

Dear Ombudsman,

On 12 September 2023, I addressed the attached letter to the President of the European Commission, Ms Ursula von der Leyen.

In this letter, I ask questions about a recent trip of the President to the island of Crete, during which she stayed at the private residence of Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis. My questions focus on whether this trip did not jeopardise the (perceived) independence and integrity of the Commission, and whether a conflict of interest could have arisen.

In this context, I asked the Commission for an assessment of the compliance of this trip with several Articles of the Commission's Code of Conduct, in particular Article 2(2), (5) and (6) and Article 6(5). I also posed questions as to the appropriate specific follow-up in this case, in particular whether the President would apply Article 4(1) of the Code of Conduct, and would thus recuse herself of any matter related to the Greek government. I furthermore asked whether the President would request an opinion of the Independent Ethical Committee on this matter, under Article 12 of the Code of Conduct.

I would hereby request the Ombudsman to open an inquiry into this matter, specifically assessing whether maladministration has arisen due to the lack of compliance of the trip with the Commission Code of Conduct and/or the lack of proper assessment thereof prior to the trip.

In the letter to the Commission, I kindly requested an answer to my questions within 15 working days, as per Article 4 of the Commission Code of Good Administrative Behaviour. I sent a reminder after 15 working days, namely on 3 October 2023. Until today, I have not received a reply.

The letter also includes a separate request for access to documents. For this, I received a confirmation of receipt on 21 September 2023, with the indication that this request for access to documents would be handled within 15 working days, with the indicated time limit set to expire on the 12 October 2023. However, the current complaint concerns the questions in the letter and the failure to reply thereto, and not the request for access to documents.

Kind regards,

Sophie in 't Veld  
Member of the European Parliament