

Access to EU Company Data Is Very Poor

Submitted on 21 Jun 2012 by Chris Taggart

Two months ago, [OpenCorporates](#) published our [ground-breaking report on access to company data in Open Government Partnership countries](#). The results were not good, with an average score of just 21 out of 100.

Following this, Neelie Kroes, the EU Vice-President in charge the Digital Agenda, including open data, [tweeted about the report](#), noting that the 15 EU countries in the OGP didn't give open access to company data, and wondering how the others performed.

Well, Commissioner Kroes, we've answered that question, scoring all 27 EU countries on access to company data, just in time for the [EU Digital Agenda Assembly](#), tomorrow in Brussels. And the results are not good.

But not have only have we published a [report](#) similar to [the one for Open Government Partnership countries](#), we've also investigated the the particular European-level barriers to that block or hinder access.

[The report](#) finds:

- Access to company data in EU countries is very poor, with an average score of just 23 out of 100 points. Though this is slightly better than for Open Government Partnership countries, the OGP figure includes several developing countries without even functioning online company registers.
- Several, including Spain and Austria are completely closed, not even allowing the search for the existence of a company without payment. Others have only the sparsest information shown for free, and Greece has no complete online register.
- There are several EU directives and projects that positively hinder access to company data, and a recent one, on the connection of company registers, threatens to harden the move towards commercialisation of the registers.
- The open data concept has barely touched company registers, with only the UK publishing open company data, while Belgium has said it intends to do so to in the future.

It's worth putting this into context too. In a time of austerity, it's significant that two of the countries at the heart of the storm are ones where their citizens can't even begin to understand the corporate sector, and whether it has disproportionately benefited at the expense of the rest of society, as some have suggested.

We'll be presenting this report at the Digital Agenda Assembly tomorrow, during [the data strand](#), as it fits in neatly with the Assembly's objectives, to:

- Assess progress to date on implementation towards the Digital Agenda's goals and actions and seek ways to improve delivery;
- Identify challenges ahead for the implementation of the Digital Agenda and for the information society in general;
- Mobilise stakeholders' actions to make further progress and address challenges.

Hopefully after the talk, we'll see some action.