Transparency and the right to access information in the Spanish Congress of Deputies

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Measures adopted by the Congress of Deputies (2015)

• The Congress has been taking gradual steps both as regards to active transparency, by means of the publication in its web page of
  • information on the MPs economic regime
  • publicity of the declarations of assets and activities

• The Bureau of the Chamber, in its meeting of January 20, 2015, adopted the Rules for the enforcement of the provisions of the The Transparency, access to public information and good governance Act (Act 19/2013, December 9),
Active Transparency

• The first relevant decision was taken in the sense of making available all information in a “Portal of Transparency”, and doing so in a clear, structured and accessible way.

• The Portal has five main sections:
  A) On transparency
  B) Institutional and organizational information
  C) Economic, budgetary and contractual information
  D) Access to information and relation with citizens
  E) Open Data
Portal of Transparency (website) – Access

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Portal of Transparency (website) - Access

Main topics

- Institutional and organizational information
- Economic, budgetary and contractual information
- Access to information and relations with citizens
- Open data
- On Transparency
Passive Transparency

- **No electronic identification** mechanisms are introduced to submit an information request.
- The right to access covers public information of the Congress, regarding **only the activity subject to administrative law**.
- The deadline for answering is **one month**.
- The **Secretary General** shall settle the requests.
- The person requesting information whose request is denied, can initiate a legal procedure before the **Supreme Court**.
- **Librarians** keep the **Portal updated**.
- Librarians ask for the information required and **draft the answers**.
Requests of information / Appeals (2015-July 2017)
Topics more demanded

- MPs remunerations
- Parliamentary Administration
- Parliamentary work
- Parliamentary groups
Conclusions

- The implementation of Transparency in the Spanish Congress of Deputies is an *outcome of the Transparency Act, 2013*

- The **number of requests** of information (100 per year aprox.) is **significantly low**

- The compliance of the TA entails a **review of administrative procedures**, for example, as regards the publicity of contracts

- Adapting to transparency entails a **change of mentality of the parliamentary administration** itself, since from then on a steering principle of the actions of administrative services shall be “that the public information of the Chamber is an asset at the disposal of citizens”
Conclusions (2)

• A significant number of requests comes from journalists

• More than fifty per cent of the requests are about parliamentary matters, not administrative ones

• Librarians play an important role in the implementation and day to day running of transparency

• The more public information provided by the chamber in the transparency portal (active transparency), the less necessary to devote efforts to reply to citizens’ requests for information (passive transparency)
Questions

• Do all MPs in your country support openness and transparency or are there different views?

• What else would you like to see published on your parliament’s website that would improve transparency?
Thank you!