



Attn: Mr Thierry Breton, Commissioner for Internal Market
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Belgium
Sent by email: cab-breton-contact@ec.europa.eu

CC: Ms Vera Jourová, Vice President and Commissioner for Values & Transparency
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9 December 2020

Joint Statement on Open Data Directive & Company Ownership Transparency

Representing 101 leading transparency, anti-corruption and open data organisations from across Europe, we call for company registers, including full ownership and corporate structure data, to be freely accessible and published in open data format.

More than \$11 trillion has already been spent by governments all over the world urgently responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and reliable information on who controls anonymous companies is central for preventing financial mismanagement, fraud and corruption.

Now more than ever, businesses, journalists, and civil society groups need high-quality and readily-accessible company ownership information in order to carry out proper due diligence on potential fraudulent or false companies.

Company structure and ownership information has been recognised as part of a “high value dataset” under the EU’s Directive on Open Data and the Re-Use of Public Sector Information (Open Data Directive). Some Member States are, nevertheless, resisting providing full access to this data arguing that there is an associated cost in doing so.

It is evident that the cost of publishing this essential information is minimal compared to the significant economic savings and invaluable societal benefits that accrue from avoiding fraud and corruption.

We therefore call for the following company structure and ownership information to be the absolute minimum made public under the Open Data Directive:

- Name of the company owner;
- Month and year of birth;
- Nationality;
- Owner identifier;
- Names of shareholders;
- Country of residence of shareholders/owners;
- Company insolvency status;
- All updates to the information submitted, including the date of the most recent update.

The commitment to open company registers would be the most critical transparency and anti-corruption measure that the EU will adopt in 2020.

Such publication is fully in line with the European Union's 5th Anti Money Laundering Directive (AMLD5), which has already committed to opening up registers of beneficial owners of companies, and Member States are currently transposing that Directive and setting up these registers.

Furthermore, standards have already been set in the UK and Denmark, with the information in these company registers available as open data.

The European Commission and Member States should now guarantee full publication of companies and company ownership information as a high-value dataset in implementing the Open Data Directive, under a genuinely open licence without additional restrictions. Anything less than full publication would ultimately foster an environment where corruption is allowed to persist. This is the time for more transparency and accountability, not less.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Darbishire, Executive Director of Access Info Europe

For and on behalf of:

Access Info Europe

One

Open Contracting Partnership

Open State Foundation (NL)

OpenCorporates

OpenOwnership

Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project OCCRP

The B Team

Transparency International

Transparency International EU

AAV- Associació d'Arxivers i Gestors de Documents Valencians

ACICOM (Associació Ciutadania i Comunicació)

Archiveros Españoles de la Función Pública (AEFP)

Asociación de Usuarios de la Comunicación (AUC)
 Asociación Española de Acreditación de la Transparencia (ACREDITRA)
 Asociación para la Comunicación e Información Medioambiental (ACIMA)
 Asociația Aradul Civic
 Asociația Civică Adevăr și Dreptate Argeșean #activAG Pitești
 Association Green Istria
 BIOM NGO, Zagreb
 Both ENDS, The Netherlands
 Branchevereniging B2B Intelligence
 Bystriny (Currents)
 Campaign for Freedom of Information
 Center for Independent Journalism
 Center for Public Innovation
 Center of NGOs Slovenia (CNVOS)
 Cenzura Plus (Censorship Plus), Split
 Citizens Network Watchdog Poland
 Civica
 Civio
 Code for Croatia, Zagreb
 Col·legi Oficial de Bibliotecaris i Documentalistes de la CV (COBDCV)
 Confederación de Consumidores y Usuarios (CECU)
 Corruption Kills (asociația Corupția Ucide)
 CorruptionWatch UK
 Daphne Foundation
 Diritto di Sapere
 Doctrine
 European Coalition for Corporate Justice
 Evoluție în Instituție
 FACT coalition
 Federación de Sindicatos de Periodistas (FeSP)
 Forum Apulum
 Forum Informationsfreiheit
 Freedom of Information Centre Armenia
 FullFact
 Fundación Hay Derecho
 Funky Citizens
 Geeks for Democracy
 GFOSS - Open Technologies Alliance
 Global Witness
 GONG
 Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanadzor
 Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries (Hivos)
 Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina
 Iniciativa Barcelona Open Data
 Innovación y Derechos Humanos (ihr.world)
 K-Monitor
 Law Development and Protection Foundation
 Mafia? Nein Danke!
 Mono Jurisdiction Organisations
 MySociety
 Netzwerk Steuergerechtigkeit
 Newspeak House, The London College of Political Technologists
 Observatorio de RSC
 Ondata
 Open Data Charter

Open Knowledge Foundation Denmark
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OpenCorporates
OpenFinData Ltd
Ostro
Parliament Watch Italia
Plataforma en Defensa de la Libertad de Información (PDLI)
Publish What You Pay International Secretariat
Publish What You Pay UK
Reporteros Sin Fronteras Sección Española (RSF España)
SOMO
Spend Network
Stakeholder Democracy Network
Sustentia
Tax Justice Network
Tax Justice NL
The Good Lobby Italia
The Open Data Institute
TI Armenia
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Transparency International Anticorruption Center
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Vouliwatch