

**Question for written answer E-000382/2022  
to the Commission**

Rule 138

**Julie Lechanteux (ID)**

**Subject:** Transparency and ethics in the EU: text message exchange between Ursula von der Leyen and Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla

On Thursday, 16 September 2021, European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly opened an inquiry into a text message exchange between Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Albert Bourla, CEO of the US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer.

The inquiry (Case 1316/2021/MIG) follows the Commission's refusal to grant public access to text messages and other documents concerning discussions between the President of the Commission and the CEO of Pfizer about a COVID-19 vaccine deal.

Similar questionable behaviour by Ursula von der Leyen has been witnessed before. In 2019, it was revealed that a mobile phone, seen as a key piece of evidence in a procurement scandal at the German Ministry of Defence — under von der Leyen's leadership at the time — had been wiped of its data.

There are economic issues at play when it comes to the purchase of vaccines, in particular the advance payments made to the pharmaceutical industry with European taxpayers' money. In view of this, does the Commission intend to publish the content of its President's exchanges with the leaders of pharmaceutical companies before the results of the Ombudsman's inquiry are released? If not, the Commission's much touted transparency will remain meaningless.