



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT
Directorate B - Circular Economy & Green Growth
ENV.B.2 - Sustainable Chemicals

Brussels,
ENV/B.2

Nina HOLLAND
Rue d'Edimbourg 26
1050 – Brussels
Belgium

By e-mail:

ask+request-9350-9a47efba@asktheeu.org

Dear Ms Holland,

Subject: Your application for access to documents – Ref GestDem No 2021/2457

We refer to your e-mail dated 18/04/2021, in which you make a request for access to documents registered under the above-mentioned reference number, and to our holding reply Ref. Ares(2021)3116984 - 10/05/2021.

You requested access to: “...any documents since 01 January 2020 until now including emails, briefings, reports, as well as attachments, and a list of meetings with detailed minutes and any other reports of such meetings - Sent to or received from Croplife Europe/European Crop Protection Association (ECPA), Syngenta, Corteva (DowDupont), Bayer, BASF, CEFIC, the European Crop Care Association (ECCA), Arysta, BusinessEurope; or anyone acting on behalf of any of these companies and organisations; - Sent to or received from permanent representation staff, national ministry officials or other representatives of the governments of Germany, Italy and Hungary; regarding the export from the EU to third countries of hazardous chemicals that are banned in the European Union; as well as the planned ban on such exports as mentioned in the EU Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability adopted in October 2020.”

Please note that due to the scope of your request covering areas falling under the responsibility of other Directorates-General, parts of your request have been attributed to other DGs. This reply relates only to the documents held by DG Environment.

With regard to your request, please see in the Annex to this letter a list of the documents corresponding to the scope of your request.

Having examined these documents under the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents, we have come to the conclusion that they may be partially disclosed, as they contain personal data, such as names, signatures, email addresses, which have been redacted.

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/EC ('Regulation 2018/1725').

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 data¹.

Please also 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 data².

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, the Data Protection Regulation becomes fully applicable⁴.

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 request, 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.

¹ 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*, request for a preliminary ruling, paragraphs 33-35, ECLI:EU:C:2017:994.

² 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.

³ Judgment of 29 June 2010 in Case C-28/08 P, *European Commission v The Bavarian Lager Co. Ltd.*, ECLI:EU:C:2010:378, paragraph 59.

⁴ 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 applicable under the new data protection regime established by Regulation 2018/1725.

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 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, 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.

As to the handwritten signatures contained in some of the documents, which are biometric data, there is also a risk that their disclosure would prejudice the legitimate interests of the persons concerned.

Special remarks

Please also note that those documents included in the attached Annex which originate from third parties are disclosed for information only and cannot be re-used without the agreement of the originators, who hold a copyright on them. They do not reflect the position of the Commission and cannot be quoted as such.

In accordance with Article 7(2) of Regulation 1049/2001, you are entitled to make a confirmatory application requesting the Commission to review its position on the matters already mentioned. 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:

European Commission
Secretary-General
Transparency, Document Management & Access to Documents (SG.C.1)
BERL 7/076
B-1049 Bruxelles
or by email to: sg-acc-doc@ec.europa.eu

Yours faithfully,

Cristina de Avila
Head of Unit