



Sophie in 't Veld (ALDE/D66) presents:

ROADMAP TO TRANSPARENCY

*An action plan for better public access to documents
and more transparent decision-making in the EU*

1. URGENT REVIEW OF EUROWOB

The European law on public access (Eurowob) to documents results in too little transparency of European institutions and agencies. This law needs urgent review. However, the member states and the European Commission are blocking reforms.

2. EU COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS

The Vice President-designate of the European Commission will be responsible for coordinating actions in the field of transparency. However, the Vice President should make transparency a higher priority and should present an ambitious plan of action. Transparency is the cornerstone of better regulation.

3. PRO-ACTIVE PUBLICATION OF DOCUMENTS ON WEBSITES

Documents regarding legislation and decision-making have to be proactively published on a central website which is accessible without the need for a Eurowob-request. This website should be easy in use and provide access to all published documents.

4. LEGAL RULES FOR CONFIDENTIALITY OF DOCUMENTS

Clear and unambiguous legislation is needed for the classification of documents in order to prevent arbitrary decisions on the confidentiality of documents. A supervisor should have the authority to verify compliance of the institutions.

5. SHORT AND EASY PROCEDURES TO CHALLENGE NEGATIVE DECISIONS IN EUROWOB-PROCEDURES

The current options for challenging denied access by European institutions in Eurowob-requests is to go to court or the European Ombudsman. However, procedures are often time-consuming whereas going to court is very costly, rendering it prohibitive for most people.

6. ASSIGNING A TRANSPARENCY OFFICER IN ALL EU INSTITUTIONS AND AGENCIES

Assigning within all institutions and agencies an officer who is specially tasked with making recommendations about increasing transparency will help create a culture of openness. The officer should, for example focus on enhancing internal processes related to transparency, and work on the improvement of Eurowob procedures.

7. NEGOTIATIONS BEHIND CLOSED DOORS (TRILOGUES) SHOULD BE REDUCED TO A MINIMUM

Negotiations between the European Parliament and the member states often take place behind closed doors, obstructing public scrutiny during a crucial phase of the decision-making process.

8. APPLYING THE TRANSPARENCY PRINCIPLE IN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

More transparency is needed regarding the negotiations of international treaties like TTIP, the trade agreement with the United States. Confidentiality should be limited to a minimum and may only be used to protect actual strategic interests during the negotiations.

9. CRITERIA FOR CLOSED SESSIONS IN PARLIAMENT AND REVIEW OF TRANSPARENCY AGREEMENTS BETWEEN EU INSTITUTIONS

Clear criteria for parliamentary sessions behind closed doors should ensure that meetings will not unnecessarily take place out of sight of the public. Special powers for parliamentarians to scrutinise documents may not result in decreased public access.

10. STRICT IMPLEMENTATION, IN LINE WITH TEXT AND MEANING, OF COURT DECISIONS

Transparency principles that have been laid down in court rulings are too often not implemented by the institutions with regard to public access to documents requests. In many cases (parts of) documents are still declared confidential without specific motivation.