

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

The Secretary-General

Brussels,
SG/B3 Ares(2018)

Steering Committee of ALTER-EU
Rue d'Edimbourg, 26,
1050 Bruxelles

By e-mail to:
coordinator@alter-eu.org

Dear Steering Committee,

Thank you for your e-mail and letter of 20 February 2018, following Vice-President Katainen's letter to you of 31 January 2018.

The European Commission is fully committed to transparency and the highest ethical standards across all areas of its work. In November 2014, the Commission decided to limit meetings between Commissioners, their Cabinets, and Commission Directors-General, to organisations and self-employed individuals engaged in EU policy-making and policy implementation, who are registered in the Transparency Register. At the same time, the Commission took a decision obliging its Members to publish these meetings. The Commission is the only institution of the European Union with this degree of transparency for its Members.

When Mr Barroso accepted the position with Goldman Sachs, President Juncker decided that *"As of taking up his employment, Mr Barroso will be received in the Commission not as a former President but as an interest representative and will be submitted to the same rules as all other interest representatives as regards the Transparency Register; the Members of the Commission and all Commission staff, when meeting with Mr Barroso, will have to comply with the existing rules as regards transparency and contacts with the representatives of interest groups."*

This means that any meeting with Mr Barroso, regardless of the capacity in which Mr Barroso acts and independently of the possibly private or social character, shall be published as a meeting with an interest representative. This is to ensure greatest possible transparency and avoid any doubt with regard to alleged secret meetings.

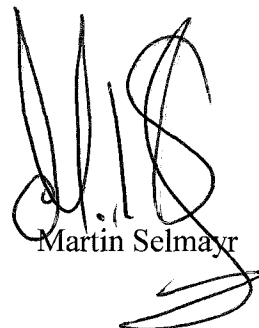
The Vice-President's decision to publish the meeting was fully in line with this policy. The reference to a meeting with "Goldman Sachs" is due to the fact that the Commission decision of 25 November 2014 requires the publication of the names of the organisation, not of the names of individual persons representing the organisation.

This strict approach does not mean that every meeting with Mr Barroso must have the purpose of lobbying. The prohibition to "lobby" foreseen in Article 11(4) of the new Code of Conduct explicitly refers to activities falling under the scope of the Transparency Register, i.e. Section III of the Agreement between the European Parliament and the European Commission on the Transparency Register for organisations and self-employed individuals engaged in EU policy-making and policy implementation of 16 April 2014. It aims namely at activities "*carried out with the objective of directly or indirectly influencing the formulation or implementation of policy and the decision-making processes of the EU institutions*".

The Vice-President has made it very clear that such an activity was not carried out by Mr Barroso at the meeting.

With regard to the complaint that you mention, the Commission is in contact with the European Ombudsman.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Selmayr

Alliance for Lobby Transparency and Ethics Regulation (ALTER-EU)
ALTER-EU Steering Committee
Ms Helen Darbishire , Access Info Europe
Mr Paul de Clerck, Friends of the Earth Europe
Mr William Dinan, SpinWatch
Mr Olivier Hoedeman, Corporate Europe Observatory
Ms Nina Katzemich, LobbyControl
Mr Jorgo Riss, Greenpeace European Unit
Mr Yuklan Wong, European Federation of Journalists