

## **The European Commission's refusal to provide full access to documents relating to an event attended by Commission staff members and by a former Commission head of unit, who had moved to the private sector**

**Case** 1794/2019/OAM - **Opened on** 01/10/2019 - **Recommendation on** 08/07/2020 - **Decision on** 11/12/2020 - **Institution concerned** European Commission ( Maladministration found ) |

The case concerned the European Commission's refusal to grant public access to names contained in documents related to a corporate event attended by Commission staff members. The complainant, a journalist, wanted to investigate whether one of the attendees at the event, a former Commission head of unit who had taken up a position with a multinational company, had acted in accordance with his legal obligations not to lobby former colleagues. The Commission had refused access and subsequently rejected a solution proposed by the Ombudsman, arguing that the complainant had not provided clear evidence of any wrongdoings. As such, disclosing the personal data requested could not be justified. The Ombudsman found that it was maladministration by the Commission to refuse to disclose the documents without redacting the specific personal data. In a subsequent recommendation, she reiterated her view that the requested documents should be disclosed without redacting the name of the former head of unit, emphasising that such transparency is necessary to help ensure public trust that the rules around 'revolving door' moves between the EU administration and the private sector are being enforced. To this end, the Ombudsman regrets that the Commission rejected her recommendation.