



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Brussels, 26.6.2019
C(2019) 4982 final

Mr Mathias Schindler
Bundestagsbüro Julia Reda,
MdEP Unter den Linden 50
11011 Berlin
Germany

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 4 OF THE IMPLEMENTING RULES TO REGULATION (EC) No 1049/2001¹

**Subject: Your confirmatory application for access to documents under
Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 - GESTDEM 2019/0923**

Dear Mr Schindler,

I refer to your email of 1 April 2019, registered on 2 April 2019, in which you submit a confirmatory application in accordance with Article 7(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents² (hereafter ‘Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001’).

1. SCOPE OF YOUR REQUEST

In your initial application of 16 February 2019, addressed to the Directorate-General for Communication, you requested access to ‘[a]ll information regarding the drafting, release and removal of the medium.com article “The Copyright Directive: how the mob was told to save the dragon and slay the knight”. This includes any information related to the perception, promotion and criticism of this article, internally or externally.’ In addition, you requested access to ‘all information (drafts, memos, notes, letters, emails) to be included in this request, regardless whether the Commission considers them to be important or not for filing and archiving’.

The European Commission has identified the following document falling within the scope of your request:

- Document in relation to the subject-matter ‘Myth of the Month: Copyright’, comprising two emails dated of 8 February 2019 and 14

¹ Official Journal L 345 of 29.12.2001, p. 94.

² Official Journal L 145 of 31.5.2001, p. 43.

February 2019, reference Ares(2019)2295049 (hereafter the 'requested document').

In its initial reply of 1 April 2019, the Directorate-General for Communication granted wide partial access to the requested document, subject only to the redaction of personal data based on the exception of point (b) of Article 4(1) (protection of privacy and the integrity of the individual) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

In your confirmatory application, you request a review of this position by indicating that in your opinion, the European Commission should have identified further documents as per your request, such as other versions of the text of the above-mentioned article and more correspondence. Finally, you argue that '[t]he redactions are overly broad and not justified under Regulation 1049/2001'.

2. ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS UNDER REGULATION (EC) NO 1049/2001

When assessing a confirmatory application for access to documents submitted pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, the Secretariat-General conducts a fresh review of the reply given by the Directorate-General concerned at the initial stage.

Following this review, I can inform you that further partial access is granted to the requested document by disclosing the domain parts of the email addresses therein.

As regards the personal data in the requested document, I have to confirm the initial decision of Directorate-General for Communication to refuse access to the requested document, based on the exception of point (b) of Article 4(1) (protection of privacy and the integrity of the individual) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, for the reasons set out below.

2.1. Protection of privacy and the integrity of the individual

Article 4(1)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 provides that '[t]he institutions shall refuse access to a document where disclosure would undermine the protection of [...] privacy and the integrity of the individual, in particular in accordance with Community legislation regarding the protection of personal data'.

In its judgment in Case C-28/08 P (*Bavarian Lager*)³, the Court of Justice ruled that when a request is made for access to documents containing personal data, 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 data⁴ (hereafter 'Regulation (EC) No 45/2001') becomes fully applicable.

³ Judgment of the Court of Justice of 29 June 2010, *European Commission v The Bavarian Lager Co. Ltd* (hereafter referred to as '*European Commission v The Bavarian Lager* judgment') C-28/08 P, EU:C:2010:378, paragraph 59.

⁴ Official Journal L 8 of 12.1.2001, page 1.

Please note that, as from 11 December 2018, Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 has been repealed by 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/EC⁵ (hereafter ‘Regulation (EU) 2018/1725’).

However, the case law issued with regard to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 remains relevant for the interpretation of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725.

In the above-mentioned judgment, the Court stated that Article 4(1)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 ‘requires that any undermining of privacy and the integrity of the individual must always be examined and assessed in conformity with the legislation of the Union concerning the protection of personal data, and in particular with [...] [the Data Protection] Regulation’.⁶

Article 3(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 provides that personal data ‘means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person [...]’.

As the Court of Justice confirmed in Case C-465/00 (*Rechnungshof*), ‘there is no reason of principle to justify excluding activities of a professional [...] nature from the notion of private life’.⁷

The requested document contain personal data such as the names and email addresses of persons who do not form part of the senior management of the European Commission. However, from the domain part of the email addresses, in itself, the persons’ identity cannot be deduced. Therefore, this part of the email addresses is now disclosed.

The names⁸ of the persons concerned as well as other data from which their identity can be deduced (such as office or telephone numbers) undoubtedly constitute personal data in the meaning of Article 3(1) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725.

Pursuant to Article 9(1)(b) of Regulation (EU) 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 (EU) 2018/1725, can the transmission of personal data occur.

⁵ Official Journal L 205 of 21.11.2018, p. 39.

⁶ European Commission v The Bavarian Lager judgment, cited above, paragraph 59.

⁷ Judgment of the Court of Justice of 20 May 2003, *Rechnungshof and Others v Österreichischer Rundfunk*, Joined Cases C-465/00, C-138/01 and C-139/01, EU:C:2003:294, paragraph 73.

⁸ *European Commission v The Bavarian Lager* judgment, cited above, paragraph 68.

In Case C-615/13 P (*ClientEarth*), the Court of Justice ruled that the institution does not have to examine by itself the existence of a need for transferring personal data.⁹ This is also clear from Article 9(1)(b) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, which requires that the necessity to have the personal data transmitted must be established by the recipient.

According to Article 9(1)(b) of Regulation (EU) 2018/1725, the European Commission has to examine the further conditions for the lawful processing of personal data only if the first condition is fulfilled, namely if the recipient establishes 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 confirmatory 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 subjects' legitimate interests might be prejudiced.

Notwithstanding the above, there are reasons to assume that the legitimate interests of the data subjects concerned would be prejudiced by the disclosure of the personal data reflected in the 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 included in the requested document, 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 the disclosure of the personal data concerned.

2.2. The existence of further relevant documents

Concerning your statement that other versions and information should exist in relation to the above-mentioned article, I inform you that the European Commission has carried out a renewed, thorough search for any minutes relating to the meeting in question. Following this renewed search, I confirm that the European Commission has not kept any additional document falling under the defined scope of your application.

Earlier versions of the above-mentioned article, if any, which might have contained text different from the final version, were either not retained or overwritten by the final version.

Therefore, earlier versions of the above-mentioned article had not been kept as they were short-lived documents in the meaning of Article 4 of European Commission's Provisions

⁹ Judgment of the Court of Justice of 16 July 2015, *ClientEarth v European Food Safety Agency*, C-615/13 P, EU:C:2015:489, paragraph 47.

on Document Management.¹⁰ As the Court of Justice confirmed in its case-law, Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 cannot oblige an institution to give access to a document that is no longer in its possession.¹¹

3. OVERRIDING PUBLIC INTEREST IN DISCLOSURE

Please note also that Article 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 do not include the possibility for the exceptions defined therein to be set aside by an overriding public interest.

4. PARTIAL ACCESS

In accordance with Article 4(6) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, I have considered the possibility of granting (further) partial access to the requested document.

For the reasons explained above, wider partial access is now granted to the requested document without undermining the interests described above.

5. MEANS OF REDRESS

Finally, I draw your attention to the means of redress available against this decision. You may either bring proceedings before the General Court or file a complaint with the European Ombudsman under the conditions specified respectively in Articles 263 and 228 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Yours sincerely,



For the Commission
Martin SELMAYR
Secretary-General

Enclosure: 1

¹⁰ Annex to Commission Decision 2002/47/EC, ECSC, Euratom of 23 January 2002 amending its Rules of Procedure, Official Journal L 21 of 24.1.2002, p. 23.

¹¹ Judgment of the General Court of 26 April 2016, *Strack v Commission*, T-221/08, EU:T:2016:242, paragraph 66.