



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT INTERGROUP  
INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY  
CORRUPTION AND ORGANISED CRIME

## ITCO press statement 28 October

### Council invites Parliament to find common ground on Access to Documents

**This week's ITCO event on Access to Documents triggered the Council to show its willingness to develop its transparency policies together with the EP. In his capacity as co-chair of the ITCO intergroup Dennis de Jong will be happy take up the invitation from the Council to start an informal dialogue on this subject.**

The ITCO intergroup event on Access to Documents brought together the EP, Council, Commission, Ombudsman and Access Info Europe. In this stimulating environment, the Council stated it wants to open up and be closer to the citizens. With the establishment of a new knowledge management unit, the Council clearly addresses transparency as a priority. Co-president of the ITCO intergroup, Dennis de Jong, comments: 'I am very pleased with the ambition of the Council to create a culture of transparency in the Council and we look forward to starting the informal dialogue together with the Council to improve access to documents.'

Common ground was also found between GUE/NGL and ALDE, as Dennis de Jong (GUE/NGL) and Sophie in 't Veld (ALDE) both stressed that even if their ideas about the future of the European Union may differ, they do agree on the need for closer involvement of the citizens in the European decision-making process. In particular, they reject policies making it difficult for citizens to get the information they want.

During the event, De Jong announced that he will proceed to the EU Court with his own access to documents case, concerning a legal advice to the Council on the Transparency Register. De Jong explained: 'I will fight to win this case at Court. I demand access, because it is very important that an open dialogue takes place on the transparency register, which enables EU citizens to assess which lobbyists are trying to influence EU legislation. The Council states that the scrutiny of the document can be problematic 'in a time when the regulation of lobbyists at the EU level attracts the attention of public opinion and is the object of important media campaigns by NGO activists'. De Jong comments: 'this is unacceptable; the Council prefers to decide behind closed doors what's in the interest of the citizens of the EU and considers the public attention as a problem. I am convinced that the Council will lose at Court.'

The Commission underlined that the denied access to documents cases are the exception rather than the standard. According to the Commission, 150 rejected cases per year can be considered the most normal thing in the world. Helen Darbishire from Access Info, commented: 'It is time for the EU to get into the 21st century and recognise that information such as travel expenses of Commissioners, legal advice about refugees, and scientific studies on pesticides should all be in the public domain – the EU must be accountable to the public.'