



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR TRADE

Directorate D – The Americas, Agriculture and Food Safety
Latin America

Brussels
TRADE.D.2/OC/FDP/mbb (2022)

by e-mail only: ask+request-11232-e4335ac4@asktheeu.org

Ms Justine Muller
via Giovanni Sercambi, 11
50133 Firenze
Italia

Subject: Your application for access to documents – Ref GestDem 2022/2661

Dear Madam,

I refer to your application dated 11/05/2022, in which you make a request for access to documents under Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001¹ ('Regulation 1049/2001'), registered the same date under the above mentioned reference number.

(1) SCOPE OF YOUR REQUEST

In your request, you asked for access to the following documents:

- 1st meeting of the subcommittee on trade and sustainable development of the trade agreement between the European Union (EU) of the one part, and Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, of the other part.
- 2nd meeting of the subcommittee on trade and sustainable development of the trade agreement between the European Union (EU) of the one part, and Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, of the other part.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43).

- 3rd meeting of the subcommittee on trade and sustainable development of the trade agreement between the European Union (EU) of the one part, and Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, of the other part.
- 1st meeting of the board of commerce and sustainable development of the association agreement between Central America and the European Union.
- 2nd meeting of the board of commerce and sustainable development of the association agreement between Central America and the European Union.
- 3rd meeting of the board of commerce and sustainable development of the association agreement between Central America and the European Union.
- 4th meeting of the board of commerce and sustainable development of the association agreement between Central America and the European Union.

(2) ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS UNDER REGULATION 1049/2001

In accordance with settled case law², when an institution is asked to disclose a document, it must assess, in each individual case, whether that document falls within the exceptions to the right of public access to documents set out in Article 4 of Regulation 1049/2001. Such assessment is carried out in a multi-step approach:

- first, the institution must satisfy itself that the document relates to one of the exceptions, and if so, decide which parts of it are covered by that exception;
- second, it must examine whether disclosure of the parts of the document in question pose a ‘*reasonably foreseeable and not purely hypothetical*’ risk of undermining the protection of the interest covered by the exception;
- third, if it takes the view that disclosure would undermine the protection of any of the interests defined under Article 4(2) and Article 4(3) of Regulation 1049/2001, the institution is required ‘*to ascertain whether there is any overriding public interest justifying disclosure*’³.

In view of the objectives pursued by Regulation 1049/2001, notably to give the public the widest possible right of access to documents⁴, ‘*the exceptions to that right [...] must be interpreted and applied strictly.*’⁵

² Judgment in *Sweden and Maurizio Turco v Council*, Joined cases C-39/05 P and C-52/05 P, EU:C:2008:374, paragraph 35.

³ *Id.*, paragraphs 37-43. See also judgment in *Council v Sophie in 't Veld*, C-350/12 P, EU:C:2014:2039, paragraphs 52-64.

⁴ See Regulation 1049/2001, recital (4).

In reply to your request, I can inform you that we have identified 11 documents that fall within the scope of your request. The identified documents are listed for ease of reference in Annex I. For each of the documents the Annex provides a description and indicates whether parts or entire documents are withheld and if so, on which grounds pursuant to Regulation 1049/2001. Copies of the accessible documents are enclosed to this letter.

Having examined the requested documents under the applicable legal framework, I am pleased to grant you full access to these documents;

- 1st meeting of the subcommittee on trade and sustainable development of the trade agreement between the European Union (EU) of the one part, and Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, of the other part and its annexes 2 and 3;
- 4th meeting of the board of commerce and sustainable development of the association agreement between Central America and the European Union;

and partial access to:

- annex 1 and 4 of the 1st meeting of the subcommittee on trade and sustainable development of the trade agreement between the European Union (EU) of the one part, and Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, of the other part;
- 2nd and 3rd meeting of the subcommittee on trade and sustainable development of the trade agreement between the European Union (EU) of the one part, and Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, of the other part;
- 1st meeting of the board of commerce and sustainable development of the association agreement between Central America and the European Union;
- 2nd meeting of the board of commerce and sustainable development of the association agreement between Central America and the European Union;
- 3rd meeting of the board of commerce and sustainable development of the association agreement between Central America and the European Union.

In all documents, the names and other personal data have been redacted pursuant to article 4(1)(b) of Regulation 1049/2001 and in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 2018/1725. Hence, the main content of these documents relevant to your request is accessible.

The reasons justifying the application of the above-mentioned exceptions are set out below.

⁵ Judgment in *Sweden v Commission*, C-64/05 P, EU:C:2007:802, paragraph 66.

**PROTECTION OF THE PRIVACY AND INTEGRITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL (MINUTES
OF THE SUB- COMMITTEES ON TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT)**

Pursuant to Article 4(1)(b) of Regulation 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 (EC) No 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/EC⁶ ('Regulation 2018/1725').

The minutes of the sub-committees on trade and sustainable development contain personal information, such as names, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers that allow the identification of natural persons, as well as other personal information.

Indeed, Article 3(1) of Regulation 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 data.⁷ Please note in this respect that the names, signatures, functions, telephone numbers and/or initials pertaining to staff members of an institution are to be considered personal data.⁸

In its judgment in Case C-28/08 P (*Bavarian Lager*)⁹, the Court of Justice ruled that when a request is made for access to documents containing personal data, the Data Protection Regulation becomes fully applicable.¹⁰

⁶ Official Journal L 205 of 21.11.2018, p. 39.

⁷ Judgment of the Court of Justice of the European Union of 20 December 2017 in Case [C-434/16](#), *Peter Novak v Data Protection Commissioner*, request for a preliminary ruling, paragraphs 33-35, ECLI:EU:T:2018:560.

⁸ Judgment of the General Court of 19 September 2018 in case T-39/17, *Port de Brest v Commission*, paragraphs 43-44, ECLI:EU:T:2018:560.

⁹ Judgment of 29 June 2010 in Case C-28/08 P, *European Commission v The Bavarian Lager Co. Ltd*, EU:C:2010:378, paragraph 59.

¹⁰ 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 institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data, the principles set out therein are also

Pursuant to Article 9(1)(b) of Regulation 2018/1725, 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 processing in accordance with the requirements of Article 5 of Regulation 2018/1725, can the transmission of personal data occur.

According to Article 9(1)(b) of Regulation 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 for a specific purpose in the public interest. It is only in this case that the European Commission has to examine whether there is a reason to assume that the data subject's legitimate interests 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 application, you do not 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 the minutes of the sub-committees on trade and sustainable development, 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 1049/2001, access cannot be granted to the personal data, 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.

Additionally, signatures also have been removed from the minutes to avoid the risk of fraudulent use of such signatures.

(3) MEANS OF REDRESS

In accordance with Article 7(2) of Regulation 1049/2001, you are entitled to make 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 Secretary-General of the Commission at the following address:

Secretary-General European Commission
Transparency, Document Management & Access to Documents BERL 7/76
Rue de la Loi 200/Wetstraat 200 1049 Brussels
Belgium

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

Yours sincerely,

Paolo GARZOTTI

Encl.: Annex I: List of documents

Annex I: List of documents

No.	Subject	Date	Release	Exception invoked
1	Minutes 1st meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Colombia, Ecuador Peru	February 6 th 2014	Full	NA
2	Annex 1 1st meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Colombia, Ecuador Peru	February 6 th 2014	Partial	4.1(b)
3	Annex 2 1st meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Colombia, Ecuador Peru	February 6 th 2014	Partial	4.1(b)
4	Annex 3 1st meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Colombia, Ecuador Peru	February 6 th 2014	Full	NA
5	Annex 4 1st meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Colombia, Ecuador Peru	February 6 th 2014	Partial	4.1(b)
6	Minutes 2nd meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Colombia, Ecuador Peru	June 16 th -17 th 2015	Partial	4.1(b)
7	Minutes 3rd meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Colombia, Ecuador Peru	December 7 th – 8 th 2016	Partial	4.1(b)
8	Minutes 1st meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Central America	November 18 th -19 th 2014	Partial	4.1(b)
9	Minutes 2nd meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Central America	May 27 th -28 th 2015	Partial	4.1(b)
10	Minutes 3rd meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Central America	June 15 th -16 th 2016	Partial	4.1(b)
11	Minutes 4th meeting subcommittee TSD EU - Central America	June 11 th – 12 th 2018	Full	NA