

HOW TO USE YOUR RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION

A GUIDE FOR JOURNALISTS MAKING ATI REQUESTS

Access to Information (ATI) gives every person the right to obtain information, documents, or data from government bodies. SDG 16 Target 10 (SDG 16.10) calls on all UN Member States to adopt legislation or policies to ensure this.

ATI laws and their implementation differ from country to country. For more information on ATI laws in your own country, visit the RTI rating website.

STEPS FOR FILING AN ATI REQUEST TO A PUBLIC BODY

IDENTIFICATION/RESEARCH

- Identify which public body has the information you are seeking
- Choose which method you will use to submit your request:
 - The public body should have a designated information officer or focal point to receive requests;
 - You may be able to submit an RTI request through their website;
 - There may be a more centralized process i.e. you must submit your request through the website of your country's information commission.

WRITING YOUR ATI REQUEST

- To file an ATI request, you will need to follow the ATI laws of your particular country.
- You may be required to fill in a form or, in other cases, you may need to submit your request via letter or email.
 - Be as specific as possible regarding the information you want to obtain. Avoid using vague language.
 - You do not need to justify your request or say how you are going to use the information.
- In some countries you can make requests anonymously.*

SENDING THE REQUEST

- After sending your ATI request, the following should happen:
- If necessary, the public body will offer you assistance with your request;
 - You should receive a receipt for your request;
 - The request should be answered within 15 to 30 days, depending on national laws.

RECEIVING A RESPONSE

- As an answer, the public body can:
- Give you all of the information requested. Occasionally you will have to pay a fee for services like photocopying;
 - Provide you with a partial response/some of the information requested;
 - Transfer the request to another body who can provide the information requested;
 - Inform you that they need more time to process the request;
 - Refuse to provide you with the information, on the basis that it is exempt from ATI laws;
 - Stay silent.
- Occasionally the response to ATI requests will be published online on that particular public body's website.*