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EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini made a €75,000 trip to Baku in Azerbaijan | Thierry Roge/AFP via Getty Images

Commissioners spent half a million on travel in two months

Chartered plane rides make up a large chunk of the costs.

By **LAURENS CERULUS** | 8/9/17, 6:00 AM CET | Updated 8/9/17, 2:53 PM CET

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A visit to Baku, Azerbaijan costing €75,000 was the most expensive trip made by a European commissioner in the first two months of 2016, according to travel expenses scrutinized by Belgian magazine [Knack](#) and published Wednesday.

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In those two months, commissioners spent close to €500,000 on 261 official trips, [Knack's](#) analysis shows. The costs of accommodation and transport were generally modest: The most expensive overnight stay, in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, cost €629.



Costs rose when commissioners used chartered planes — as happened when foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini made the €75,000 trip to Baku. The Commission said such “air taxis” can be used if no commercial flights are available that fit a commissioner’s schedule.

Other expensive trips include European Commission President Jean-Claude

Juncker’s two-day visit to Rome in February 2016, which cost €27,000, and a trip to a series of countries, including Somalia and Turkey, by Christos Stylianides, the commissioner for humanitarian aid, for a total of €11,000.

These are the first expenses of this kind and scale to be made public and the Commission tried to stop them being disclosed. The documents on travel expenses were requested by Spanish transparency NGO [Access Info](#), but the NGO spent three years tussling with the European Commission over which and how many documents it could look at. It is still pushing to get reports for other time periods.

“We just ask basic information about how the Commission is using public funds. Any taxpayer has the right to know how his money is spent,” Helen Darbishire, director of Access Info Europe, told [Knack](#).



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According to the Commission, making public the travel expenses for the rest of 2016 would create an “excessive administrative burden” and the EU institution is already “one of the most controlled organizations in the world,” having to submit its spending to the European Parliament and European Court of Auditors.

Günther Oettinger, now the budget commissioner, was last year criticized for taking a [private plane to Budapest](#) at the invitation of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. The plane was owned by Klaus Mangold, a pro-Russia German businessman and lobbyist.

Commission deputy spokeswoman Mina Andreeva said Wednesday that the Juncker trip to Rome involved an air-taxi as the Commission president travelled with nine other people and no commercial flights were suitable.

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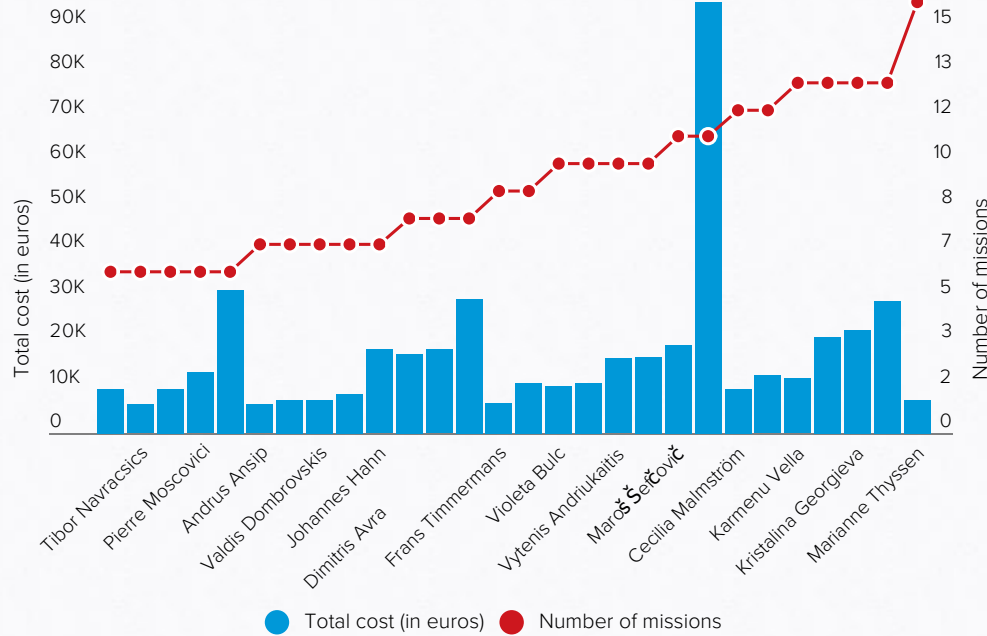
EU lawmakers on fact-finding mission to Hungary accused of meddling in domestic affairs.

COMMISSION MISSIONS, BY THE NUMBERS

In a two-month period (January and February) in 2016, the 28 European Commissioners took 261 missions, costing nearly €500,000. Here's how those trips break down.

WHO SPENT THE MOST?

How many missions commissioners went on, and what they spent on them, in the given time period.



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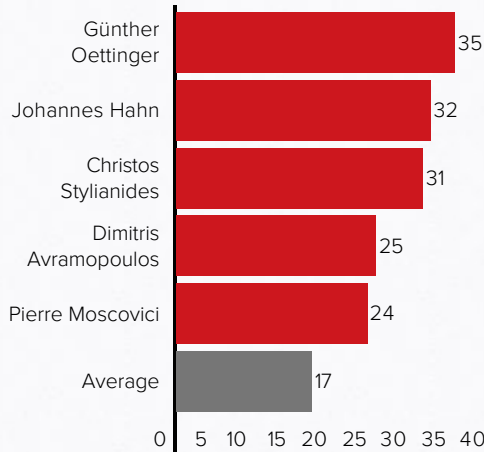
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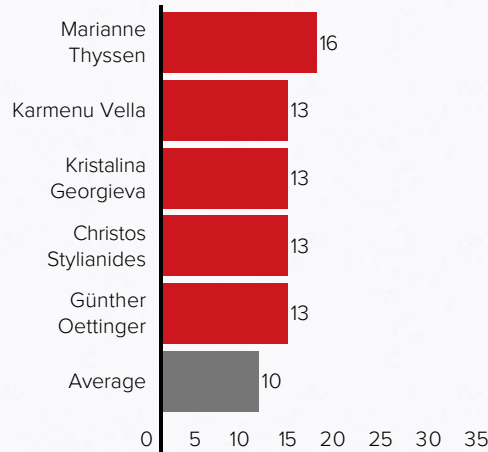
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WHO SPENT THE MOST NIGHTS ABROAD?



WHO TOOK THE MOST MISSIONS?



AVERAGE COSTS

€1,886

Per mission

€17,580

Per commissioner

SOURCE: [Knack](#)

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