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ACCESS INFO EUROPE[PRINT](#)

19.06.2009 von sysadmin

*** 12 States Sign World's First Treaty on Access to Information***

*- What about the other 35 Council of Europe Member States? ***

12 European countries - Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Slovenia, and Sweden - today became the first states to sign the world's first treaty on access to information; the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents at a meeting of Ministers of Justice held in Tromsø, Norway.

Access Info Europe, a human rights group dedicated to promoting open government, welcomed the leadership shown by these 12 countries, and called the Council of Europe's other 35 member states to demonstrate their commitment to government transparency by signing and ratifying the Convention.

"Countries like the UK, France, Germany, Denmark, and the Netherlands were all present during the negotiation of the treaty. Responding to civil society concerns that the treaty set a low standard, they argued that a minimum-standard Convention would attract more signatures. Why then have they not signed? Where is their commitment to the public's right to know?" said Helen Darbishire, Executive Director of Access Info.

A map of those who signed can be found at www.access-info.org
<<http://www.access-info.org>>

Notes for Editors

* The Convention on Access to Official Documents sets a low minimum standard on the right of access to information. Positive features include that it establishes a right to request "official documents", which are broadly defined as all information held by public authorities, in any form. The right can be exercised by all persons with no need to demonstrate a particular interest in the information requested,* **and at no charge for filing requests and viewing documents*.

* Signature of the Convention is the first step, and must be followed by ratification. The Convention contains optional provisions such as whether judicial and legislative bodies will be fully subject to the right to request and receive information. It will enter into force once 10 states have ratified.

* Slovenia is one country taking a lead on ratifications, having already included ratification of the Convention in its legislative programme; it plans to ratify the optional provisions on access to

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legislative and judicial information, setting a high standard for other states in west, central, and Eastern Europe.

* In April 2009, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that access to government-held information is a right protected by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

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*Access Info Europe is a human rights organisation based in Madrid which works to promote and defend the right of access to information by promoting access to information from national and supranational public bodies *

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