

Press Release

16 of 27 Member States refuse to provide information on EU transparency negotiations

Brussels/Madrid, Monday 21 March 2011: European citizens can't find out from either Brussels or from national governments which countries are lobbying against EU transparency, according to a report launched by the NGO Access Info Europe this week.

The report is launched just before an expected ruling by the European Court of Justice on 22 March in the case of *Access Info Europe vs. the Council*. The pro-transparency organization is **challenging the Council's concealment of Member State positions** on the reform of the EU's access to documents rules.

After submitting access to information requests in all 27 Member States, Access Info Europe reports in *"The Secret State of EU Transparency Reforms"* that it only has a very partial picture of the positions countries are taking in negotiations in Brussels.

Only 11 countries provided information about either their positions and/or the process of the reform of Regulation 1049/2001. Two of these, the Netherlands and the UK, only provided information following appeals.

Information Received		No Information Received		
Partial release of documents	Position (& minimal other info)	Referral to Council	Refusal to release information	No response
Denmark Finland Sweden Lithuania Netherlands + Council	Austria Estonia Latvia Malta Poland UK	Greece Hungary Ireland Luxembourg Romania Slovakia	Belgium Czech Republic France Germany Slovenia Spain	Bulgaria Cyprus Italy Portugal
Total 5 countries	Total 6 countries	Total 6 countries	Total 6 countries	Total 4 countries

Of the 16 countries which did not provide any information, **six countries formally refused, six referred us back to the Council** despite the Council's assertion that it was up to each Member State to provide this information, and **four did not respond at all** (administrative silence).

In total **23 countries applied exceptions** to all or part of the information requested. Protection of "ongoing negotiations", "decision making" and "international relations" were commonly used exceptions. Also used to shield governments from accountability

were grounds that the information was held in “internal documents” or “might create misunderstanding.”

The report “*The Secret State of EU Transparency Reforms*” reveals wider systemic problems with getting information about how the rules that affect our everyday lives are being developed in Brussels.

“*The way the system currently works makes it easy for governments to claim one thing at home, and to press for just the opposite in Brussels,*” said Helen Darbshire, Executive Director of Access Info Europe.

“*The severe lack of information makes it impossible for members of the European public to engage in decision making and to hold governments to account.*”

***The Access Info Europe team will be in Brussels
on 21 and 22 March and is available to brief journalists.
Call +34 667 685 319.***

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

Pam Bartlett Quintanilla, Researcher, Access Info Europe
pam@access-info.org | +34 699 354 215

Helen Darbshire, Executive Director, Access Info Europe
helen@access-info.org | +34 667 685 319