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“The Council is a black box”

Daniel Freund · Thursday, February 15th, 2018

It's good to see that others are finally calling the Council of the European Union for what it is: a black box of decision making. Citizens are mostly left in the dark on what positions their national governments are taking, supposedly in their name. Decisions are taking behind closed doors.

The European Ombudsman is the latest EU institution to join a long list of those complaining about the utter lack of transparency of the Council. Emily O'Reilly has just [launched a procedure](#) against the Council for maladministration. She warns that the current working of the Council reinforces the culture to blame Brussels and risks alienating citizens, something we at Transparency International EU had pointed to in our [submission](#) to her.

This view is also supported by 26 National Parliaments in a [position paper](#) on “Opening up closed doors: Making Europe more Transparent for its citizens” discussed at the last plenary meeting of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC).

Over recent years we have also seen [criticism](#) by the European Parliament, and the Council has lost [several cases](#) on transparency in front of the European Court of Justice (ECJ). So far, these court rulings have mostly been ignored.

When citizens speak about decisions behind closed doors that are taken in Brussels, this is what it's all about. It is high time that national governments realise they are risking the survival of the European project with their obstruction to any form of transparency. Citizens have a right to know what their governments are doing in their name. All votes and member states' positions should be published. And the Council should stop opposing the lobby register and lobby meetings of member states representations should be published.

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