issue binding orders. Legal challenges may take longer than the period during which the information remains of journalistic relevance.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

ЗАПИТ
на публічну інформацію

Відповідно до статті 34 Конституції України кожному гарантовано право на отримання, зберігання та поширення інформації. Гарантія права на інформацію забезпечується обов'язком органів державної влади та органів місцевого самоврядування, як розпорядників інформації, оприлюднювати інформацію, яка була отримана або створена в процесі їхньої діяльності згідно зі статтями 3, 4, 14 Закону України «Про доступ до публічної інформації».

Згідно зі статтею 5 Закону України «Про доступ до публічної інформації» доступ до інформації забезпечується шляхом надання інформації за запитом на інформацію, при цьому згідно зі статтею 19 цього самого закону запитувач має право звернутися до розпорядника інформації із запитом на інформацію незалежно від того, стосується ця інформація його особисто чи ні, без пояснення причини подання запиту.

Зважаючи на вищенаведене, відповідно до статей 5, 6, 13 Закону України «Про доступ до публічної інформації», статей 5, 6 Закону України «Про інформацію», прошу надати інформацію:

1) _____
_____.

2) _____
_____.

(поставити питання щодо інформації або документів, які стосуються повноважень розпорядника інформації, до якого ви звертаєтесь)

Відповідно до статті 20 Закону України «Про доступ до публічної інформації», просимо надати відповідь протягом 5 робочих днів з дня отримання запиту.

Відповідь просимо надіслати на адресу: _____

(вказати поштову адресу або електронну адресу)

У випадку, якщо запитувана інформація буде перевищувати 10 сторінок, гарантуємо відшкодування фактичних витрат на копіювання та друк згідно зі статтею 21 Закону України «Про доступ до публічної інформації». (дане речення треба включати, якщо ви хочете отримати копії документів та готові заплатити за це).

Звертаємо Вашу увагу, що у випадку ненадання відповіді на запит або надання неповної інформації, ми будемо змушені звертатись за захистом свого права на інформацію до суду або вимагати притягнення Вас до адміністративної відповідальності за статтею 212-3 Кодексу України про адміністративні правопорушення.

_____ р. _____
 _____ Підпис _____ (ПІП запитувача)

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently requested institutions?

Institution	Enquiry channel
Секретаріат Кабінету Міністрів України Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine	publishinfo@kmu.gov.ua ; 01008, Київ, вул. Грушевського, 12/2
Апарат Верховної Ради України The Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine	infzapyt@rada.gov.ua ; 01008, Київ, вул. Грушевського, 5
Офіс Президента України Office of the President of Ukraine	vidkrytist@apu.gov.ua ; або онлайн-форма
Міністерство оборони України Ministry of Defence of Ukraine	zpi@mil.ua ; +380 44 271 37 03
Апарат РНБО України The Secretariat of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine	public@rnbo.gov.ua ; 01601, Київ, вул. Петра Болбочана, 8
НАЗК NACP	info@nazk.gov.ua ; 01103, Київ, бульв. Миколи Міхновського, 28

Державна судова адміністрація State Judicial Administration	vidkrytist@court.gov.ua ; або електронна форма
Офіс Омбудсмана The Ombudsman's Office	zapyt@ombudsman.gov.ua ; complaints: hotline@ombudsman.gov.ua ; from abroad: +380 44 299 74 08

A list of other organisations that are most frequently contacted can also be viewed on the '[Access to the Truth](#)' site by selecting a specific information holder and clicking on 'Information Holder's Homepage'.

What additional resources are available for exercising freedom of information in your jurisdiction/country?

[Open data portal](#) — government datasets.

[Prozorro](#) — tenders, procurement, contracts and clients' documents.

[Spending.gov.ua](#) — treasury transactions, contracts and the use of public funds.

[E-data](#) — an open data platform on public finances.

[The Unified State Register of Court Decisions](#) — texts of court judgments.

[Verkhovna Rada Legislation Database](#) — laws and subordinate legislation.

[Access to the truth](#) — a platform for submitting enquiries and viewing previously received replies. It contains contact details for over 2,000 public authorities.

[Ombudsman's materials](#) — official clarifications, reports and recommendations.

Can you name any contact points for people who want to help journalists in your country?

[Платформа прав людини](#) Human Rights Platform: info@ppl.org.ua

Free consultations, pre-publication reviews and legal representation for journalists in court.

[Institute of Mass Communication](#): info@imi.org.ua

Provides legal advice and documents breaches of freedom of speech.

[National Union of Journalists of Ukraine](#): spilka@nsju.org

Legal assistance and the network of Journalists' Solidarity Centres.

Centre for Democracy and the Rule of Law: info@cedem.org.ua

Specialises in access to information and coordinates a network of lawyers who provide advice and support in legal proceedings.

Ombudsman of Ukraine: hotline@ombudsman.gov.ua

United Kingdom

How do I make a request?

The most reliable way to send a request is via email or [WhatDoTheyKnow.com](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com).

You can make a request in many other ways including letter, online form, or social media.

Can I make requests in English?

Yes.

Does it cost money?

No.

Under what law can I make requests?

The [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#) is the main access to information law. The Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (derived from the Aarhus Convention and EU Directive 2003/4/EC) covers environmental information.

What is the time frame for a response?

20 working days. However this can be extended by further 20 day periods when authorities need to consider the public interest in disclosure.

How can I appeal against an ignored or rejected request?

Stage one: You ask the authority to internally review its decision, briefly stating your concerns.

Stage two: You [complain to the regulator](#), the Information Commissioner's Office who enforces the FOIA.

Stage three: You appeal the ICO decision to the Information Tribunal (a court).

All stages of the appeals procedure are free.

Can you give examples of successful requests?

There are many [here](#).

Can you give examples of loopholes in the law or requests that are mostly rejected?

Requests are often denied on cost grounds (section 12 of the FOIA). In such cases, the public body estimates that it will take longer than 18/24 hours (depending on the authority) to process the request.

Can you provide a template for a typical request?

Dear Sir or Madam

Government transparency data shows the following meetings took place.

SoS Peter Kyle met with the

i. CMA (16/07/2024)

ii. Amazon (09/07/2024)

iii. Meta (09/07/2024)

iv. Microsoft (10/09/2024)

v. Roundtable with Google, Amazon Web Services, Startup Coalition and others (14/08/2024)

1. I am writing to request briefings, readouts and other memoranda related to these meetings.

Kindly acknowledge receipt of this request.

*Many thanks,
Lucas Amin*

Dear Sir or Madam

This is an FOI request.

1. How many referrals has the Electoral Commission made to the Metropolitan Police Service since the year 2000?

2. How many investigations the Electoral Commission has (a) carried out since 2010 into possible offences under sections 54(7) since the year 2000?

3. How many suspicious activity reports has the EC received from the National Crime Agency in the past five years (please disclose in the format you hold, e.g. financial year, calendar year etc)

4. Please provide full copies of each suspicious activity report received by the EC in the past five years.

Kindly acknowledge receipt of this request.

Dear Competition and Markets Authority,

On 24 June 2025 the CMA published its "strategic market status investigation into Google's general search services: Roadmap of possible measures to improve competition in search".

I am writing to request copies of correspondence between the CMA and the Treasury relating to this report, that were sent or received in the time period 01/06/2025 and 01/09/2025.

Please ensure your search for this information includes checks of relevant emails and attachments, text messages and whatsapp messages.

Kindly acknowledge this request.

Dear Sir or Madam

This is an FOI/EIRs request about the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council's Clare Barclay.

I wish to receive copies of correspondence exchanged by the office of SoS Jonathan Reynolds and Clare Barclay, who chairs the Industrial Strategy Advisory Council, which were sent and received in the period 01/03/2025 and today (13/06/2025).

I ask you to ensure that the search for correspondence includes a search of email accounts used by the SoS and members of his office.

I am interested in receiving all emails sent to and received from Clare Barclay within these accounts. I also wish to receive all attachments in these emails.

Kindly acknowledge this request and respond within 20 working days as the statute requires.

Can you provide contact addresses for the most frequently asked institutions?

Googling the institution and FOI contact address is the easiest way to find them.

What additional resources exist for using FOI in your jurisdiction/country?

[FOIA without the Lawyer](#), the handbook published by the Centre for Investigative Journalism, is free to download although it is a little old. Chapter two gives a brief overview of how to make a good request.

Ex BBC journalist Martin Rosenbaum's [practical guidebook on FOI](#) is newer and more comprehensive.

Information Commissioner [general guidance](#).

Information Commissioner [exemptions guidance](#).

Can you provide contact points for people willing to help journalists in your country?

Lucas Amin, lucas@democracyforsale.uk

Jenna Corderoy, jenna@democracyforsale.uk

Contributors

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European Union: Alexander Fanta
 Albania: Blerjana Bino
 Austria: Alexander Fanta, Markus Hametner
 Belgium: Steven Vanden Bussche
 Bosnia and Herzegovina: Azem Kurtić
 Bulgaria: Alexander Kashumov, Philip Markovsky
 Croatia: Jelena Prtorić
 Cyprus: Kyriakos Pieridis
 Czechia: Jan Cibulka
 Denmark: Staffan Dahllöf
 Estonia: Märt Belkin
 Finland: Päivi Leino-Sandberg, Jarno Liski
 France: Alexiane Lerouge, Stéphane Horel
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 Iceland: Aðalsteinn Kjartansson
 Ireland: Alexander Fanta
 Italy: Lorenzo Di Stasi
 Kosovo: Flutura Kusari
 Latvia: Inese Braže
 Lithuania: Gabrielė Navickaitė
 Luxembourg: Charlotte Wirth
 Malta: Matthew Caruana-Galizia
 Montenegro: Snežana Nikčević
 Netherlands: Bas van Beek
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 Norway: Tarjei Leer-Salvesen
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 Romania: Matei Bărbulescu
 Serbia: Dina Đorđević
 Slovakia: Peter Čuroš
 Slovenia: Uroš Škerl Kramberger, Anuška Delić
 Spain: Sergio Sangiao
 Sweden: Staffan Dahllöf
 Switzerland: Lorenz Naegeli, Balz Oertli and Martin Stoll
 Turkey: Damla Tarhan
 Ukraine: Victoria Matola
 United Kingdom: Lucas Amin