



## Press Release

Not to be published before 12th April 2010

Project Launch on 12/04/10 at 18.30 in CCMC premises

## Launch of the project "The Right to Access Information: Researching and Reforming Transparency Participation and Accountability in Cyprus"

### First bi-communal coalition to promote transparency of public bodies

*Nicosia, 12 of April 2010:* Three civil society organisations are launching a bi-communal coalition to promote the right of access to information and public participation in Cyprus following a day-long training. Access to information has been recognised as a fundamental human right at the international level but is still not fully respected in law or in practice in Cyprus.

The Cyprus EU Association (Kıbrıs AB Derneği, KAB), the Socio-political Studies Institute (Ιδρυμα Κοινωνικοπολιτικών Μελετών, IKME) and Access-Info Europe will be carrying out legal analysis, training for civil society, and monitoring of current levels of transparency. They will hold public consultations on recommendations for reform.

*"We share a common vision that transparency of public bodies is essential for the functioning of 21<sup>st</sup> century democracies,"* said Ali Ereli, President of KAB.

*"This is a sound bi-communal initiative that aims to promote a fundamental right and democratic values at European standards,"* added Alecos Tringides, Managing Director of IKME.

The right to access information from public bodies is now clearly established in international law as a fundamental human right. It is contained in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. In 2009, the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on Access to Official Documents which is currently being ratified by member states.

The European Court of Human Rights has recently ruled that the refusal by public authorities to provide information it holds to citizens can be considered a violation of the right of freedom of expression and information. Exceptions are permitted but are very limited.

*"Access to information is essential to fight against corruption and for public debate about decision-making by public bodies,"* said Helen Darbishire, Executive Director of Access Info, a human rights organisation which promotes government transparency around Europe.

An international conference on the Right to Access Information will round off this two-year EU-funded project, with the participation of worldwide leading experts and the presence of all groups involved in the initiative.

The organisations also launched a three-language website which tells citizens how they can be involved in the campaign: <http://accessinfocyprus.eu/>

All interested individuals and organisations are invited to the launch which will take place at Cyprus Community Media Centre (next to Ledra Palace) at 18.30 on Monday 12<sup>th</sup> of April. Please contact the organizers to confirm your attendance.

**For more information and RSVP, please contact:**

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**Note for editors:**

Access Info Europe is an international human rights organization based in Madrid, which works to promote a strong and functioning right of action Europe and globally. <http://www.access-info.org/>

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KAB was founded by a group of civil society volunteers in 2006 with the aim of ensuring that information flow among the Turkish Cypriots and the international community. <http://www.cypruseu.org>

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IKME was registered in 2002 in Cyprus as a non-governmental organisation aiming to contribute to the prevalence of freedom, democracy, socialism and the European values. <http://www.ikme.eu>

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