



The European Economic and Social Committee's (EESC) refusal to grant public access to documents concerning travel expenses related to an official trip to China

Case 1/2020/MIG - Opened on 14/01/2020 - Decision on 23/07/2020 - Institution concerned European Economic and Social Committee (Solution achieved) |

The complainant, a journalist, sought public access to documents about travel expenses linked to an official trip to China by members of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and support staff. The EESC provided some general information about the expenses linked to the trip, and refused access to more detailed information about flight costs on data protection grounds.

The Ombudsman's inquiry team reviewed a table, which the EESC had drawn up, detailing the information on the flights in question, including the information sought by the complainant (individual flight costs and seating class). Based on this, the Ombudsman proposed, as a solution, that the EESC disclose this detailed breakdown of flight expenses, anonymising information that could lead to the individual identities of participants being revealed. The EESC accepted the Ombudsman's proposal.

The Ombudsman welcomed the EESC's decision and closed the inquiry with a suggestion for improvement, encouraging the EESC to establish a policy on making available proactively the travel expenses of members. The EESC subsequently replied to the Ombudsman, committing to further improvements.