



Subject: Report on the application of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents by REA in 2025

The right to ask for EU documents is set out in the EU treaties and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The right of access to documents (AtD) is part of the fundamental objective of making decision-making as open and as close to citizens as possible (Art. 1 TEU). However, this right has its limits: the access to documents Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001¹ lays down the general principles and the limits of this fundamental right.

Access to documents, whether in whole or in part, may be refused only on specific grounds. As such refusals constitute exceptions to the transparency principle, they are strictly defined by the jurisprudence originating from the use of listed exceptions under Article 4 of the afore-mentioned Regulation.

On 15 October 2025, the REA Steering Committee adopted a Decision on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001². The new Decision improves the clarity, predictability and consistency of REA's policy on Access to documents.

This annual report is drafted in accordance with Article 17(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001. It covers the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 by REA in 2025 and is based on statistical data. It also refers to the findings of the European Ombudsman concerning REA's implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 and the rulings handed down by the EU Courts.

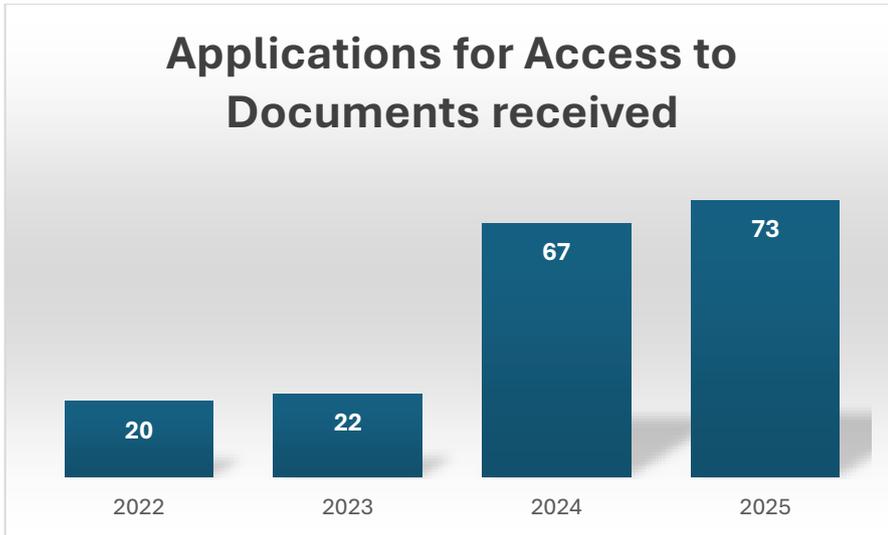
1. Analysis of applications for Access to Documents

1.1. number of applications

As illustrated by the graph below, in 2025, the number of applications reached 73. This represents an increase by 9% compared to 2024.

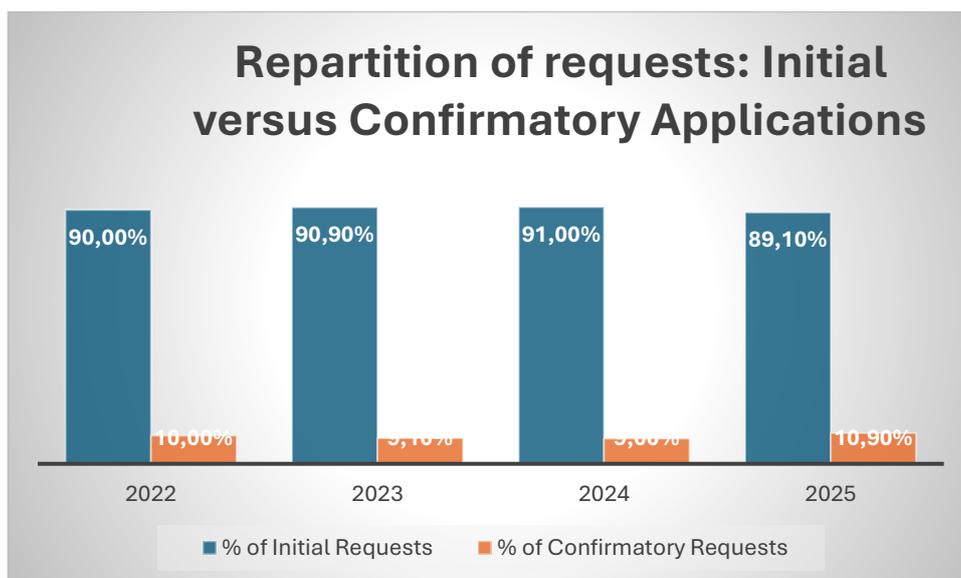
¹ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents; OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43.

² Decision of the Steering Committee of the European Research Executive Agency SC(2025)3.4.2 on the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and the Council regarding public access to documents.



1.2. Type of applications: repartition between initial and confirmatory applications

When an EU institution receives an access to documents request, it has 15 working days to respond. This is known as an initial request. If the person is not satisfied with the response, they can ask the institution to review the decision by making a confirmatory application. The institution then has another 15 working days to respond.



Between 2022 and 2025, the total number of requests received increased steadily, rising from 20 in 2022 to 73 in 2025. This represents more than a threefold increase over the four-year period, with the most significant growth occurring between 2023 and 2024.

Despite the increase in volume, the composition of requests remained highly consistent. Initial requests accounted for approximately 90% of total requests each year, while confirmatory requests made up the remaining 10%.

1.3. Applicants

Number of Requests per Applicant	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total 2022-2025
1	10	14	29	28	53
2	5	2	6	6	13
3			3	1	3
4		1	3	3	4
5			1	1	1
6				1	
7				1	
Total no of applicants	15	17	42	41	115
Total no of requests	20	22	67	73	182

Read: in 2022, 10 applicants formulated 1 request for access to documents, and 5 applicants formulated 2, totalling 20 ($10*1 + 5*2 = 20$).

The above table displays the distribution of requests made by applicants from 2022 to 2025, categorized by the number of requests per individual.

The table shows a clear structural shift beginning in 2024. The number of requests rose dramatically from 22 in 2023 to 67 in 2024 and continued to increase to 73 in 2025, while the number of applicants more than doubled over the same period (17 to 41). This indicates that the growth was not simply due to existing applicants returning more often, but to a large influx of new people seeking assistance. However, alongside this wider inflow, the nature of the workload also changed: from 2024 onward, applicants began making multiple and repeated requests (up to 7 per person), something that was virtually absent in 2022–2023. As a result, the average number of requests per applicant rose from around 1.3 in the early years to 1.78 in 2025.

At the same time, while most applicants still make only a single request, a small group of recurrent applicants now generate a disproportionate share of the activity. In 2025, roughly one-third of applicants accounted for over 60% of all requests. This shows that the caseload has become both broader and deeper: many more people are approaching REA, and a subset of them require sustained, complex, and continued effort for the services.

Overall, the data reflects not just an increase in volume, but a qualitative change in the type and intensity of work REA is handling since 2024.

1.4. Types of requests: Wide scope

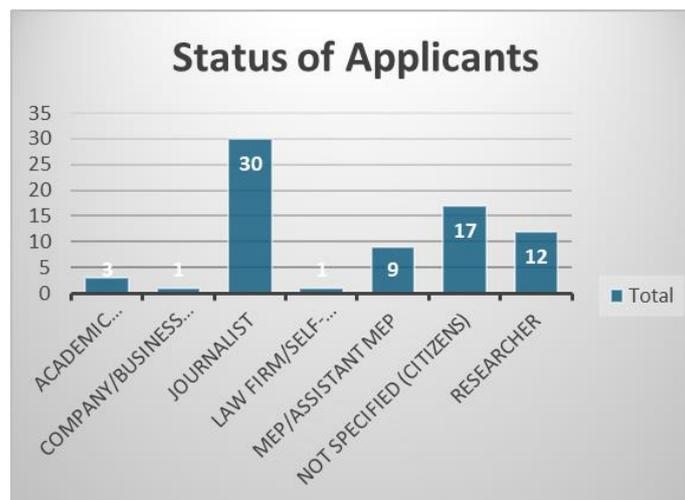
In the event of an application relating to very long documents or a large number of them, the institution concerned may confer with the applicant informally to find a fair solution. This is known as a 'wide scope' request, which requires additional time to find an agreement with the applicant on a reasonable scope and generally leads to analysing a significant number/volume of documents. There was no delay in replying to requests for wide-scope access to documents in 2025, once an agreement was reached on a fair scope of the request.

The time to assess non-wide-scope requests was **22.4 working days in 2025**; REA systematically requests an extension of the deadline (extended to 30 working days) in cases of late answers from consulted third parties or particularly voluminous requests. In three instances, replies were delayed due to late input from consulted third parties, resulting in delays of one, three, and seven days, respectively.

Requests received - overview	2025
Wide Scope	10
Others	63
Total	73

1.5. Applicants: status and country of origin

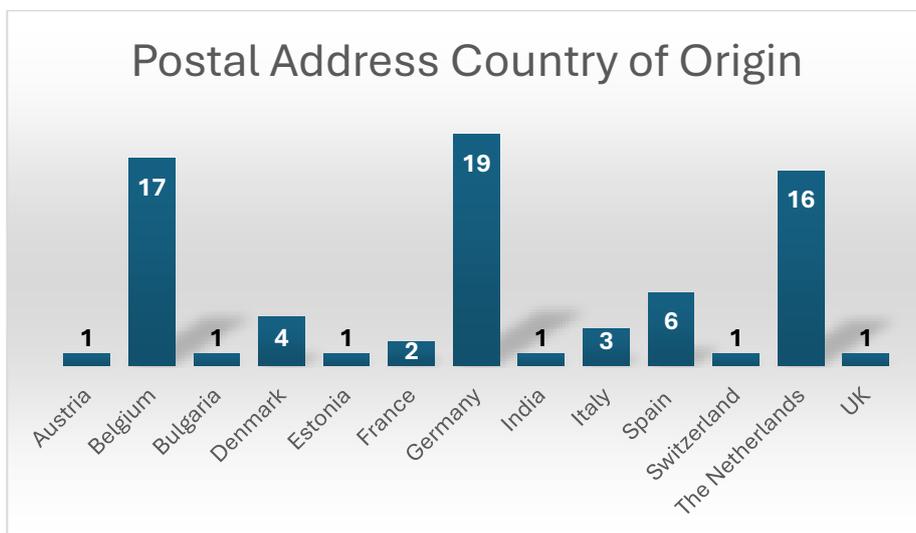
a. Requests came from the following type of applicants:



The applicant's profile is neutral in terms of public access to documents. However, the above chart shows that journalists form by far the largest identifiable group of applicants, with 30 requests, indicating that media professionals are a primary source of demand.

They are followed by citizens who did not specify their status and researchers accounting for 17 and 12 respectively.

- b. The applicant’s country of origin is based on the postal address indicated at the time of the request and can be split as follows:



The above bar chart illustrates the distribution of nationalities, with Germany leading significantly, with 19 requests, followed by Belgium and the Netherlands with 17 and 16 requests respectively. The wide range of countries represented reflects a wide of interest in accessing REA documents, spanning across Europe.

1.6. Targeted information:

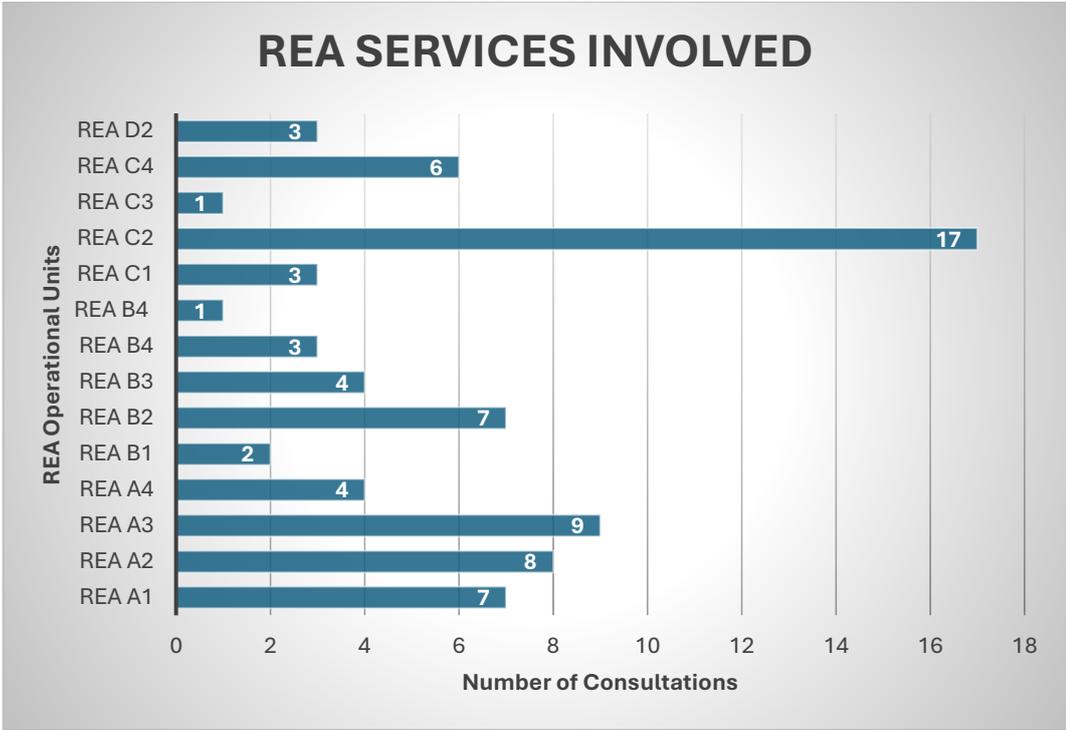
The above displays

Targeted areas	Number of requests
HORIZON EUROPE (HE)	26
HE Widening and ERA support actions	4
HE Missions	3
HE General	19
HORIZON 2020 (H2020)	31
H2020 Secure Civil Society	10
H2020 MSCA	14
H2020 Others	7
Research Fund for Coal and Steel (RFCS)	5
Promotion of Agricultural Products	2
FP7	3
Others	6
Total	73

table the

distribution of requests across various EU research and innovation programmes. It reveals a clear and continuing interest in Horizon 2020 projects.

1.7. REA Services involved:



The table presents data on the number of times various services have been involved in access to documents requests, some requests covering several services.

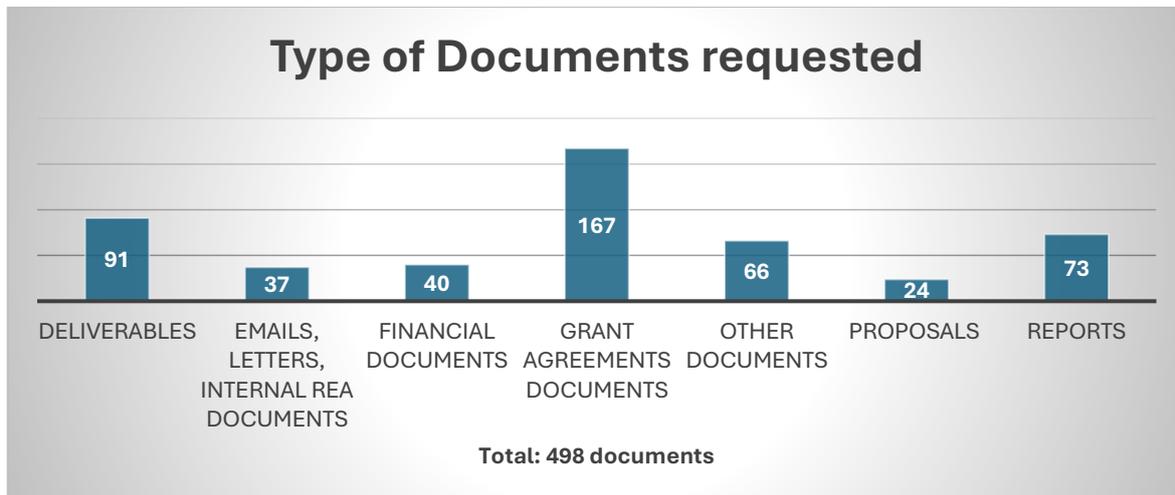
REA Unit C2 Secure Civil Society is by far the most involved, with 17 consultations.

1.8. Documents analysed:

In 2025 REA conducted a comprehensive analysis of **498 documents** (against 453 documents in 2024) providing full and/or partial access to them, encompassing **over 30.000 pages in total** (against 12,000 pages in 2024).

When considering a reasonable number of documents within the final scope of the request, taking into account its complexity, it is generally considered reasonable to assess 30 pages per day (time to analyse and expunge data not to be disclosed).

1.9. Type of documents subject to replies:



Requests clearly focused on formal, binding project documentation, with far less interest in internal communications or preparatory materials. This suggests that applicants primarily sought access to documents with legal, financial, or operational significance rather than informal or preliminary records.

1.10. Exceptions to the Right of Access

In principle, all documents of the institutions should be accessible to the public. However, certain public and private interests must be protected by way of exceptions. Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 provides specific exceptions in Article 4. Any decision to reject access to a document, whether full or partial, must be justified under at least one of these exceptions.

On this basis, the institutions have the possibility to either refuse access to a document, or to grant access to it after having expunged the information to be protected. Any decision to reject access to a document, whether full or partial, must be justified under at least one of these exceptions

a) Level of access granted to the documents requested:

The below analysis shows that the 498 documents concerned were released as follows:

	2025		disclosure in framework request, disclosed are deemed publicly
	No	%	
Upon the of an AtD (partially) documents to be	110	22.09	disclosure in framework request, disclosed are deemed publicly
Full access	296	59.44	
Partial access	92	18.47	
Access refused	498	100	
Total			

available (this is the *erga omnes* rule), which is the case for most documents requested (81.53%) as the above table shows.

To give effect to the *erga omnes* rule, in the second semester of year 2025, REA put in place a register of documents³ which have been disclosed in the context of previous AtD requests.

b) Exceptions applied to the documents requested:

The exceptions listed in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 include both absolute and relative exceptions. Absolute exceptions do not have to be justified and cannot be challenged, whereas the relative ones can be considered for disclosure if there is an overriding public interest to do so that would outweigh legitimate interests for protection of commercial interest.

Absolute exceptions:

- art. 4.1(a) refers to the protection of public interest – public security, defence and military matters, international relations, financial, monetary, or economic policy of the Community or a MS,
- art. 4.1(b) refers to privacy and integrity of the individual - protection of personal data.

Relative exceptions:

- art. 4.2 refers to commercial interest, Court proceedings, purpose of inspections, investigations and audits.
- art. 4.3 refers to the decision-making process, before or after a decision is taken.

Exceptions laid down in Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001	2025	
	No	%
4(1)(a) – Protection of the public interest as regards public security	50	8.1
4(1)(b) – Protection of privacy and the integrity of the individual	336	54.46
4(2). – Protection of commercial interests, inspections, investigations and audits	175	28.36
4(3), first and second subparagraphs – Protection of the decision-making process	56	9.08
Total	617	100

The above table covers the individual exceptions made to (partially) protect the documents requested based on Article 4 of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001. Since the exceptions can be cumulative, some documents were counted more than once.

³ [Register of published documents - European Research Executive Agency](#)

The most striking observation is that privacy and integrity of the individual (Article 4.1(b)) is the most recurring reason for partial disclosure, accounting for 54.46% of such cases. This suggests a strong institutional emphasis on protecting personal data, while still striving to maintain some degree of transparency through redacted releases.

The protection of commercial interests (Article 4.2) represents another significant ground for restricting access, accounting for 28.36% of the cases.

2. Complaints on access to documents to the European Ombudsman

There is no complaint to report under this section in 2025.

3. Court cases on access to documents introduced against REA

There is no referral to Court to report under this section in 2025.

- e-signed -
Marc TACHELET