



Emily O'Reilly

European Ombudsman

Mr Vasco Alves Cordeiro
President
European Committee of the Regions



Strasbourg, 05/05/2023

Complaint 795/2022/OAM

Subject: The refusal by the European Committee of the Regions to give full public access to the expenses and travel itineraries of a former Irish member - your reference: PCab/RLC/SoB/ssch D 402/2023

Dear President,

I refer to your letter of 24 March 2023. I appreciate the positive response that the Committee of the Regions has given to my proposal for a solution of 2 December 2022.

In accordance with the standard procedures of my Office, the proposal for a solution and your letter of 24 March 2023 have been shared with the complainant who has made comments. My inquiry team has also been in contact with the complainant to get a better understanding of the comments. The comments and correspondence we further exchanged with him are attached.

In essence, the complainant argues that he needs to be granted access to the flight tickets underlying the reimbursement claims made, or at least the destinations, dates and times of the flights at issue. Without this information, it is not possible to see whether reimbursement claims presented to the national authorities at issue overlap with those presented to the Committee of the Regions.

The complainant's comments have merits. Therefore, and on the basis of the assessment leading to my solution proposal of December 2022, I consider that further access could be granted to the flight tickets corresponding to the Committee of the Regions' events of interest to the complainant.¹

¹ These correspond to the complainant's request of 23 August 2021: NAT seminar (Zwolle, 12 March 2015); CIVEX seminar (Elblag, 10 April 2015); ENVE meeting (Brussels, 24 February 2016); 119th plenary session (Brussels, 10-12



In view of this, I suggest that the Committee of the Regions discloses to the complainant the flight tickets at issue (redacted if they should contain irrelevant personal data) or at least provides the complainant with the information contained in the respective flight tickets, that is the specific itineraries (dates of the flights, together with the departure and arrival airports and hours respectively).

Such disclosure would be proportionate to achieve the public interest objective pursued by the complainant.

Please note that I am likely to send your reply and related enclosures to the complainant for comments.² Should the Committee of Regions have any questions, please contact the inquiries officer responsible, [REDACTED]

I would be grateful to receive your reply by 9 June 2023. In light of the communication that has already taken place in relation to this case, I deem this deadline to be appropriate and realistic.

Yours sincerely,

Emily O'Reilly
European Ombudsman

Enclosures: Comments and correspondence exchanged with the complainant on the Ombudsman solution proposal and the Committee of the Regions response (of 3 and 13 April 2023)

October 2016); European Week of the Regions and Cities (Brussels, 13 October 2016); 121st plenary session (Brussels, 8-9 February 2017); local event 'Challenges for the Atlantic Cities on the Eve of Brexit' (A Coruña, 10 February 2017); CIVEX meeting (Brussels, 6 April 2017); local event 'EU maritime agenda: a territorial view' (Viana do Castelo, 28 April 2017); Atlantic Strategy Group meeting (Madrid, 12 February 2018); Atlantic Stakeholder Platform Conference (Vigo, 23-24 October 2018); and NAT Seminar (Szombathely, 14 May 2019).

² If you wish to submit documents or information that you consider to be confidential, and which should not be disclosed to the complainant, please mark them 'Confidential'. Encrypted emails can be sent to our dedicated mailbox eo-secem@ombudsman.europa.eu. Please contact eo-secem@ombudsman.europa.eu beforehand. Information and documents of this kind will be deleted from the European Ombudsman's files shortly after the inquiry has ended.