

**Press release**

For immediate release

## **Council of the EU Fights Open Decision Making: Greece, UK, and other member states to intervene in favour of secrecy**

*Madrid, 27 June 2011* – This Council of the European Union is appealing against a March 2011 General Court (Court of Justice) ruling that promised to open Brussels law making up to proper scrutiny and participation by members of the European public.

A number of member states are reported to be considering joining this effort to keep EU decision making behind closed doors. Specifically the Council wants to deny European citizens the right to know the positions their governments are taking when negotiating EU regulations, which now affect as much as two thirds of national law.

Greece and the UK have already taken a position against greater transparency of the Council: both countries sided with the Council to defend the initial case which resulted in the 22 March 2011 General Court ruling strongly in favour of public access to information and public participation.

The case, *Access Info Europe vs. Council* ([Case T-233/09](#)) was taken in June 2009. The Madrid-based human rights organisation had submitted a request about the reform of the EU's transparency rules in November 2008 and was given documents with the names of the countries blacked out, making it impossible to know which states were arguing for or against greater public access to information.

The General Court ruled this refusal illegitimate and found that the Council had "*in no way demonstrated*" how publication of the country names would "*seriously undermine its decision-making process*".

The Court stressed that "*If citizens are to be able to exercise their democratic rights, they must be in a position to follow in detail the decision-making process*" and that they should "*have access to all relevant information.*"

### **Call for Member States to Support Transparency**

Commenting on the news that the Council and possibly a large number of member states will challenge the ruling, Access Info Europe's Executive Director Helen Darbishire stated "*The fully irony of this case is not lost on the European public: there is resistance to transparency even about the transparency rules themselves. Just at the EU claims to be trying to get closer to citizens, it is actually slamming the door in our faces.*"

Access Info Europe is calling on Member States to take a stand in favour of the internationally recognised right of access to information and invites them to join it in defending this case.

Civil society organisations and individuals who want to join in the campaign to get their governments to take a stand in favour of EU transparency should contact Pamela Bartlett using [pam@access-info.org](mailto:pam@access-info.org) for information and campaign materials.

***For more information - in English or French - please contact:***

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