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World Hits 100 Freedom of Info Laws, but Challenges Abound

By: **ACCESS INFO EUROPE** | September 19, 2014

The civil society movement campaigning for government openness reached a significant landmark yesterday with the Latin American country of **Paraguay** enacting the world's 100th access to information law.



Right to information specialist organization **Access Info Europe** congratulates the global freedom of information community for achieving this milestone.

Twenty years ago, in 1994, there were just 15 access to information laws globally. The democratic transitions in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and subsequent democracy movements

globally have given impetus to the transparency movement for securing these laws. The Open Data and Open Government movements, plus advocacy and litigation from [freedom of information advocates](#), are helping to drive this forward.

“There are still many challenges. The quality of access to information laws varies enormously. There is insufficient transparency.”

“Hitting 100 laws is a very exciting development for the global right to information movement,” commented Helen Darbshire, executive director of Access Info Europe.

“There are still many challenges ahead,” added Darbshire. “The quality of access to information laws varies enormously. There is insufficient transparency in practice and we urgently need more comparative data on how these laws are working.”

Full analysis of all access to information laws can be found on the website [RTI-Rating.org](#) run by Access Info Europe and the Centre for Law and Democracy. Laws are evaluated against 61 indicators and awarded up to 150 points. The best law on paper is that of Serbia (135 points) and the weakest is that of Austria (37 points).

Access Info noted that repeated monitoring surveys show that countries with access to information laws generally have better levels of responsiveness to requests for information, but that in most countries there are still problems with inconsistent implementation, over-use of exceptions, and high levels of administrative silence.

In Europe, the youngest access to information law is that of Spain which was adopted in December 2013 and will come into force in December 2014. Cyprus and Luxembourg are the only European countries without an access to information law. The pro-transparency organisation calls on Cyprus and Luxembourg to bring their legislation into line with international standards.

Since 2006, major international human rights bodies including the UN Human Rights Committee, European Court of Human Rights*, and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have confirmed that access to information is a fundamental human right linked to the right to freedom of expression.



Access Info Europe is dedicated to promoting and protecting the right of access to information as a tool for defending civil liberties and human rights, for facilitating public participation in decision making, and for holding governments accountable.

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