

Resolution of the European Freedom of Information Commissioners and Ombudspersons

Berlin, February 24th, 2017

Enforce Freedom of Information! Strengthen European Information Commissioners!

Many countries and regions in Europe have laws governing the right of access to administrative information. Information commissioners and ombudspersons provide support and advice to citizens in exercising their rights to information. At the same time, they encourage the lawful application of the rights of access to information by providing advice and monitoring authorities.

A strong right of access to information can only be fully effective if its implementation is accompanied and supported by strong information commissioners and ombudspersons as mediators between the state and citizens.

The participants of the Europe-Meeting of national and regional information commissioners and ombudspersons therefore call upon parliaments and governments in Europe to ensure that all people in their countries have the right to access independent offices and to provide these with appropriate funding as well as human and legal resources corresponding with the importance of their task, so that the citizens' right of access to information is effectively supported and strengthened. Freedom of information (FOI) and transparency are crucial elements for a functioning free and democratic legal system.

However, freedom of information in Europe also depends on the exchange of regulatory models and experience. It is further strengthened by the development of solid common positions by freedom of information commissioners, especially concerning regulatory projects at supranational level.

The work of the network of European information commissioners and ombudspersons should become more permanent and be further strengthened.

The group recognised that Europe needs common FOI standards. These standards should be driven by the commissioners, ombudspersons, parliaments, and governments in a constructive dialogue.

Due to the mandates of the European ombudsman, the Danish parliamentary and the Norwegian parliamentary ombudsmen, these institutions are not part of this statement.