



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Mediterranean Department
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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31 July 2015

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0520-15

Thank you for your email of 5 February asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked for:

- 1. Communications, between 1 January 1999 and June 30 1999, between the British Embassy in Rome and the FCO about the potential appointment of Romano Prodi as President of the European Commission;*
- 2. Communications, between 1 January 1999 and June 30 1999, between the UK Representation to the EU and the FCO, about the potential appointment of Romano Prodi as President of the European Commission;*
- 3. Correspondence, between 1 January 1999 and June 30 1999, between the FCO and the Prime Minister's European and Foreign Affairs Advisers in Number 10 about Romano Prodi's potential appointment as EC President.*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested and that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold relevant information.

Please find attached the information that the FCO can release to you. Some of the information has been withheld using section 27 – international relations. Section 27 is a qualified exemption and is subject to a public interest test. We acknowledge that releasing information on this issue would increase public knowledge about our relations with Italy. However, s.27 (1) (a) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. If the United Kingdom does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interests through international relations will be hampered, which will not be in the public interest. For these reasons we consider that the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing.

Please also note that some of the information you have requested is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness

aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

Once an FOI request is answered, it is considered to be in the public domain. To promote transparency, we may now publish the response and any material released on gov.uk in the [FOI releases](#) section. All personal information in the letter will be removed before publishing.

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Yours sincerely,

Mediterranean Department
Europe Directorate