

Madrid, 26 September 2013

Access to Company Registers in Montenegro

It is with great concerns that Access Info Europe has learnt about the shutting down from public access of the Montenegrin Company Register and we call for the register to remain open.

We have been informed that the argument being used is that the register contains personal data and must be protected in line with EU Data Protection rules. This is not a legitimate or correct argument. Information about the owners of companies is available, to a greater or lesser extent, in many countries across the European Union without problems being caused regarding violation of the right to privacy. This is because it is deemed necessary in a democratic society to provide access to data on the owners of companies. Such an analysis in favour of openness was shared by a number of Information Commissioners at an international meeting in Berlin on 18-19 September.

The European trend is towards publishing more, not less, information in the company registers. Indeed, this is something which leaders such as Barak Obama of the USA, David Cameron of the UK, and Angela Merkel of Germany signed up to in the G8 Open Data Charter (June 2013) which specifically mentions company registers as a "high value data set" which should be made available "for improving democracies and encouraging innovative re-use of data".

Access Info calls on the Montenegrin authorities to provide full access to the Company Register and other similar registers without delay as a sign of their commitment to upholding the transparency standards in EU countries and the right of access to information which the European Court of Human Rights has ruled is a fundamental right part of the right to freedom of expression.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Darbishire
Executive Director
Access Info Europe
Tel: +34 667 685 319