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### NGO Penalized for Requesting Information on Corruption in Spain

[<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/01/17/ngo-penalized-for-requesting-information-on-corruption-in-spain/>]

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After a five-year legal battle, [Access Info Europe](http://www.access-info.org/) [http://www.access-info.org/], an NGO with whom the author of this article collaborates, has been [sentenced to pay 3,000 euros](http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2012/10/28/actualidad/1351455843_506737.html) [http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2012/10/28/actualidad/1351455843\_506737.html] [es] after the Supreme Court ruled that it did not have the right to know what Spain does to fight against corruption.

The European organization, based in Madrid, fights to institute and ensure compliance of the European transparency laws while simultaneously promoting the right to accessing information worldwide with the goal of having this be recognized as a fundamental right.

On June 14, 2007, a member of the Access Info board requested information from the Spanish Ministry of Justice, asking for the measures the government was taking in accordance with the U.N. Convention against corruption. The information was denied and the case ended up in the courts until it exhausted the legal channels in May of 2012. As such, the Spanish Supreme Court alleged that following the demand for information on anti-corruption measures, the NGO expected to the government to provide explanations for its actions, a right that only the Parliament has, and for that it was fined 3,000 euros.



*Photo from the campaign showing the Access Info team upon*

*receiving the fine.*

The last option for the organization is to present the case to the European Court of Human Rights, which could delay the case for years. To meet the costs imposed by the Supreme Court, the NGO has launched a campaign to raise enough money to pay the fine [<http://www.access-info.org/en/spain-coalicion-pro-acceso/313-help-us-3000-euros>]. The members of the organization say that any type of collaboration is welcome — whether monetary or spreading the word — considering that the cause justifies it: supporting the fight for transparency in Spain.

The campaign has received support on Twitter, a network on which so many politicians, civil society organizations, journalists and citizens related to the transparency cause have contributed to spreading the petition of support. In its first day, Access Info raised more than 800 euros. If donations exceed the needed amount, the money will go towards other legal cases.



*The penalty amount with the Spanish Supreme Court in the background. (Access Info's website)*

The case is alarming for various reasons: it does not grant the right to know the measures taken to fight corruption, especially when Spain is living in an unprecedented time of crisis that triggers citizen discontent. The context does not allow for an understanding of the sentence when new cases of political corruption are disclosed in the media day after day, corruption that now affects even the country's monarchy [<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2012/07/23/spain-the-kings-son-in-law-renews-millionaire-contract/>]. It is also problematic to deny such requests for information when Spain is processing the Law of Transparency, Access to Information and Good Governance [[http://www.eldiario.es/zonacritica/informes-ocultos-Ley-Transparencia\\_6\\_45905413.html](http://www.eldiario.es/zonacritica/informes-ocultos-Ley-Transparencia_6_45905413.html)] [es] in the Parliament. International experts have analyzed and harshly criticized this law for not meeting international standards and excluding many areas of information that the citizens will not have access to.

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