

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-003222/25
to the Commission
Friedrich Pürner (NI)
(11 August 2025)**

Subject: Deletion of text messages relating to vaccine negotiations ('Pfizergate') — amending the Commission's internal guidelines on keeping records of digital communications

According to the press ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾, important text messages exchanged between the Commission President and Pfizer's CEO about the COVID-19 vaccine negotiations were deleted or never recorded. Notably, this concerns messages containing the details of contract negotiations exchanged through personal SMS channels, claims *The New York Times*.

1. Will the Commission amend its internal guidelines on keeping records of digital communications (e.g. SMS and messenger services) to prevent such events happening again? If so, by when and in what way?
2. Going forward, how will it ensure that communication via informal channels leading to political decisions is subject to democratic scrutiny and documented? How does it think this case has affected public trust in transparent decision-making processes in the EU institutions?

Submitted: 11.8.2025

**Answer given by Mr Šefčovič on behalf of the European Commission
(12 November 2025)**

1. As set out in the Commission decision C(2025) 5429 of 28 July 2025, which is publicly available on the Electronic Access to Commission Documents Portal, the sole aim of these text messages was to ensure the respective availability of the President of the Commission and of the Chief Executive Officer of Pfizer for subsequent calls in the context of the ongoing global pandemic. Since the content of these text messages was short-lived and did not require any follow-up by the Commission and its services, the text messages did not fulfil the registration criteria set out in Article 7(1) of the Commission Decision (EU) 2021/2121 ⁽¹⁾. As a consequence, these text messages were not registered in the records management system of the Commission. Please note that the General Court in the recent judgment (T-36/23) ⁽²⁾ did not put into question these conditions for the registration of documents by the Commission.
2. Having said so, the Commission adopted in December 2024 updated rules for the application of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 ⁽³⁾ clarifying that text messaging applications on corporate mobile phones shall only be used for information that is short-lived, unless where this is strictly required in the interest of the service. In any case, the registration criteria set out in Article 7(1) of the Commission Decision (EU) 2021/2121 apply.
3. The Commission stands for the highest standards of transparency across its activities and decision-making processes. The Commission staff consistently apply the rules on records management and archives (Decision (EU) 2021/2121) and the institution's information technology security recommendations for the acceptable use of public instant messaging applications and any other corporate communication tool.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/01/world/europe/eu-texts-covid-new-york-times.html>

² <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/eu-kommissionschefin-ursula-von-der-leyen-und-pfizergate-kurznachrichten-wurden-wohl-geloescht-a-2416eb67-db45-4385-a4e5-cb5b409d5a51>

⁽¹⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dec/2021/2121/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ Judgment 14 May 2025, *Stevi and The New York Times v Commission T-36/23*, ECLI:EU:T:2025:483.

⁽³⁾ Commission Decision (EU) 2024/3080 of 4 December 2024 establishing the Rules of Procedure of the Commission and amending Decision C(2000) 3614 (OJ L, 2024/3080, 5.12.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dec/2024/3080/oj>).