

## Spain: Study reveals that citizens' information requests meet with silence, evasion, and absurd answers

*Madrid, 1 October 2008* — A report by Access Info Europe published today reveals that of over forty requests filed with more than twenty public bodies in Spain during the past year, a full 78% did not receive the requested information.

*"But can this information be given to ordinary people?"* – Ministry of Transport  
*"To give this information to individuals "would be inadvisable"* – Ministry of the Interior  
*"Send us your written request, but you won't get the information"* – Presidency

The report "[When Public Information is Not Public](#)" sets out the unexpected and unacceptable answers by the Spanish administration in response to information requests. This study also analyses the major shortcomings of current law and practice in Spain which is hindering exercise of the right of access to information and citizen participation.

The study found that requests for information in Spain meet with a range of evasive responses: Ministries which keep silent when asked if Spain has included into national law the UN Convention Against Corruption (Ministry of Justice); or which refuse to provide information on the number of its buildings sold in 2007 (Ministry of Defence). Public officials who ask "but, can this information be given to ordinary people?" when asked about the meetings of the Minister with external interest groups (Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure); or when asked about the number of days that the President was outside the country, told the requestor by telephone "present your written request but you will not get this information" (Cabinet Office). Local governments which return - unopened - letters to the Mayor, even when these contained an administrative appeal (Madrid Town Hall).

*"The majority of the reasons given by public bodies for not providing the requested information are not in compliance with international principles on the right of access to information, nor are they in line with current practice in other European Union countries,"* said Eva Moraga, Lawyer working with Access Info Europe.

*"The fact that Spain does not have a specific law on access to information is permitting this type of behaviour by the Administration,"* added Moraga.

Access Info Europe calls on the Spanish government to fulfil its electoral promise and to approve a law which replace the obscurantist Administrative culture with full recognition of the right of all persons to have full and equal access to all information held by public bodies.

### ***For more Information, please contact:***

Helen Darbishire, Executive Director, Access Info Europe  
+ 34 667 685 319 [helen@access-info.org](mailto:helen@access-info.org)