



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

Directorate D – Waterborne
D.1 – Maritime Transport and Logistics

Brussels
MOVE.DDG2.D.1

Mr. Barnaby PACE
Global Witness
Rue Belliard 53
1000 Bruxelles
Belgium

**Sent by e-mail with request for
acknowledgment of receipt:**
[ask+request-10965-
bb2ad0b2@asktheeu.org](mailto:ask+request-10965-bb2ad0b2@asktheeu.org)

**Subject: Your applications for access to documents – GESTDEM 2022/2244
and GESTDEM 2022/2246**

Dear Sir,

We refer to your applications dated 7 April 2022 and 14 April 2022 in which you make two requests for access to documents, both of them registered on 19 April 2022 under the abovementioned reference numbers.

You request access to “*all documents—including but not limited to correspondence, emails, minutes, notes (hand written or electronic), audio or video recordings, verbatim reports, operational conclusions, lines to take, briefings, and presentations—related to the meeting on February 22 between Filip Alexandru Negreanu Arboreanu, Adina-Ioana Vălean and Walter Goetz and Equinor ASA.*” and to ‘*all documents—including but not limited to correspondence, emails, minutes, notes (hand written or electronic), audio or video recordings, verbatim reports, operational conclusions, lines to take, briefings, and presentations—related to the meeting on February 22 between Adina-Ioana Vălean and Equinor ASA*’.

Please note that the meeting between Equinor ASA and Commissioner Vălean took place on 23 February 2022 and not on 22 February 2022, as you mentioned in your requests. There has not been a second meeting solely between Cabinet members and Equinor ASA, on neither of these two days or the day after.

In light of the above, we have identified the following documents as falling within the scope of your applications:

— **Annex 1:** Request from Equinor ASA for a meeting with Commissioner Vălean to be held on 23 February 2022;

Annex 2: Flash Report of the meeting held by Commissioner Vălean with Equinor on 23 February 2022.

As regards both documents listed above, we have come to the conclusion that they may be partially disclosed. A complete disclosure of these documents is prevented by the exception concerning the protection of privacy and the integrity of individuals outlined in Article 4(1)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents¹ (hereinafter ‘Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001’), because they contain the following personal data:

- the names/initials and contact information of Commission staff members not pertaining to the senior management;
- the names/initials and contact details of other natural persons;
- other information relating to identified or identifiable natural persons, in particular references to functions of natural persons, to the extent that these would enable their identification.

Pursuant to Article 4(1)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, access to a document has to be refused if its disclosure would undermine the protection of privacy and the integrity of the individual, in particular in accordance with European Union legislation regarding the protection of personal data.

The applicable legislation in this field is Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC² (hereinafter ‘Regulation (EU) 2018/1725’, or ‘Data Protection Regulation’).

In particular, Article 3(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 provides that personal data “*means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person [...]*”. The Court of Justice has specified that any information, which by reason of its content, purpose or effect, is linked to a particular person is to be considered as personal data³.

In its judgment in Case C-28/08 P (Bavarian Lager)⁴, the Court of Justice ruled that when a request is made for access to documents containing personal data, the Data Protection Regulation becomes fully applicable⁵.

¹ OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43.

² Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC (OJ L 205 of 21.11.2018, p. 39).

³ Judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union of 20 December 2017 in Case C-434/16, *Peter Nowak v Data Protection Commissioner*, ECLI:EU:C:2017:994, paragraphs 33-35.

⁴ Judgment of 29 June 2010 in Case C-28/08 P, *Commission v Bavarian Lager*, ECLI:EU:C:2010:378, paragraph 63.

⁵ Whereas this judgment specifically related to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community

Pursuant to Article 9(1)(b) of the Data Protection Regulation, personal data shall only be transmitted to recipients established in the Union other than Union institutions and bodies if “[t]he recipient establishes that it is necessary to have the data transmitted for a specific purpose in the public interest and the controller, where there is any reason to assume that the data subject’s legitimate interests might be prejudiced, establishes that it is proportionate to transmit the personal data for that specific purpose after having demonstrably weighed the various competing interests”.

Only if these conditions are fulfilled and the processing constitutes lawful handling, in accordance with the requirements of Article 5 of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, can the transmission of personal data occur.

According to Article 9(1)(b) of the Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, the European Commission has to examine the further conditions for a lawful processing of personal data only if the first condition is fulfilled, namely if the recipient has established that it is necessary to have the data transmitted to you for a specific purpose in the public interest. It is only in that case the European Commission has to examine whether there is a reason to assume that the legitimate interests of the data subject might be prejudiced and, in the affirmative, establish the proportionality of the transmission of the personal data for that specific purpose after having demonstrably weighed the various competing interests.

In your request, you do not express any particular interest to have access to these personal data, nor do you put forward any arguments to establish the necessity to have the data transmitted for a specific purpose in the public interest. Therefore, the European Commission does not have to examine whether there is a reason to assume that the data subject’s legitimate interests might be prejudiced.

Notwithstanding the above, please note that there are reasons to assume that the legitimate interests of the data subjects concerned would be prejudiced by disclosure of the personal data reflected in these documents, as there is a real and non-hypothetical risk that such public disclosure would harm their privacy and subject them to unsolicited external contacts.

Consequently, I conclude that, pursuant to Article 4(1)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, access cannot be granted to the personal data contained in these documents, as the need to obtain access thereto for a purpose in the public interest has not been substantiated, and there is no reason to think that the legitimate interests of the individuals concerned would not be prejudiced by disclosure of the personal data concerned.

Please note that documents originating from third parties are disclosed to you based on Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001. However, this disclosure is without prejudice to the rules on intellectual property, which may limit your right to reproduce or exploit the released documents without the agreement of the originator, who may hold an intellectual property right on it. The European Commission does not assume any responsibility from their reuse.

Please also note that the disclosed flash report of the meeting was drawn up for internal use under the responsibility of the relevant services of the Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport. They solely reflect the authors’ interpretation of the

institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data, the principles set out therein are also applicable under the new data protection regime established by Regulation (EU) 2018/1725.

interventions made, and do not set out any official position of the third parties to which the documents refer. They also do not reflect the position of the Commission, and cannot be quoted as such.

In accordance with Article 7(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, you are entitled to submit a confirmatory application requesting the Commission to review this position.

Such a confirmatory application should be addressed within 15 working days upon receipt of this letter to the Secretariat-General of the Commission at the following address:

European Commission
Secretariat-General
Unit C.1. 'Transparency, Document Management and Access to Documents'
BERL 7/076
B-1049 Brussels,

or by email to: sg-acc-doc@ec.europa.eu

The COVID-19 outbreak undoubtedly has an impact on the process of handling access to documents requests under Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001. Given the large-scale teleworking of the Commission services, all replies, which should normally be sent via registered post, currently are sent only by e-mail. In this regard, we kindly ask you to confirm receipt of this email.

Yours faithfully,

(e-signed)

Annika KROON
Head of Unit

Enclosure: Annexes 1 and 2, better described above.