

## **PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

### INFORMATION POLICY STATEMENT

# INFORMATION POLICY STATEMENT

## Introduction

The first objective of the EIB's public information policy is to provide as much information as possible on the Bank, how it operates and what it does. EIB regards its information policy as an evolving and flexible process, subject to continuous evaluation and quality assessment.

Acknowledging that the public has an interest in the activities of the EIB, this policy statement and related documents aim to support one of the EIB's key corporate objectives: to achieve a high level of transparency of its activities and communicate even more effectively with all stakeholders<sup>1</sup>.

As the European Union's financing institution, EIB carries out its activities within the legal framework of the Treaty establishing the European Community and of its Statute, which forms part of the Treaty. The Treaty provides the EIB with operational and financial autonomy to enable it to support European policy objectives through banking means. EIB operations are guided by EU policy and are subject to EU law, which legitimates and safeguards its operations.

Under its Statute, EIB is accountable to the Member States of the European Union. The Member States subscribe to the Bank's capital. The Board of Governors sets out its general policy and principles of lending and borrowing and approves the Annual Report of the Board of Directors, taking note of the report of the Audit Committee.

Working in synergy with the other EU institutions to provide financial backing for the EU's priorities means listening to all points of view. In support of its commitment to increasing accountability through enhanced transparency, EIB has also established over the years a policy dialogue with the European Parliament, the elected representatives of the Union's citizens. In addition, it is forging closer links with the Economic and Social Committee, given the Committee's role as interface between the EU institutions and civil society. At the same time, EIB is directly engaged in an ongoing dialogue with civil society organisations which have expressed an interest in its policies and activities.

The principal tool for disseminating information to the public at large is the Bank's website. All documentation published by EIB is either posted or listed on its website, with paper versions available on request. The Bank is constantly seeking to fine-tune the features of its website to meet the specific needs of its reference groups.

EIB welcomes comments from all stakeholders with a view to future development of its information policy. To promote this, a dedicated mailbox has been made available in the information policy section of the Bank's website ([infopol@eib.org](mailto:infopol@eib.org)).

---

<sup>1</sup> The EIB Group's specialised vehicle providing venture capital and guarantee instruments, the European Investment Fund (EIF), manages its own information activities. EIF contact and website details can be found under "Contact details".

## **Information Policy Framework**

Relevant EU policies on transparency and public disclosure of information and other legislation are the main elements of the framework for the EIB's information policy. In addition, EIB keeps its policy in step with best practice in the banking sector.

The policy takes account of EIB's status and mission as the financing institution of the European Union and its functioning as a bank. EIB is part of the Union's institutional set-up, which distinguishes it from other international financing institutions and development banks.

Within this structure, EIB relies on the EU's policy-making and legislative bodies, making extensive use of policy-related documents, for instance country reports, prepared by other EU institutions such as the European Commission. Similarly, EIB is bound to follow the policy positions of the European Union's political and legislative bodies on human rights issues in countries and regions in which EIB operates. .

In addition, the Bank has to take into account European and national legal provisions on confidentiality, in particular Article 287 of the EC Treaty, Regulation EC/1049/2001, as well as best practice in the banking sector. It has a duty to respect the confidentiality of business-sensitive information provided by its customers, to preserve the effectiveness of its decision-making process and operations and to protect the privacy interests of individuals.

## **Information Policy Principles**

The Bank's information policy reflects its commitment to EU policy initiatives on transparency and public disclosure of information as well as the principles and limits of the Regulation EC/1049/2001 on Public Access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents. EIB is not directly covered by the Regulation, which is addressed to the Parliament, Council and Commission in application of Article 255 of the EC Treaty; however, it has responded to the call by the three institutions for other EU institutions and bodies to review their own rules on public access to documents taking account of the Regulation's principles and limits.

The policy principles set out below, the "Rules on Public Access to Documents" adopted in 2002 and the "Code of good administrative behaviour for the staff of the European Investment Bank in its relations with the Public" are derived from the framework outlined above. These are :

- EIB aims at providing the public with information on its policies, activities, and procedures to the maximum extent possible.
- EIB undertakes an active information policy towards both the general public and specific interest groups, aiming to release information whenever possible and as early as feasible.

- EIB aims to strike a balance between:
  - its objective to disclose information and documents whenever possible and, notably, to respect the tenor and aims of the Aarhus Convention within the context of the relevant EU legislation and the EIB's operational framework
  - its obligation to respect confidentiality in compliance with European and national regulations covering business contracts and market activity
  - its duty to respect the private commercial and market-sensitive interests of its business counterparts
  - its duty to ensure the effectiveness of its decision-making process and operations
  - its duty to protect the privacy interests of individuals.
- Statutory documents are available in all official EU languages. Availability of publications in EU languages and/or non EU languages is determined according to the Bank's operational objectives, with the majority of other publications available in English, French and German.
- The public documents of the Bank can be freely reproduced, if:
  - the source and the date of publication are mentioned
  - the information concerned is not modified
  - the information is not used for commercial purposes (such would require EIB's approval)
  - the rights of third parties, namely in the field of copyright, are respected.
- In giving access to information and documents, EIB applies the principle of equal treatment towards both individual citizens and legal persons.
- Standards of administrative conduct which the public is entitled to expect when requesting information or documents are published. The "Code of good administrative behaviour for the staff of the European Investment Bank in its relations with the Public" also includes procedures for complaints from members of the public to be addressed to the Bank's Secretary General as well as recalling citizens' rights to lodge complaints with the European Ombudsman.
- EIB's information policy is an evolving process, subject to continuous quality control under the direction of the Bank's Management Committee, and is adjusted accordingly. The Bank welcomes comments on its information policy from all stakeholders with a view to the policy's future development.

\* \* \* \* \*

Further information on how the EIB is implementing this Statement is to be found on its website [www.eib.org](http://www.eib.org) and in document "*How EIB communicates - an overview*".