

For Immediate Release  
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## Sweden accused of Secrecy over Convention on Transparency

### Public kept in the dark on world's first international treaty on access to information

The Swedish government pledged to make the Council of Europe more transparent but, in spite of this, is overseeing adoption of the world's first Convention on Access to Official Documents under a shroud of secrecy which makes it impossible for parliamentarians, civil society and journalists to know how decisions are being taken.

Sweden's six-month Chairmanship of the Council of Europe will end on Thursday 27 November with the adoption of the Convention on Access to Official Documents. The public agenda for this meeting does not state that the adoption of the Convention is planned. The relevant documents and details of the agenda items are classified.

The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly on 3 October issued a heavily critical Opinion calling for the Convention to be redrafted. Apparently this Opinion of the people's representatives has been rejected by a sub-group of the Committee of Ministers although it is impossible to know this for certain as the public cannot have access to this information.

"It is unacceptable that Sweden, with its long tradition of open government, is complicit in secret processes which it had pledged to reform," stated Helen Darbishire, Executive Director of the pro-transparency NGO, Access Info Europe.

"Sweden's reputation as an advocate of transparency will be damaged if Foreign Minister Carl Bildt allows this much-criticized treaty on access to documents to be adopted in its current form and in this secretive and undemocratic manner", concluded Darbishire.

#### Notes:

1. In its list of priorities for the Chairmanship, Sweden stated that "*Transparency is one way of enhancing interaction with other actors and improving efficiency. Civil society should be actively invited to contribute to the work of the Council of Europe. The Council should strive for making its documents more accessible to the public.*" Another priority was to adopt the Convention on Access to Official Documents
2. Concerns advanced in that opinion have been raised over the past year by more than 250 NGOs; Information Commissioners from nine countries (Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland and the UK); and the OSCE's Representative on Freedom of the Media. These bodies were not formally consulted on the draft Convention and the issues they raised were not fully considered on their merits.
3. Background documents and details of the problems with the draft Convention can be found at [www.access-info.org](http://www.access-info.org)

#### For more information, please contact:

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