

13 MARS 2013

Brussels,

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

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Ms Ann Cahill  
President

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Dear Madam, /

Thank you for your letter of 3 March, to which I have given careful attention.

As you are no doubt aware, the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) is facing budgetary restrictions, which have led it to look for savings, including for its catering services.

The pricing policy introduced at the press bar as a result of a new call for tenders is determined by the new catering company, which has set prices based, in particular, on profitability and on the number of people using the various catering outlets in our buildings.

Accordingly, the two bars (the Press Bar and the Delegates Bar on level 50) have seen price rises, whilst the "mass" outlets, such as the Yellow Cafeteria and the free-flow restaurants, have seen prices broadly maintained at their previous levels. However, I wish to emphasise that there is no subsidy present, either from us or from one customer to another. There is no question of the money paid in the Press Bar subsidising the catering in the rest of the Council.

As you know, your colleagues can continue to use the yellow cafeteria or the free-flow restaurant nearby, where prices are lower, owing to the large number of people who use them.

We will explore with the contractor, in the light of initial experience, whether there is scope for reviewing the prices of some basic products at the press bar, within the constraints explained above.

As regards European Councils, free provision of meals and refreshments will be discontinued as from 14 and 15 March, which will put an end to an exceptional situation which was not in line with the principles applying to Council meetings in general.

The yellow cafeteria will remain open until the end of the meeting. All the food outlets will operate as usual, charging their normal prices, which will allow all members of the press to obtain hot meals at prices that are altogether acceptable.