

Ministry for Justice: Freedom of Information

User Guide

FOi
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

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1. Summary

The Ministry for Justice and Reform of the Construction Sector has launched a new Freedom of Information portal to facilitate the submission and processing of requests and complaints, regarding documents held by Public Authorities. This platform allows users to submit requests and file complaints, track their status and receive responses efficiently.

The website is designed for individual users to manage and submit their cases securely. It replaces traditional methods by offering digital, user-friendly, and accessible solution available at any time.

This user guide provides a detailed walkthrough of the website's functionalities, including logging in, submitting requests and complaints, making payments, tracking case progress, and accessing relevant documentation.

This guide explains how to:

- log in with your GOV.MT e-ID;
- submit a request;
- track your requests and understand their status;
- answer clarification questions from the Public Authority;
- pay fees and download documents;
- submit a complaint;
- find contact details for Public Authorities.

2. Using the System

2.1 User Interface

The homepage serves as the central gateway to the application, offering a clear and intuitive interface from which users can access all essential features.

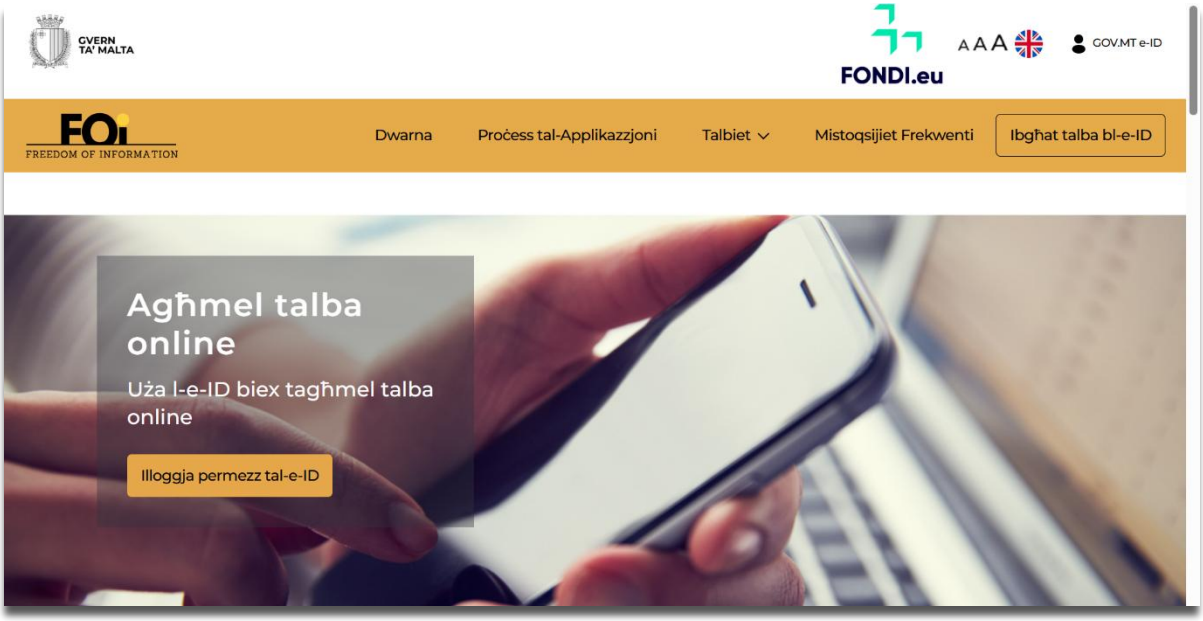

Figure 1: Homepage

At all times, the header displays the logo on the left-hand side; clicking the logo will return the User to the homepage. In the top-right corner, there is a button that allows the User to adjust the font size across the website, followed by a button to toggle the language between Maltese and English, and finally the GOV.MT e-ID login button.

Below these three buttons, an additional row in the header provides further navigation options. Here the user can click the 'About us' button to visit a separate page containing more information about FOI and their processes. Moreover, the user can select the 'Application process' button to view more details regarding request submission process or use the 'Requests' dropdown to submit a new request or track the progress of an existing one. Adjacent to these, a 'Frequently Asked' button is available, allowing the user to view popular queries and finally a 'Submit request via e-ID' button, which once again gives the user an option to open a new request using their GOV.MT e-ID account.

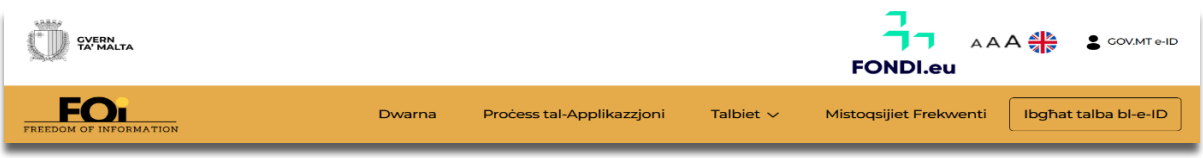

Figure 2: Header

On a phone or tablet, the second-row collapses behind a menu (☰) button. Tap it to show the menu items.

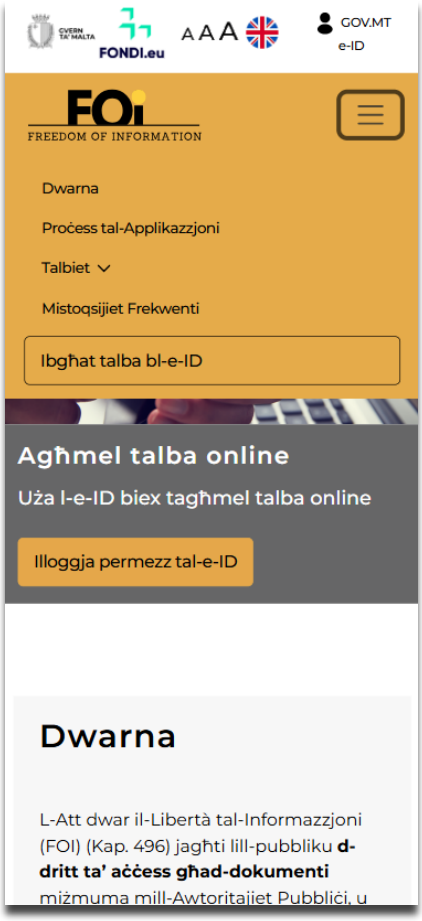

Figure 3 - Header Mobile View

Beneath the header, the homepage features several sections that collectively guide the user through key actions and provide more information. Firstly, the user is presented with another button allowing them to log-in via e-ID.

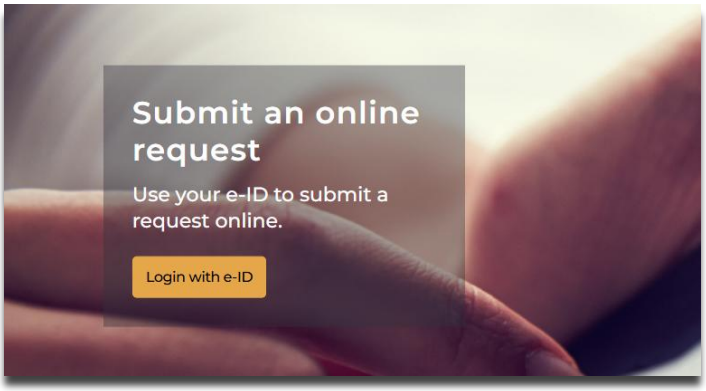

Figure 4: Login Button

The next section provides a ‘Discover More’ button that directs the user to a page, providing more information regarding the FOI unit.

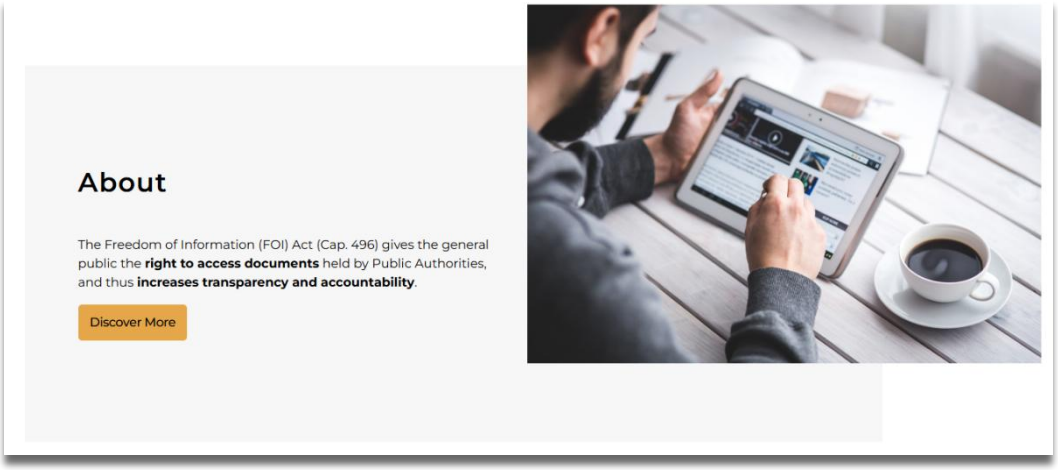

Figure 5: Discover More

Another section presents a brief overview of the request process alongside a button to start submitting a new request.

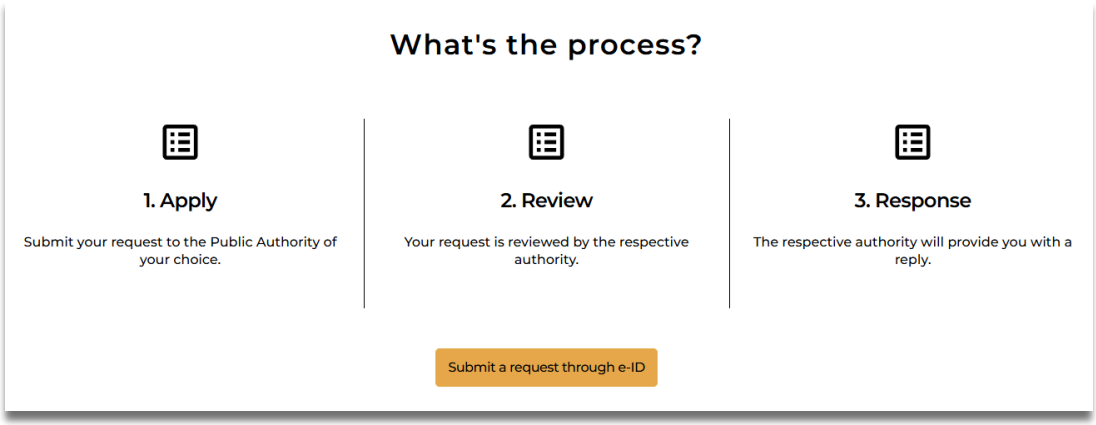

Figure 6: Application Process Overview

Finally, a concluding section details the types of documents that can be requested, the eligibility criteria for submitting, possible outcomes of a request submission and includes a link with further information regarding the FOI Act.

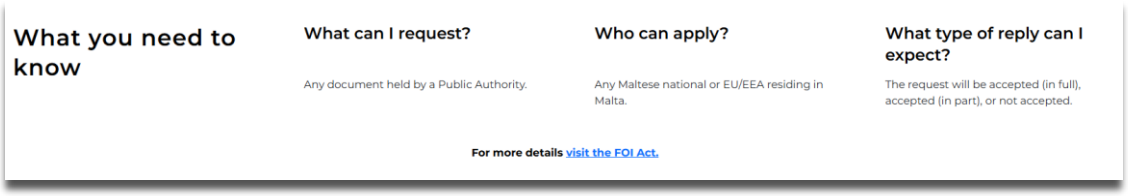

Figure 7: Submission Details

At the bottom of the page, two distinct footers are displayed. Thle first one provides the user with two buttons, a 'Contact Us' button, which automatically dials the FOI office's number and 'Find a public authority' button which directs the user to a contact list page featuring details for various public authorities.



Figure 8: Contact Footer

On the contact list page, the user is initially presented with a dropdown menu to select a ministry.

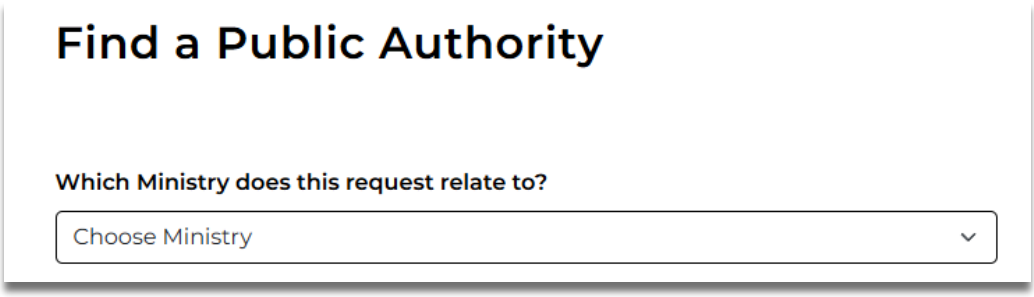

Figure 9: Ministry Dropdown

Once a ministry is chosen, a second dropdown appears, listing the public authorities associated with the selected ministry. After selecting a public authority, the page displays its detailed information including the address, email, telephone number, as well as the normal and summer opening hours.

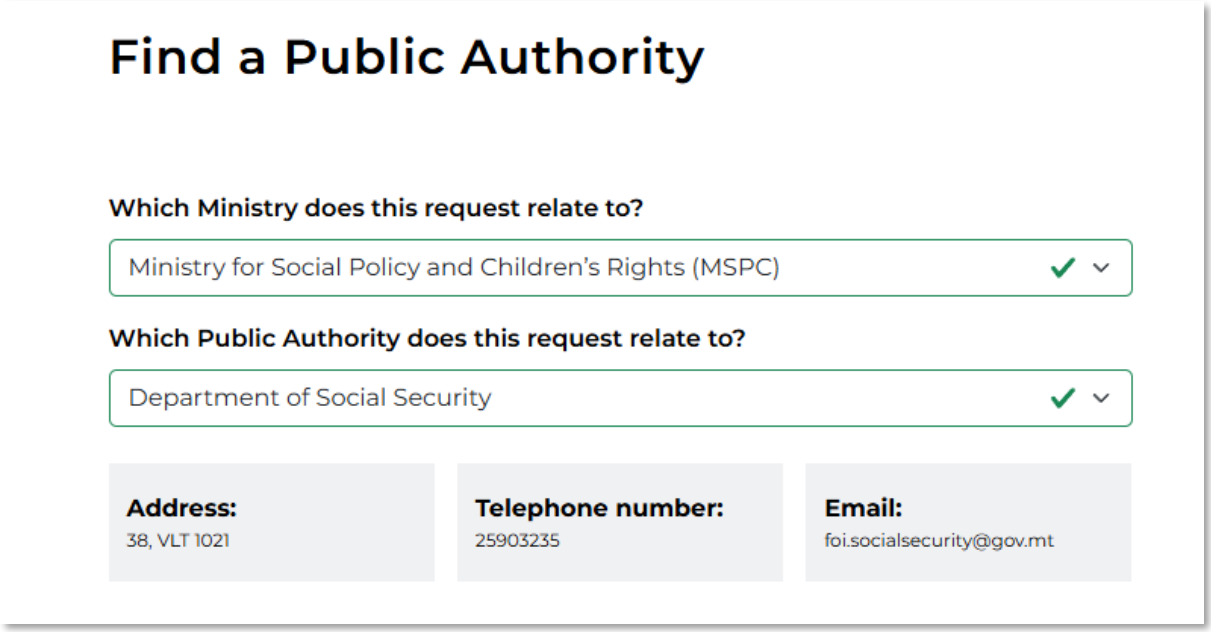

Figure 10: Contact List Page

At the very bottom of the website, the second footer provides additional resource links for the user. These include:

- 'Discover more' - Offers further information and resources related to the FOI unit
- 'Disclaimer' - Outlines the legal disclaimers and limitations of liability
- 'Accessibility Statement' - Details how the website adheres to accessibility standards
- 'Terms of use' - Specifies the terms and conditions governing the use of the website
- 'Cookie Policy' - Explains how cookies are used and managed on the website
- 'E Communications Policy' - Describes the policies related to electronic communication
- 'User Guide' - Links to the official manual for the website



Figure 11: Bottom Footer

2.1.1 Login

Users can log in to the system using their gov.mt e-ID account. To do so, they should click the yellow ‘Login with e-ID' button, which is prominently displayed in the centre of the homepage. Alternatively, they can access the system by selecting the ‘GOV.MT e-ID' button in the top-right corner of the page, which always remains visible.

After clicking either button, users will be redirected to the e-ID login page to complete the authentication process.

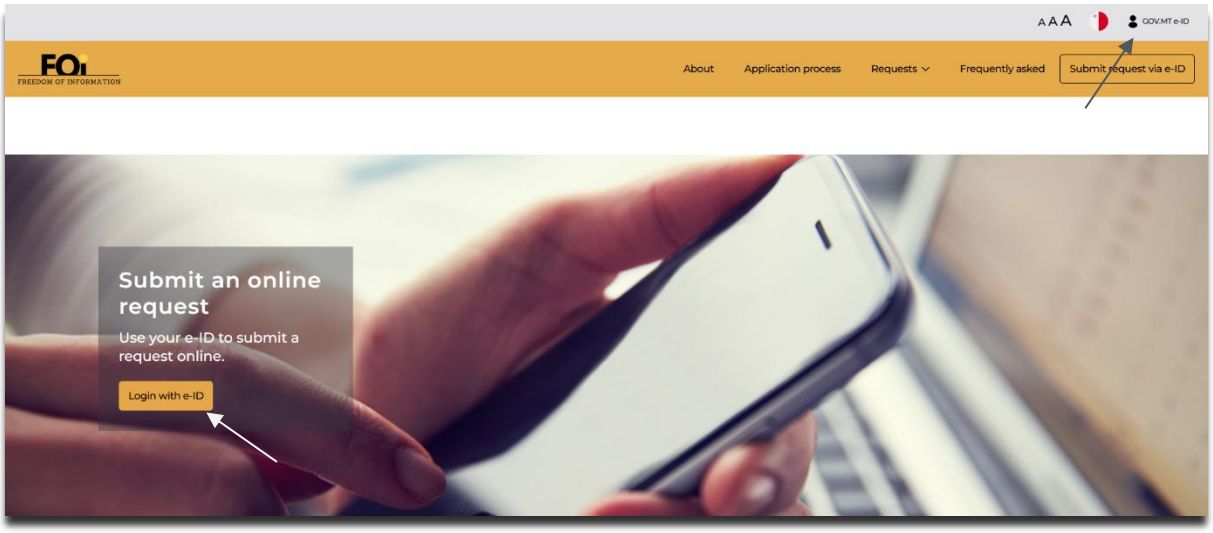

Figure 12: Homepage

2.1.1.1 Logging Out

1. Click **Welcome, [your name]** at the top right.
2. Select **Log out** from the drop-down menu.

For your security, always log out when using a shared or public computer.



Figure 13 - Header Log out

2.1.2 Application Process

2.2.1 User submits a request.

Upon successful login, the user may initiate the request submission process by clicking the ‘Submit request via e-ID’ button located in the header or by selecting the ‘Submit a request’ button from the Requests menu.

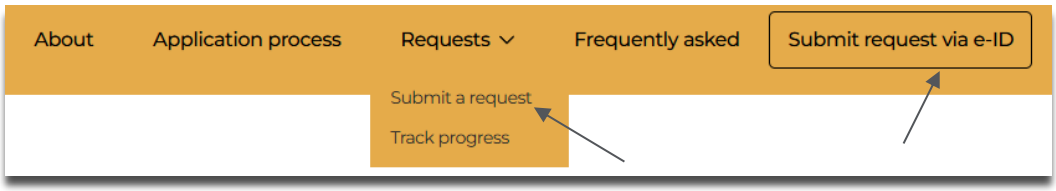

Figure 14: Submit a Request

2.2.2 Personal Details.

After clicking the button, the user will be redirected to the first page of the submission process, which is dedicated to personal details. The fields on this page are pre-filled with information extracted from the user’s e-ID account and are not editable.

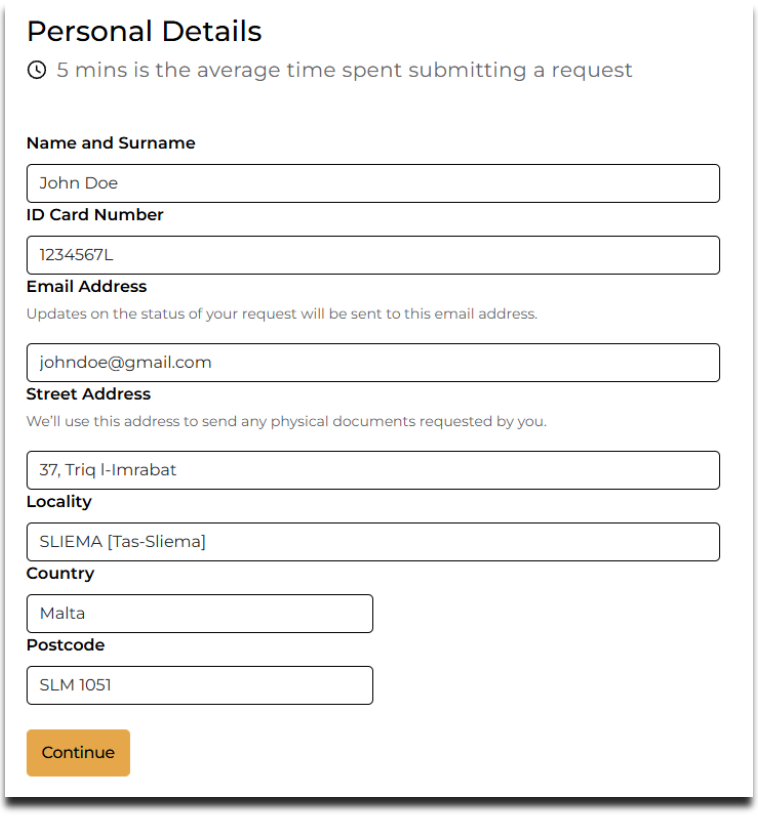

Figure 15: Personal Details

At the top of the page, a navigation bar displays each step of the process, allowing the user to click on any step number for direct access. Alternatively, a ‘Continue’ button is

located at the bottom of each page, enabling users to proceed sequentially through the process.

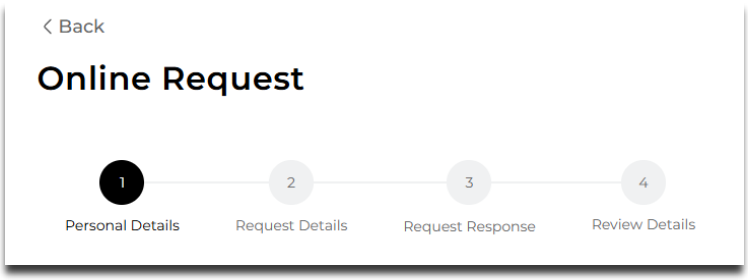

Figure 16: Steps to Submit a Request.

2.2.3 Request Details.

The second page, titled 'Request Details', provides a text box for the user to describe the document in question. Additionally, two dropdown menus are available: one for selecting the relevant ministry and another for choosing the corresponding public authority. Please note that the public authority dropdown will only display options once a ministry has been selected.

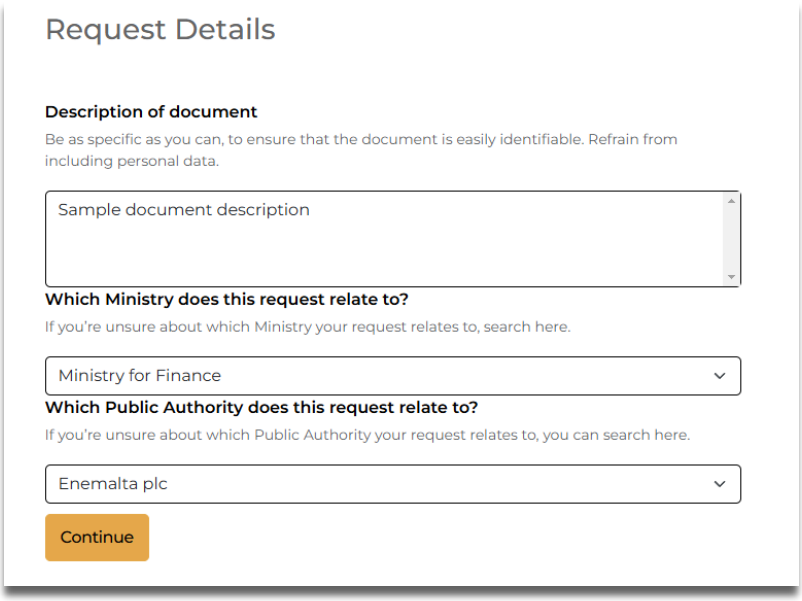

Figure 17: Request Details

2.2.4 Request Response.

The following page, 'Request Response', prompts the user to specify their preferred format for the document.

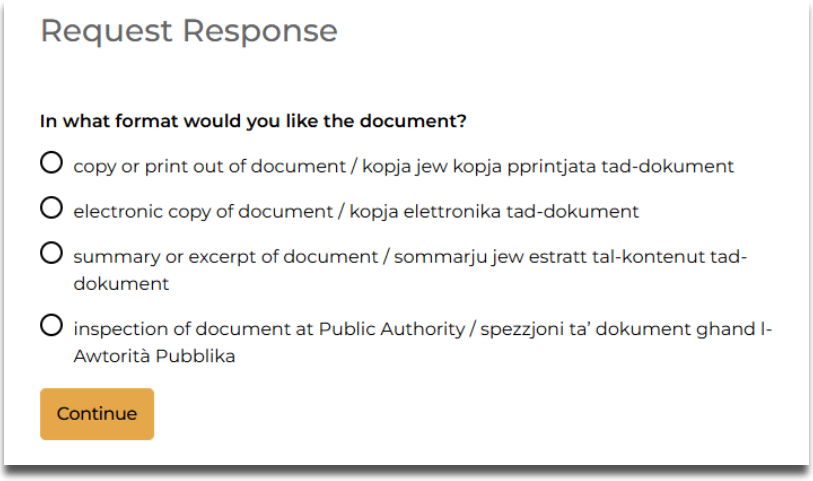

Figure 18: Request Response Format

Depending on the format, a second question appears asking how you would like to receive the document (for example, by email or as a hard copy).



Figure 19: Request Response Format Delivery

2.2.5 Review Details.

The final page, Review Details', presents a comprehensive summary of all the information provided throughout the process. This step also includes edit buttons for the request and response details, which allow users to make modifications by navigating directly to the corresponding page.

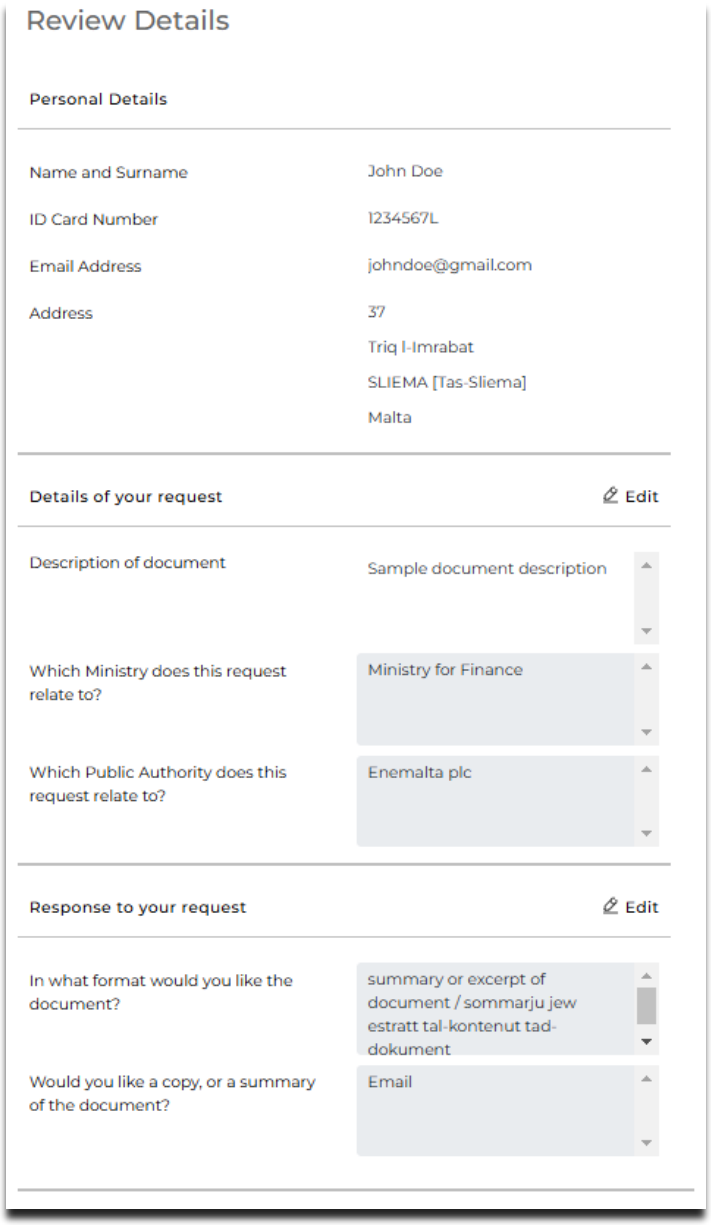

Figure 20: Review Details

At the bottom of the page, three buttons are displayed, each opening a pop-up containing a distinct document that the user must review and agreed. These documents are: 'Application general notes', 'Data protection statement' and 'Freedom of Information Act (Cap.496)'. Once the user has read and accepted all three documents,

the ‘Submit’ button becomes available, allowing the user to complete the submission process.

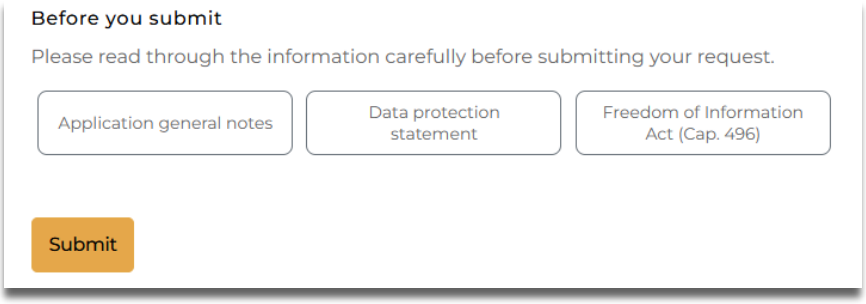

Figure 21: Terms & Conditions

Upon submission, the user is directed to a confirmation page that displays the unique request reference number along with details outlining the subsequent steps in the process. Additionally, the page provides a link in the ‘Track Progress’ step, that enables the user to go directly to the page where they can view real-time updates on the status of their request. The user will also receive an email confirmation upon submission.

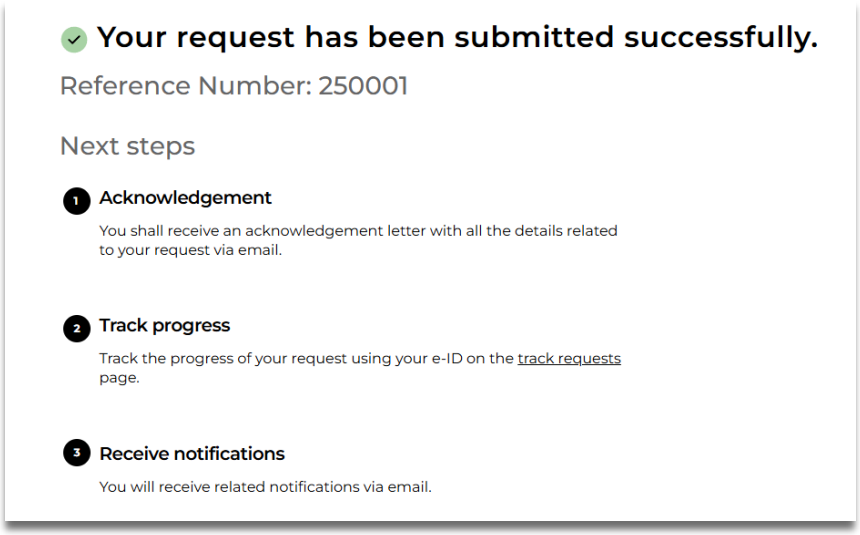

Figure 22: Request Submitted

If something goes wrong, a message is shown on the page. Try again; if the problem continues, log out, log back in and retry. If it still fails, contact support (Section 6).

2.2.2 Track the Progress of the request.

The 'Your Requests' page allows the user to track all submitted requests. This page can be accessed directly from the Requests dropdown in the header by clicking the 'Track progress' button. Additionally, the user will receive email notifications if any action is taken on the request they submitted.

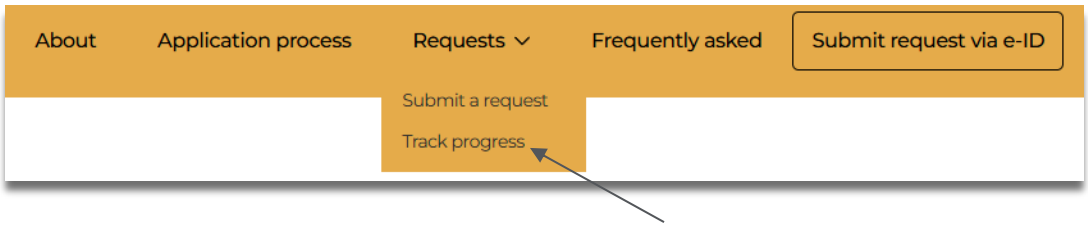

Figure 23: Track Progress

The page displays a comprehensive list of the user's requests, with each entry showing the reference number, associated ministry, public authority, date of submission, the timeframe of the request and a status indicator represented by a coloured dot. The meanings of these colours are explained in a legend above the list. When a status of a given request changes, the user will be notified by email.

In addition, the page offers two request actions, 'View Clarifications' and 'Complaints', as well as links to payments and files related to a given incident.

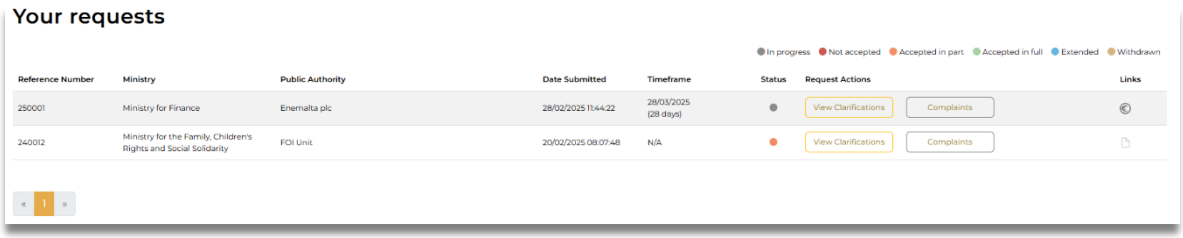

Figure 24: Clarifications.

Understanding the status colours:

STATUS	*Meaning*
OPEN	Your request has been received and is being processed
EXTENDED	The authority needs more time to respond.
ACCEPTED UNPAID	Accepted, but a fee is due
ACCEPTED	Your Request has been accepted
NOT ACCEPTED	Your request was not accepted
WITHDRAWN	Treated as withdrawn if the fee is not paid in time

2.2.3 Clarifications

Clicking on the 'View Clarifications' button directs the user to a dedicated page for clarifications related to the incident. The button will be available only when a clarification is sent from the FOI officer for the first time. Here, a chat interface displays all previously exchanged clarifications between the user and the FOI officer handling the request, along with the timestamps indicating the elapsed time since each message was sent. At the bottom of the interface, a text box is provided for the user to compose and send a new clarification.

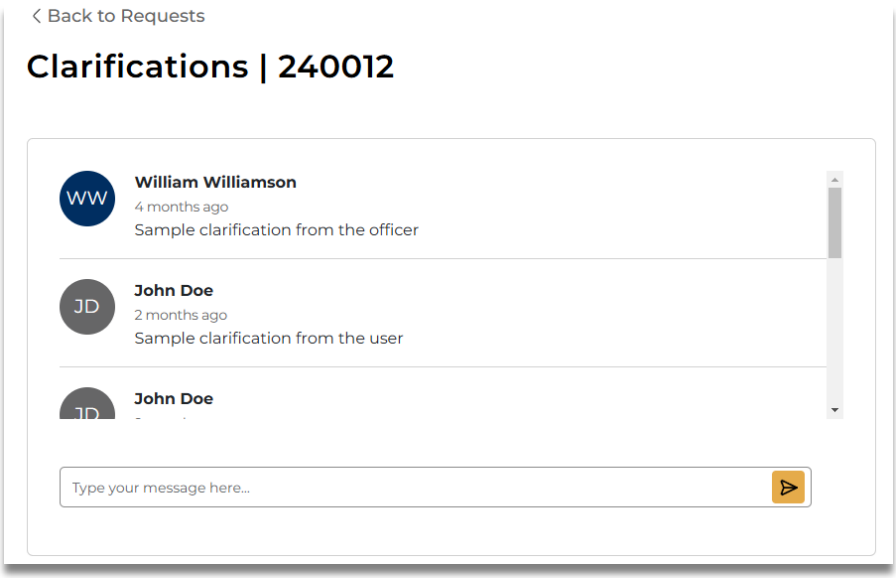

Figure 25: Clarification Chat Box.

Next to each message, an icon featuring the sender's initials is displayed. For officers, this icon has a navy-blue background, while for regular users, it is grey. When an officer sends a clarification, the user will also receive an email notification.

Notes:

- You cannot send an empty message.
- A message confirms whether your clarification was sent. If it fails, try again later.
- The chat **will no longer be accessible once the request is closed**.
- Use the **Back** link to return to *Your Requests*.
- Long conversations scroll within the chat box.

3. Payment for Services

3.1 Online Payment: paying with card.

After a request is submitted, the user is required to pay a fee. On the 'Your Requests' screen, a euro icon appears in the links column for a new request.

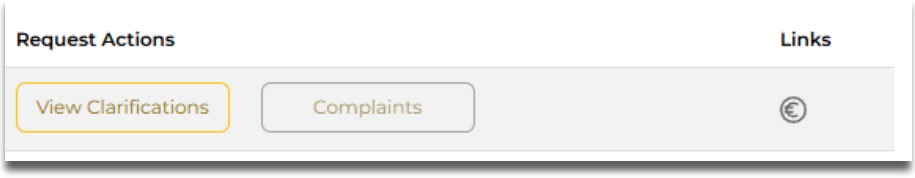

Figure 26: Payment icon

Clicking this icon opens a pop-up that informs the user about the applicable fees and the remaining time available to complete the payment. A 'Pay Now' button within the pop-up redirects the user to the payment screen to finalize the transaction.

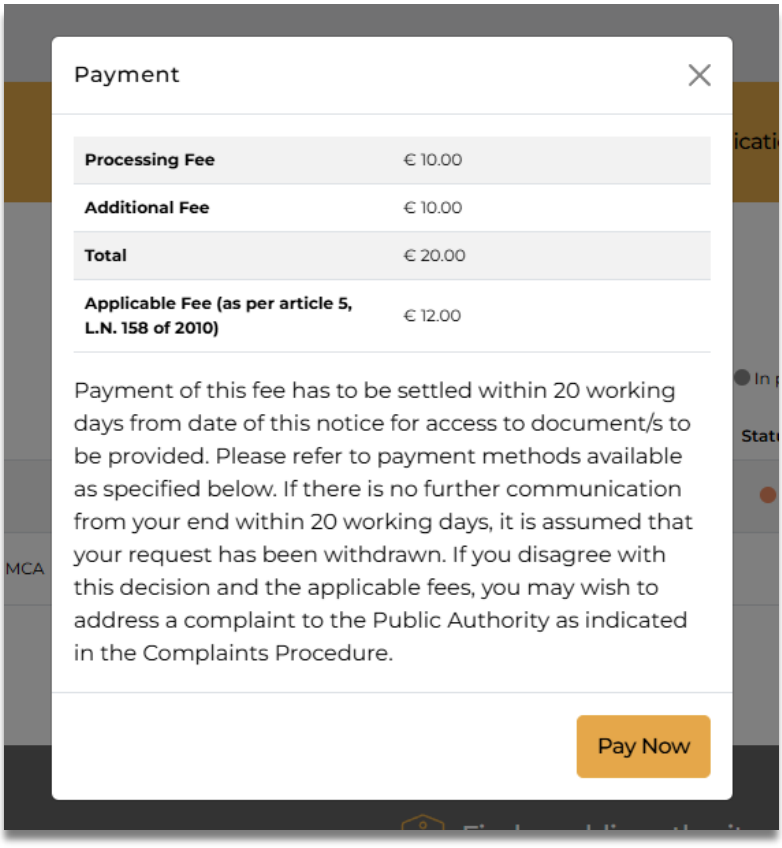

Figure 27: Payment Summary

Read the notice. **Payment must be made within 20 working days from the date of the response letter.** If there is no further communication from you within this time, your request is considered withdrawn. If you disagree with the decision or fees, you may address a complaint to the Public Authority as indicated in the response letter.

When the user clicks the 'Pay Now' button they will be redirected to a secure payment page where they are required to input their card details and complete the transaction.

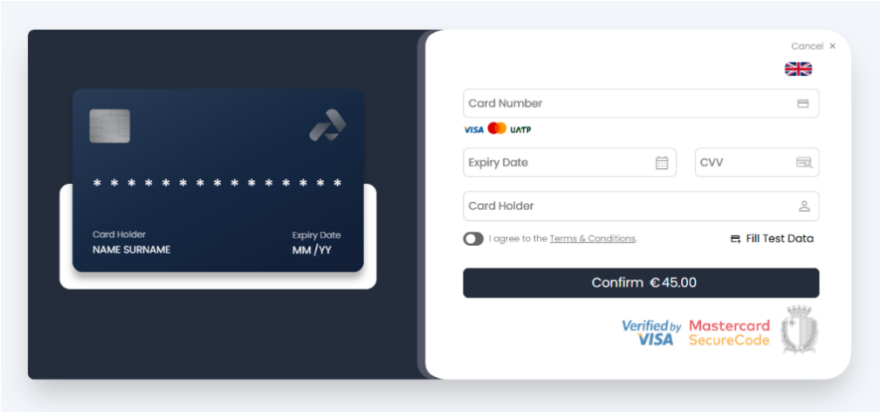

Figure 28: Payment Page

Once the payment is successfully processed, the user is automatically redirected to a payment confirmation page, which verifies the competition of the transaction. Additionally, an email notification will be sent to the user confirming the successful payment.

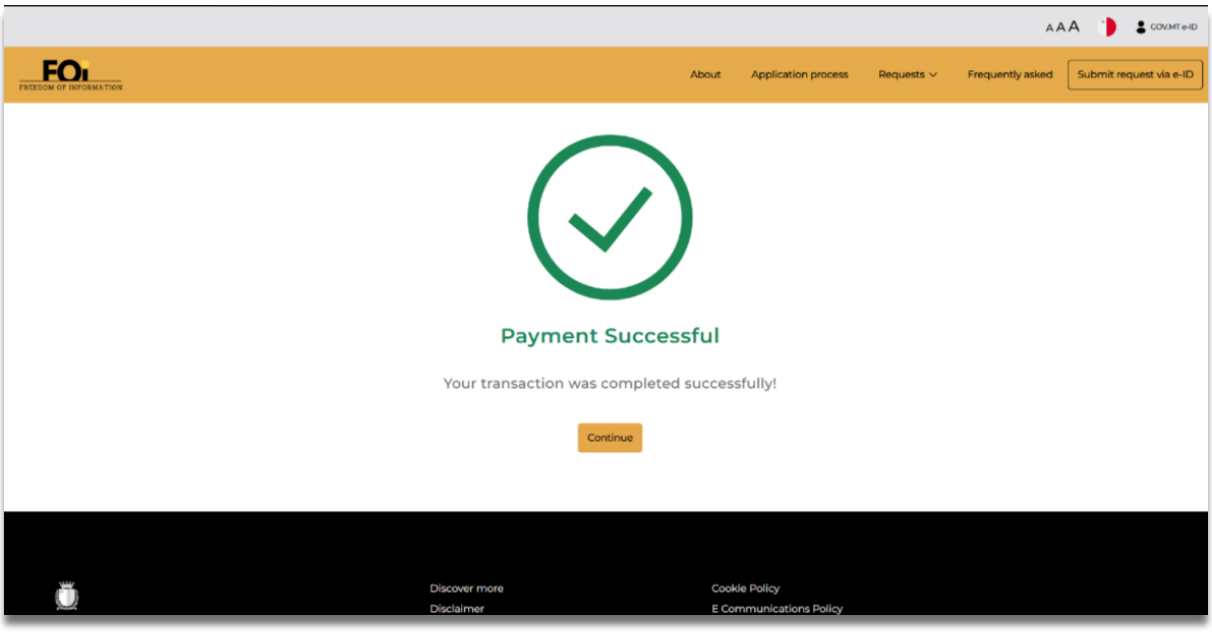

Figure 29: Payment Successful

3.2 Viewing Files

After the payment is made, the icon in the links column changes from a euro symbol to a light-grey file icon.

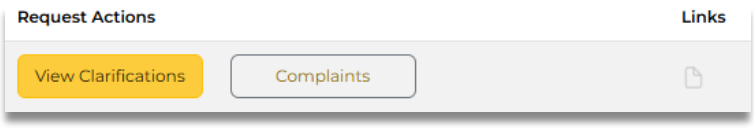

Figure 30: Viewing Files Before Payment.

If files are available for the incident, the file icon appears in a darker grey and becomes clickable.

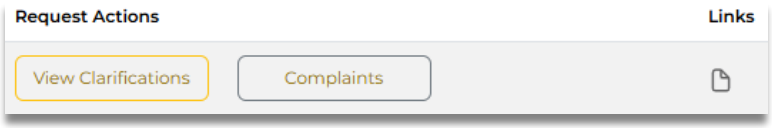

Figure 31: Viewing Files After Payment.

Upon clicking the file icon, a pop-up is displayed that lists the files associated with the incident, specifying each document's name, date of upload and offering the option to download each file individually.

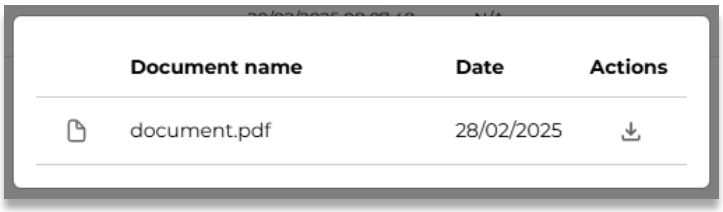

Figure 32: Download Files

4. Submit A Complaint

4.1 User submits a complaint.

When the user is on the 'Your Requests' page, clicking the 'Complaints' option withing the request actions will redirect them to the complaints page. The button becomes available once the FOI officer has acted on the given request, resulting in its status changing to either 'Extended', 'Not Accepted' or 'Accepted Unpaid'. From that point, the user has 30 days to submit a new complaint by clicking the button. The user will receive an email notification, informing them that the request has been actioned.

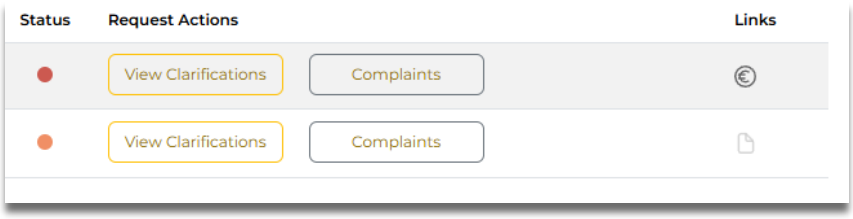

Figure 33: Complaints Button

If no complaints exist for the selected request, an appropriate message will be displayed. Additionally, a button labeled 'Open a complaint' is available to initiate the process of submitting a new complaint.

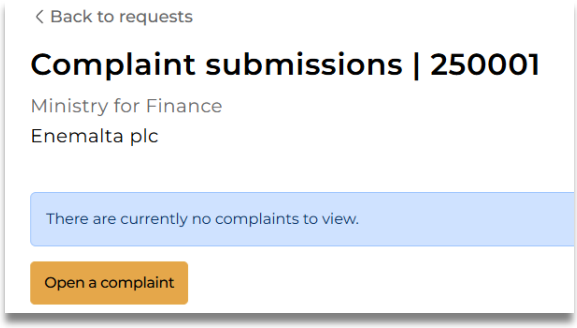

Figure 34: Complaint Submission Dashboard

After clicking the 'Open a Complaint' button, the complaint form is displayed. At the top of each step, a navigation bar allows the user to directly access any stage of the form, while the 'Continue' button at the bottom of each page facilitates moving sequentially to the next stage.

The first page, titled 'Incident Details', is automatically pre-filled with information pertaining to incident and the user submitting the complaint.

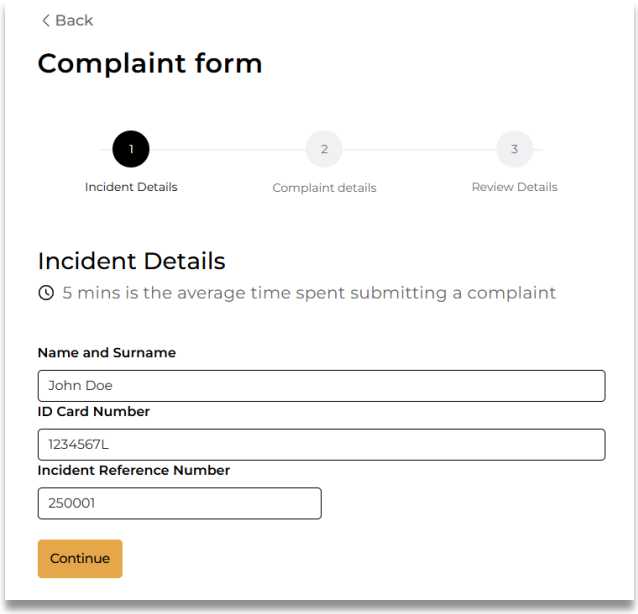

Figure 35: Request Details

Following the initial stage, the 'Complaint Details' section presents the user with a list of potential reasons for the complaint, along with a text box for further elaboration on the issue.

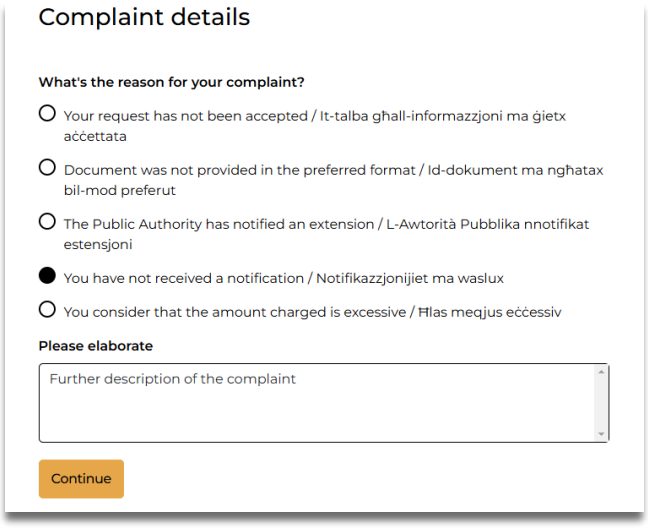

Figure 36: Complaint Details

The final page, 'Review Details', presents a comprehensive summary of all the information provided in the previous steps. Within this summary, the user is also provided with an edit button for the complaint details, which will take them directly to the corresponding page for any desired modifications.

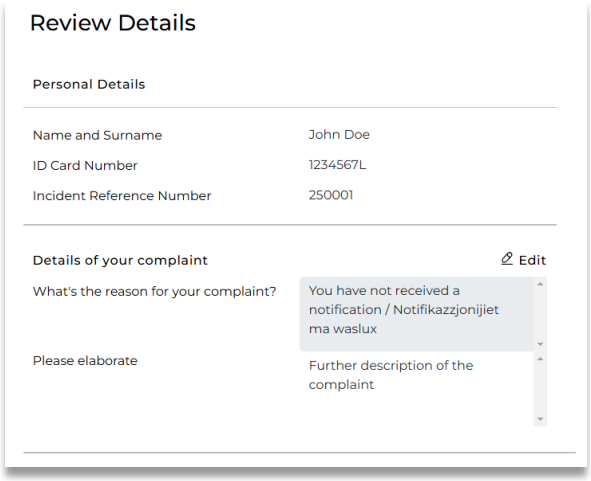

Figure 37: Review Details

At the bottom of the page, three buttons are displayed, each opening a pop-up containing a distinct document that must be reviewed and agreed to by the user. These documents are: 'Application general notes', 'Data protection statement' and 'Freedom of Information Act (Cap.496)'. Once the user has read and accepted all three documents, the 'Submit' button becomes available, allowing the user to complete the submission process.

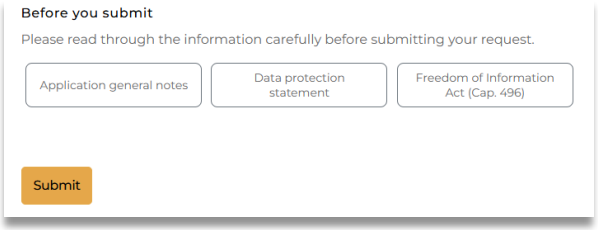

Figure 38: Terms & Conditions

After successfully submitting a complaint, the user will receive an email notification with the confirmation.

4.2 Track the Progress of the complaint.

After submitting a complaint, it will be displayed on the complaints screen for the corresponding incident. Here, the user can review the request's reference number, the complaint's submission data as well as its designated timeframe and current status. Additionally, the user has the option to view clarifications related to the complaint and access any associated files and payment links. The user will also receive an email notification, whenever any of their complaints are actioned.

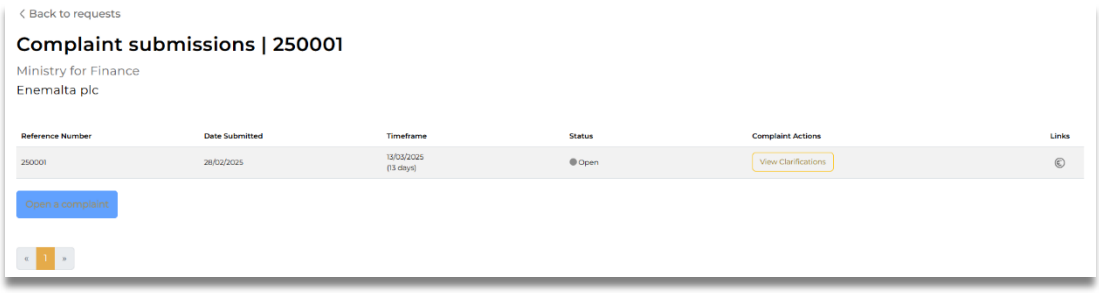

Figure 39: Complaints Grid

4.3 Clarifications

Clicking on the 'View Clarifications' button directs the user to a dedicated page for clarifications related to the complaint. The button will be available only when a clarification is sent from the FOI officer for the first time. Here, a chat interface displays all previously exchanged clarifications between the user and the FOI officer handling the complaint, along with the timestamps indicating the elapsed time since each message was sent. At the bottom of the interface, a text box is provided for the user to compose and send a new clarification.

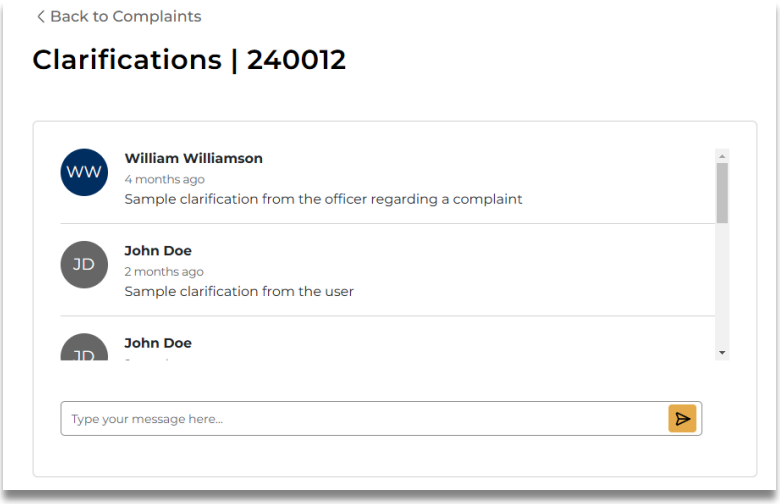

Figure 40: Clarifications Chat Box

Next to each message, an icon featuring the sender's initials is displayed. For FOI officers, this icon has a navy-blue background, while for regular users, it is grey. When an officer sends a clarification, the user will also receive an email notification.

4.4 Payment

After a complaint is submitted, the user is required to pay a fee. On the 'Complaint submissions' screen, a euro icon appears in the links column for a new complaint.



Figure 41: Payment Icon

Clicking this icon opens up a pop-up that informs the user about the applicable fees and the remaining time available to complete the payment. A 'Pay Now' button within the pop-up redirects the user to the payment screen to finalize the transaction.

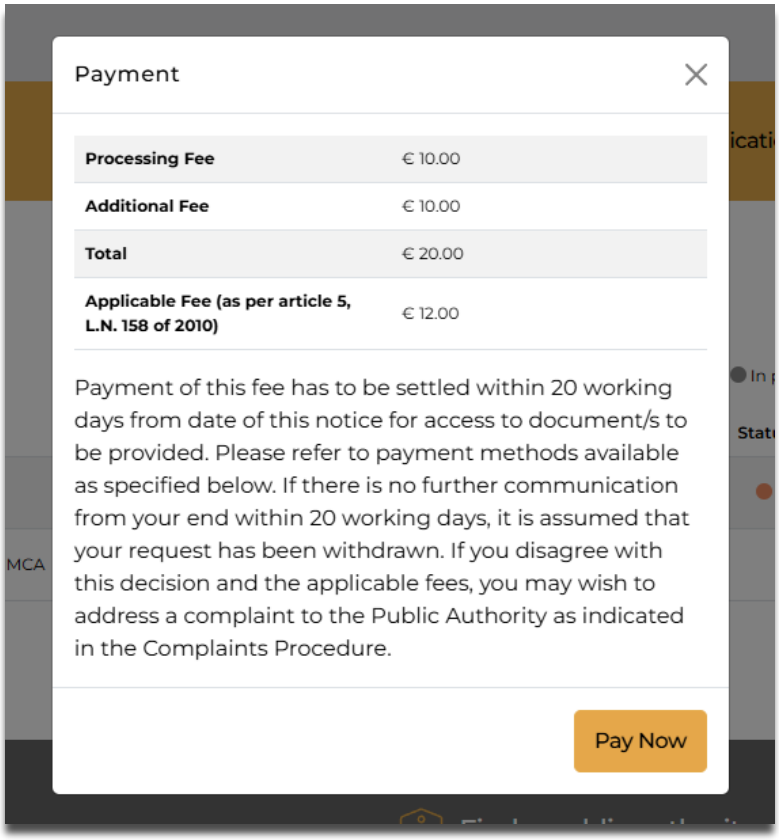

Figure 42: Payments Summary

When the user clicks the 'Pay Now' button they will be redirected to a secure payment page where they are required to input their card details and complete the transaction.

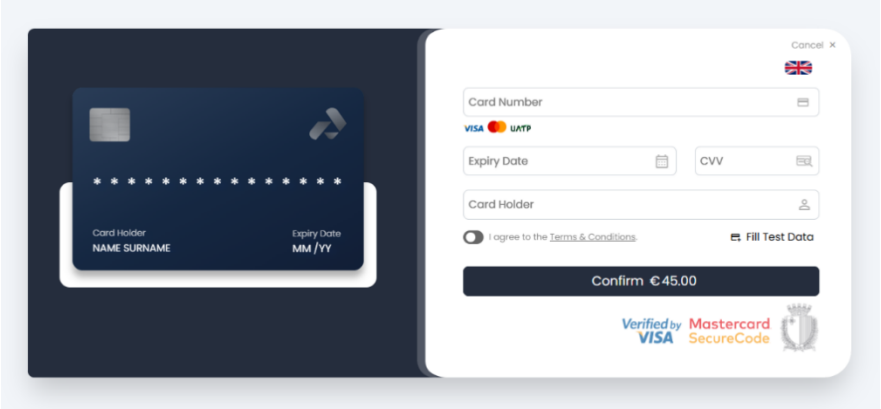

Figure 43: Payment Page

Once the payment is successfully processed, the user is automatically redirected to a payment confirmation page, which verifies the competition of the transaction. Additionally, an email notification will be sent to the user confirming the successful payment.

4.5 Viewing Files

After the payment is made, the icon in the links column changes from a euro symbol to a light-grey file icon.

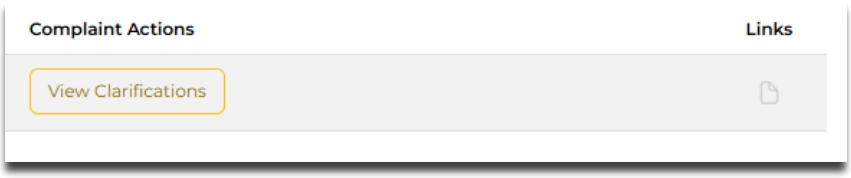

Figure 44: Inactive Files Button

If files are available for the incident, the file icon appears in a darker grey and becomes clickable.

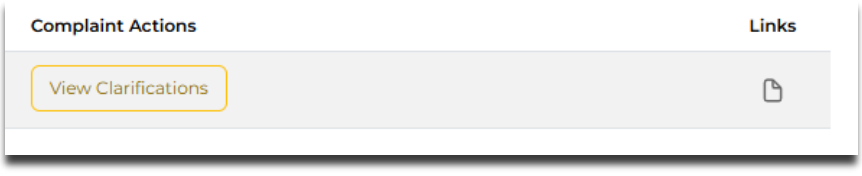

Figure 45: Active Files Button

Upon clicking the file icon, a pop-up is displayed that lists the files associated with the incident, specifying each document's name, date of upload and offering the option to download each file individually.

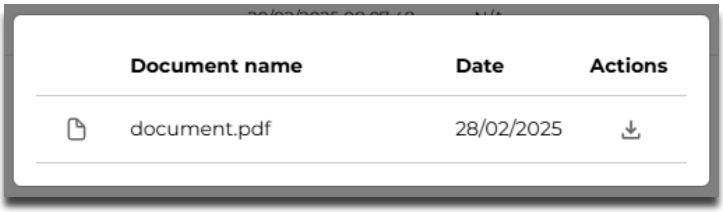

Figure 46: File Details

5. Finding a Public Authority

You can look up contact details without logging in.

1. Click **Find a public authority** in the footer.s
2. Select a **ministry** from the first drop-down.
3. Select a **public authority** from the second drop-down.
4. The page shows the address, email, telephone number and **normal** and **summer** opening hours.



Figure 47 - Find a public authority section in footer

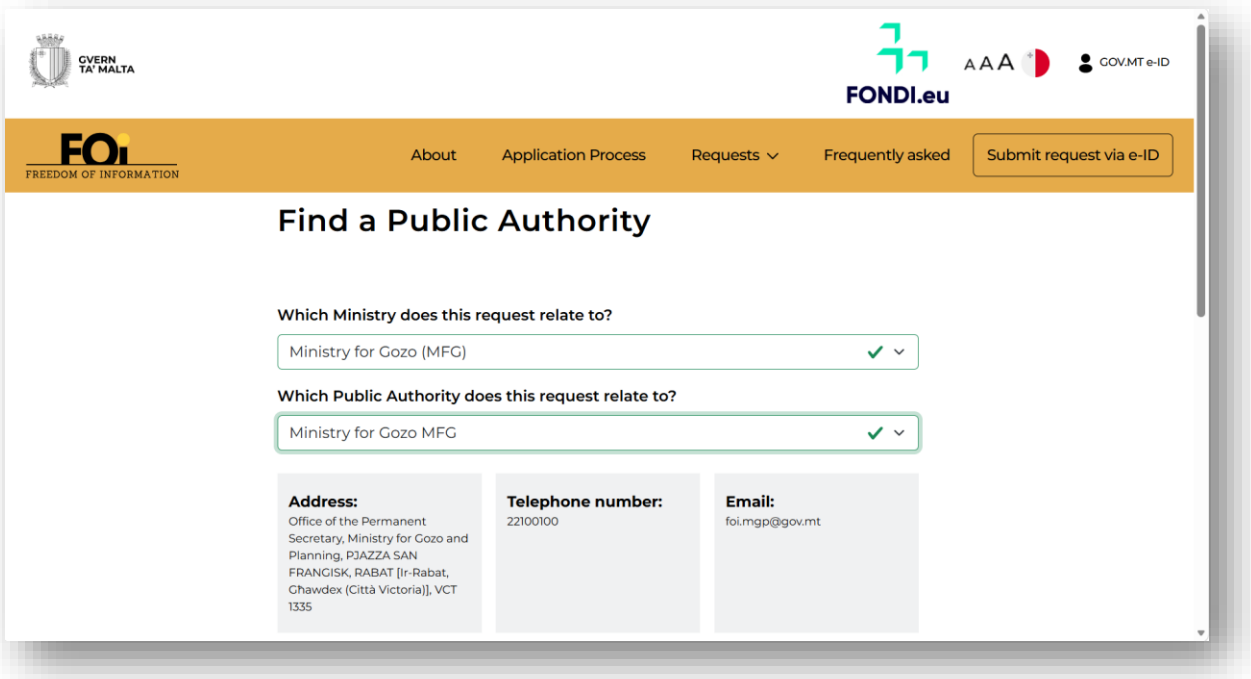

Figure 48 - Find a public authority page

6. Assistance and Support

Should users require any assistance while using the FOI portal, they are invited to contact:

Email Address	foicu@gov.mt
Telephone number	(+356) 22478200
Address	Block 28, Flat 19, Vincenti Building, Triq id-Dejqa, Il-Belt Valletta