

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Office of the First Vice-President Mr Frans Timmermans

Deputy Head of Cabinet

Brussels, 4 02. 2015
Ares (2014) 4213944

Ms Helen DARBISHIRE
Executive Director
ACCESS INFO EUROPE
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Dear Ms Darbshire,

The First Vice-President of the European Commission for better regulation, interinstitutional relations, rule of law and the charter of fundamental rights, Mr Frans Timmermans, has asked me to thank you for your letter of 10 December 2014 raising a number of transparency-related issues. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying to you.

Transparency is a high priority for the new Commission, as reflected in the Commission's Work Programme for 2015. This foresees a proposal for an Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register covering the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, to replace the current voluntary register covering the European Parliament and the Commission.

The importance of transparency is also reflected in the Commission's Political Guidelines¹ and in the Decisions taken in November which ensure that the Commissioners, their Cabinets and Directors-General publish information on meetings held with organisations and self-employed individuals on-line². To balance the aim of transparency with data protection considerations, except for self-employed persons, the names of entities rather than individuals are made public.

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¹ Presented at the European Parliament on 15 July and at the European Council on 16 July 2014.

² Press release: http://ec.europa.eu/news/2014/11/20141125_en.htm; Decisions C(2014)9048 and 9051.

Several reports by specialised organisations have recently confirmed that the Commission achieves a high level of transparency including by comparison with other international organisations. This also applies to the Commission's practice in the implementation of Regulation 1049/2001 on access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents, which forms an important part of its overall transparency policy. However there is always room for improvement and I have taken good note of your suggestions about the application of Regulation 1049/2001. I have asked my colleague Mr Martin Kröger, Head of Unit responsible for Transparency in the Secretariat-General, to reply to you directly on these points.

I look forward to reading your assessment of the level of transparency reached by the Commission, including through the most recent initiatives, in comparison with international standards. Thank you for your constructive engagement on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,


Michelle SUTTON