



Investigation of EU COVID-19 Vaccine Contracts



The European Ombudsman is [investigating](#) the European Commission's refusal to give public access to documents concerning the purchase of vaccines against COVID-19.

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After receiving two complaints, the Ombudsman office has opened an inquiry asking the Commission to explain the secrecy around the documents concerning the purchase of vaccines against COVID-19.

By now, the EU has spent about €2.5 billion euros in upfront payments to six pharma companies for the delivery of around 2.3 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines, both candidates and approved. The details of the agreements, such as the prices and terms of delivery, are not disclosed since confidentiality of such data should empower the Commission to negotiate better terms with companies. "Contracts are protected for confidentiality reasons, which is warranted by the highly competitive nature of this global market. All companies require that such sensitive business information remains confidential between the signatories of the contract. This is in order to protect sensitive negotiations as well as business-related information, such as financial information and development and production plans," [explains](#) the Commission.

Last year, Corporate Europe Observatory [requested](#) access to the documents relevant to the EU contract with AstraZeneca (the only such contract at the time), but the request was [refused](#) on the grounds of protecting "the commercial interests of a legal person" and the need to protect its procurement procedure. The refusal was appealed by the organisation, which later also requested access to documents linked to vaccine negotiations. In both cases, the Commission has issued no respective decision yet.

"Given the significant public interest in this matter, I would ask the Commission to issue a confirmatory decision on both access requests as soon as possible and at the latest by 11 February 2021," the Ombudsman has written in a letter to the European Commission.

So far, under pressure from the European Parliament, the Commission has only [disclosed](#) to MEPs a redacted version of its contract with CureVac, with prices, downpayment amount and doses allocation all being concealed.

Source: [Reuters](#)

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