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Big spenders: EU commissioners blew nearly €500,000 on travel in two months

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Holiday: Juncker's two-day trip to Rome cost €27,000 (Source: Getty)

EU commissioners spent nearly €500,000 on travel over just two months - including a two-day trip to Rome made by **Jean-Claude Juncker**, which cost €27,000.

This was not the most expensive trip in the first two months of 2016, however. That honour falls to foreign affairs chief Federica

Mogherini, whose trip to Baku, Azerbaijan cost €75,000. Both journeys included use of a chartered plane, which forced the fees up.

Another big expense came from a visit to a series of countries, including Somalia and Turkey, made by Christos Stylianides, the commissioner for humanitarian aid, for a total of €11,000.

Juncker himself expensed €63,877 over the two months – including a €48 half day allowance for a visit to Germany.

However in general, expenditure was not excessive. The €500,000 was split between 28 commissioners and 261 official trips - an average of around €1,900 per trip. The most expensive overnight stay, in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, cost €629.

Britain's former EU Commissioner Jonathan Hill racked up travel costs of around €9,000 in the period just before David Cameron's pre-referendum negotiation.

Mina Andreeva, a commission spokeswoman, told reporters today that chartered planes were only taken where commercial flights were not available, timings did not work or in instances where there were security concerns.

Of Juncker's Rome trip, she said that there had been "no available commercial plane to fit the president's agenda" in Italy. During the trip Juncker met the Italian president and prime minister, among other dignitaries.

This is the first time this level of detail has been released about the commission's expenditure, after a three-year battle by Spanish transparency NGO Access Info.

Access Info recently said it was "[extremely regrettable](#)" [that just two months of data was made available](#). A complaint has been lodged with the ombudsman to try and force the commission to release the full year break-down.

Access Info vice president Helen Darbshire told City A.M. the lack of transparency was a bigger concern than the expenses themselves.

"What is stupid of the commission is to fight making this public because it makes people suspicious – it was very ill advised of them not to just say 'let's make it public'. It's essential for oversight, accountability, and as a good practice example for more corrupt countries within Europe that we can point to the commission and say 'that is how we should do it in a democracy'."

Darbshire added: "There is a lot of euroscepticism throughout Europe, not just in UK, and when there is a lack of willingness to be held to account that only fuels the anti-European attitude."

The commission insists that disclosing the travel expenses for the other 10 months of 2016 would create an "excessive administrative burden".

James Price, campaign manager at the TaxPayers' Alliance, said: "We have long known that Juncker and other members of the Commission care little for how they spend European taxpayers' money, and these revelations will confirm suspicions that they do not focus on keeping costs down.

"Many would find it remarkable that these expenses were signed off in the first place, but it is perhaps unsurprising when the EU's own auditors highlight so many errors in the commission's accounts as a whole. Revelations like this make some of the entries from the MP's expenses scandal seem like small change."

Andreeva added: "We do publish information on expenses whenever we are asked to provide information ... I think it is not possible on a case-by-case basis to publish all expenses of people travelling."

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