



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

The Secretary-General

Brussels,
ARES(2017)

*Ms Helen Darbshire
Executive Director
Access Info Europe*

By e-mail: andreas@access-info.org

Dear Ms Darbshire

Thank you for your letter of 31 January 2017 about the need to address the alleged lack of transparency around Commissioners' individual mission expenses.

The European Commission continuously strives to develop its communication and transparency policy and is one of the most scrutinised organisations in the world. Our policy on transparency is far reaching and comprehensive. I would refer you, for example to the Europa webpage developed by DG BUDG concerning public spending¹; to the increased transparency regarding Members of the Commission's individual agendas, who they are meeting, and when²; and to the transparency ensured with regard to Commission Decisions on former Commissioners post- mandate activities³.

The cost of the missions carried out by the Members of the Commission is covered by a global envelope available to the College, the amount of which is stipulated annually by the European Parliament and the distribution of which is fixed by the President, taking account of the needs of each Member of the Commission. Members' mission costs are kept within the limits stipulated by the Budgetary Authority.

All Commission expenses are controlled internally. They are also subject to external scrutiny by the Court of Auditors and in the framework of the discharge procedure, the results of which are public.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/budget/figures/index_en.cfm

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/agenda_en

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-union/principles-and-values/ethics-and-integrity/ethics-and-integrity-eu-commissioners/former-european-commissioners-authorized-occupations_en

Communication and transparency are priorities for the Commission. However, given the overall oversight procedures in place, the Commission does not see added value in publishing online the detailed travel expenses for every mission by every Member of the Commission as your letter requests, and considers that the resource costs of processing the data to make them available on the Europa website would be disproportionate.

As regards your request for access to documents, I have set out in my reply on behalf of the Commission to your confirmatory application under Article 7(2) of Regulation 1049/2001 of 9 March 2017, the reasons why the Commission has considered that there is a balance to be reached between the interest of public disclosure and safeguarding good administration. Consequently, the Commission decided to give access to mission statements for all Members of the Commission for a proportionate period of 2 months.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alexander Italianer', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alexander Italianer

Cc: SG-DOSSIERS-ACCES@ec.europa.eu