

**FOI**

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**From:** [redacted]  
**Sent:** 06 July 2018 15:21  
**To:** Policy; Communications; [redacted] Marcial Boo; Victoria Fox  
**Subject:** Meeting with [redacted] ERG

Hi all

Just as an update, I met with the [redacted] from the European Research Group ([redacted]) this morning to find out more about how the group operates. You'll all be aware, I think, that we have had a steady stream of interest from journalists and members of the public about the fact that we fund subscriptions to the ERG, since it has been portrayed in the media as a secretive 'party within a party' holding the Government hostage over Brexit. The Compliance Officer has also dealt with a significant number of complaints from the public.

A few points:

- [redacted] is the sole employee of the ERG, as stated in the assurance report. The money from MPs' subscriptions paid by IPSA goes into a bank account, from which [redacted] salary, tax and NI contributions are paid. There is a separate bank account into which other donations are paid. This other pot of money is used to organise meetings of MPs (in the past there have been drinks receptions and breakfasts organised).
- There are two meetings a week with the Chair (Jacob Rees-Mogg) and a small group of MPs to discuss what topics need to be researched. These are, unsurprisingly, normally related to topics currently being debated in the House on Brexit. There are less frequent meetings involving a wider group of subscribing MPs. [redacted] [redacted] also does ad hoc bits of research for individual MPs who want some information for a particular debate, such as statistics about trade, etc.
- [redacted] maintains that the image of the ERG in the press is something different from the ERG [redacted] works for as a researcher. There is a wider group of perhaps 60-80 MPs who are aligned politically as pro-Brexit Conservatives, so when Mr Rees-Mogg makes a statement as the 'Chair of ERG', the implication is that the ERG includes that whole wider group of MPs. In fact there are only 26 or so MPs who subscribe to the research services, and no briefings are provided to any of the non-subscribers.
- [redacted]
- I floated the possibility of more regular reviews of materials. [redacted] understood this, but said that as [redacted] was the sole employee, such requests could be burdensome. I assured [redacted] that we would aim to do such things proportionately. We can think further about whether and how to do this.
- [redacted]

[redacted]

Many thanks,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Head of Policy and Assurance

**Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA)**