

**From:** Helen Darbshire [mailto:helen@access-info.org]  
**Sent:** vendredi 24 février 2017 08:06  
**To:** 'SG ACCES DOCUMENTS' <Sg-Acc-Doc@ec.europa.eu>; Martin Kröger <xxxxx@ec.europa.eu>  
**Cc:** 'Luisa Izuzquiza' <luisa@access-info.org>; 'Andreas Pavlou' <andreas@access-info.org>; 'Alba' <alba@access-info.org>  
**Subject:** RE: Ares(2017)966603 - RE: Commissioners' mission expenses

Dear Mr Kröger,

Thank you for your message.

In the first instance, it is important to clarify that AsktheEU.org is simply a platform that facilitates the exercise of the right of access to EU documents, a fundamental right protected by the treaties of the EU. Similar request platforms run in many other countries around Europe and globally.

The means by which a requester exercises the right (which according to Regulation 1049/2001 Article 6(1) may be “in any written form, including electronic form”) does not in any way obviate the Commission’s legal obligation to acknowledge receipt of access to EU documents requests (Article 7(1) Regulation 1049/2001).

It is indeed the case that Access Info Europe’s campaign invited members of the public to submit requests for access to Commissioners’ expenses because we believe strongly that this information should be in the public domain. This is within our mandate as a civil society organisation that works to promote and defend the right of access to information in Europe, as well as working on issues of accountability, including for the spending of public funds. Members of the public who have engaged in this campaign by submitting requests have the right to be treated equally before the law, just like any other requester for access to EU documents.

Furthermore, I note that the requests submitted by 119 individuals during 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January for access to EU documents are almost identical requests that very recently have been registered by the Commission, and indeed which were answered by granting access to documents. To that end, Access Info is not ready to act as an intermediary between the Commission and these requesters, although we will of course be keeping them and the wider public informed about the progress of these requests.

In our recent letter to Vice President Timmermans we suggested that the Commission disclose the information online and in bulk rather than per request. This would both facilitate a positive outcome for the requesters and would provide the wider European public with data on the spending of their taxes on public business.

Access Info is of course happy to discuss this further, and we stand ready to meet in person to discuss the possible solutions for proactively publishing this information in the public interest.

Yours faithfully

Helen Darbshire

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**Helen Darbshire**  
Executive Director  
**Access Info Europe**  
[www.access-info.org](http://www.access-info.org)  
[@helen\\_access](mailto:@helen_access), [@access\\_info](mailto:@access_info)  
Mobile: +34 667 685 319

**From:** EC ARES NOREPLY [<mailto:MAILTO:DIGIT-NOREPLYARES@ec.europa.eu>]  
**Sent:** 22 February 2017 15:26  
**To:** Helen Darbshire <[helen@access-info.org](mailto:helen@access-info.org)>; SG ACCES DOCUMENTS <[Sg-Acc-Doc@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Sg-Acc-Doc@ec.europa.eu)>  
**Cc:** Luisa Izuzquiza <[luisa@access-info.org](mailto:luisa@access-info.org)>; Andreas Pavlou <[andreas@access-info.org](mailto:andreas@access-info.org)>; Alba <[alba@access-info.org](mailto:alba@access-info.org)>  
**Subject:** Ares(2017)966603 - RE: Commissioners' mission expenses

[Ares\(2017\)966603 - RE: Commissioners' mission expenses](#)

*Sent by KROEGER Martin (SG) <[xxxxx@ec.europa.eu](mailto:xxxxx@ec.europa.eu)>. All responses have to be sent to this email address.*

*Envoyé par KROEGER Martin (SG) <[xxxxx@ec.europa.eu](mailto:xxxxx@ec.europa.eu)> . Toutes les réponses doivent être effectuées à cette adresse électronique.*

Dear Ms Darbshire,

Many thanks for your message.

I would like to confirm that the various Commission departments involved are currently looking into this matter.

At the moment, the Commission does not intend to send individual communications on the handling of the requests to the applicants. Given that the requests have been triggered by an AccessInfoEurope initiative via the AsktheEU website, I would like to suggest that AccessInfoEurope makes centrally available information about the handling of the file, for instance on the basis of our exchange of emails.

Please rest assure that we will come back to AccessInfoEurope as quickly as possible on further developments of the file.

Best regards,

**Martin KRÖGER**  
Head of Unit

**European Commission**  
Secretariat-General  
Unit B4: Transparency

BERL 5/325  
+32 2 29 99559  
B-1049 Brussels  
[xxxxx@ec.europa.eu](mailto:xxxxx@ec.europa.eu)

**From:** Helen Darbishire [<mailto:helen@access-info.org>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 16, 2017 10:54 PM  
**To:** SG ACCES DOCUMENTS; KROEGER Martin (SG)  
**Cc:** 'Andreas Pavlou'; 'Alba'; 'Luisa Izuzquiza'  
**Subject:** RE: Commissioners' mission expenses

Dear Martin Kröger,

Thank you for your message and for informing me that you are exploring how to respond to the series of requests submitted by members of the European public for information about the travel expenses of the European Commissioners.

You should have received, but I attach again for your convenience, the letter we sent to Vice President Timmermans about this, respectfully suggesting that the most appropriate way of moving forward would be proactive publication of all relevant data.

I note from your message that you plan to extend the deadline. If the dates of receipt are counted as 27 January and 30 January (being the first working days after, respectively, the 26 and 27 of January when the bulk of requests were sent), then as of next Tuesday, 21 February, the initial 15 day period for responding to the requests will expire.

Given that numerous requesters have exercised the right of access to documents as protected by the treaties of the EU, I would ask that you confirm whether or not you are planning to send each requester a message such as this one, notifying them of the registration of their requests – along with a GESTDEM number for each request – and informing each requestor of the application of the extension as per Article 7(3) of Regulation 1049/2001?

I am at your disposal to discuss this further.

With best regards

Helen

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**Helen Darbshire**

Executive Director

**Access Info Europe**

[www.access-info.org](http://www.access-info.org)

[@helen\\_access](mailto:helen_access), [@access\\_info](mailto:@access_info)

Mobile: +34 667 685 319

**From:** [Sg-Acc-Doc@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Sg-Acc-Doc@ec.europa.eu) [<mailto:Sg-Acc-Doc@ec.europa.eu>]

**Sent:** 15 February 2017 16:29

**To:** [info@access-info.org](mailto:info@access-info.org); [helen@access-info.org](mailto:helen@access-info.org)

**Subject:** Commissioners' mission expenses

Dear Ms Darbshire,

We refer to the campaign launched by *AccessInfoEurope* (<https://www.access-info.org/commissioners-expenses>) at the end of January 2017 and the series of requests for access to the mission expenses of (a) specific Commissioner(s) submitted in this framework.

Given the large number of individual access-to-documents requests triggered by your campaign (currently almost 200), the Commission is currently examining the appropriate way of handling these requests.

The first individual requests were received on 25 January 2017. Due to the complexity of the matter, the Commission has to extend the standard the time-limit for their handling with 15 working days.

We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause, and would like to reassure you that the Commission will endeavor to handle the requests as soon as possible.

Thank you for your understanding.

Kind regards,

Martin Kröger