

## Administration of the European Council (SI/8/2017/KR)

Correspondence - 15/12/2017

**Case** SI/8/2017/KR - **Opened on** 15/12/2017 - **Decision on** 03/05/2019 - **Institution concerned** European Council |

Donald Tusk President of the European Council

Strasbourg, 15/12/2017

Dear Mr President,

In a series of summits this year, the European Council has proudly marked the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. I concur with your sentiment that optimism is on the rise and with its ambition for the future of Europe.

As part of the planned Leaders' Agenda work programme, members of the European Council have expressed a willingness to "*take the fate of the Union in their own hands*" on issues such as employment, migration, security and trade. The method set out includes 'Leaders' Agenda notes', on the basis of which political discussion will occur. There will also be progress reports from the Member holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU. [1]

My work involves working with the EU institutions, agencies and bodies to help improve their already high standards of public administration. I am greatly encouraged by your commitment to communicating clearly and openly with citizens. This can only help further to increase both the legitimacy of, and public trust in, the work of the EU. This improved public accountability will also lessen the tendency by some at times to blame 'Brussels' for EU decision making.

Another area where openness is important concerns EU interaction with interest representatives. Of course listening to external input and discussing policy issues with key stakeholders is an important and necessary part of any senior public service role, and especially true for you and for your cabinet.

The Council of the EU has just this month agreed to enter talks with the European Parliament and European Commission on the revision of the joint EU Transparency Register, which I very



much welcome.

Since 2014, Commissioners and their cabinets meet only registered interest representatives, and meetings with interest representatives are pro-actively published. The revised European Parliament Rules of Procedure adopted in January 2017 state “ *Members should adopt the systematic practice of only meeting interest representatives that have registered* ”, without prejudice to their independent mandate.

Given this welcome progress in recent years, I would be grateful if you could reflect on the following questions:

- Would you also be willing to publish information on meetings you hold with interest representatives, who fall under the scope of the Transparency Register, and those of your cabinet?
- Regardless of whether the European Council joins the Transparency Register in the future, would you in the meantime consider making interactions with the same interest representatives conditional on registration?
- Leaders' Agenda notes have the potential to stimulate wider debate on the issues facing the EU. Will the associated progress reports be also published?

Thank you for your consideration of these questions which, I hope you will agree, reflect some of your thinking in relation to making the work of the European Council more open, clear, and effective. In my view, greater clarity and openness will assist in enhancing citizen engagement with the profoundly important matter of the future of Europe.

I would appreciate it if you could reply at your earliest convenience, preferably before March 1st 2018.

Finally, I wish you and your colleagues a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Yours sincerely,

Emily O'Reilly

European Ombudsman

[1] 'Invitation letter, Leaders' Agenda and Bratislava implementation report' (17 October 2017), see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/10/17/tusk-invitation-letter-euco/>  
[Link]