



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

BUDGET

Brussels, 25/10/2019
BUDG.03/AS/budg.03(2019)7115353

Margarida da Silva
Corporate Europe Observatory
Rue d'edimbourg 26
1050 Bruxelles

By registered letter with
acknowledgment of receipt

Advance copy by email: ask+request-
7282-cb4acb89@askthecu.org

Subject: Your application for access to documents – Ref GestDem No 2019/5257

Dear Ms da Silva,

We refer to your e-mail dated 11/09/2019 in which you make a request for access to documents, registered on 12/09/2019 under the above-mentioned reference number.

You request access to documents relating to all exchanges between Commissioner Oettinger, his office and his Cabinet, with the Verband der Automobilindustrie (VDA) since January 2017. Specifically, you request any emails, correspondence, meeting notes or telephone call notes.

Your application concerns the following documents:

- Letter from VDA to Commissioner Oettinger of 02/02/2017: Invitation to speak at event 'Qualitäts-Gipfeltreffen der Automobilindustrie' (Ares(2017)783375)
- Email from VDA to Commissioner Oettinger of 16/03/2017: Invitation to dinner with young entrepreneurs (Ares(2017)1383762)
- Email from Cabinet of Commissioner Oettinger to VDA of 10/04/2017: Declining invitation to speak at event (Ares(2017)1905335)
- Letter from VDA to Commissioner Oettinger of 18/07/2017: Invitation to an event 'Abend der Automobilindustrie' (Ares(2017)3476413)
- Email from VDA to Commissioner Oettinger of 24/07/2017 referring to an ifo Study '[Consequences of a Potential Ban on New Cars and Light Trucks with Combustion Engines](#)' (Ares(2017)3786632)
- Email from VDA to Cabinet of Commissioner Oettinger of 10/01/2018: Request for meeting (Ares(2018)164540)
- Letter from VDA to Commissioner Oettinger of 17/07/2018: Invitation to an event 'Eröffnungsfeier der 67. IAA Nutzfahrzeuge' (Ares(2018)1205521)
- Letter from Commissioner Oettinger to VDA of 19/10/2018: Invitation to moderate or speak at a session of The Europa Forum, April 2019 (Ares(2018)5952949)

- Letter from VDA to Commissioner Oettinger of 18/12/2018: Invitation to VDA's 21st Technical Congress (Ares(2019)144227)
- Email from VDA to Commissioner Oettinger of 21/05/2019: Invitation to attend a VDA board meeting as a guest (Ares(2019)3353022)
- Email from VDA to Commissioner Oettinger of 29/05/2019 attaching a VDA Position Paper "Mobilität und Wachstum in Europa" (Ares(2019)3936731)
- Letter from VDA to Commissioner Oettinger of 02/08/2019 inviting him to the opening of IAA 2019 (Ares(2019)5296830)

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/EC1 ('Regulation 2018/1725').

Some of the documents to which you request access contain personal data, in particular names, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers and signatures.

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.² 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.³

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.

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'.

¹ Official Journal L 205 of 21.11.2018, p. 39.

² 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](#).

³ 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](#).

⁴ 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.

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 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.

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.

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, which are biometric data, there is a risk that their disclosure would prejudice the legitimate interests of the persons concerned.

In case you would disagree with the assessment that the redacted data are personal data which can only be disclosed if such disclosure is legitimate under the applicable rules on the protection of personal data, you are entitled, in accordance with Article 7(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001, 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 Bruxelles, or by email to: sg-acc-doc@ec.europa.eu

Yours sincerely,



Anna JAROSZ-FRIIS
Head of Unit

