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COVID-19 Update: Tracking Changes to Right to Information Laws

The Centre for Law and Democracy has added a page to the RTI Rating (containing information about national right to information laws) which tracks the changes that have been made to right to information (RTI) laws in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (https://www.rti-rating.org/covid-19-tracker/). The aim is to provide a central repository of comparative information on this issue. If you are aware of relevant information which is not posted on this page, please write to us at: laura@law-democracy.org.

"Many governments, in some cases with the acquiescence of information commissions, seem to be taking advantage of this crisis to limit access to information," said Toby Mendel, Executive Director, CLD. "*The need for accountability through openness, as well as the imperative need to get relevant information to the public, is greater now than ever.*"

CLD believes that blanket changes – such as suspending the operation of an RTI law or even imposing across the board delays – are not legitimate. Instead, delays need to be specifically justified. Requests that are of high public importance, in particular because they help hold government to account, should be treated as priorities. At this time, governments are making decisions of overwhelming importance – to the provision of health care, to maintaining respect for human rights and to safeguarding the economy – and maintaining accountability mechanisms, including RTI, is essential to ensuring that those decisions are strong in the first place and are implemented properly.

CLD is currently preparing a briefing note on the RTI standards which apply at this exceptional time, along with an assessment against those standards of the more common measures being taken by governments.

For further information, please contact:

Toby Mendel
Executive Director
Centre for Law and Democracy
Email: toby@law-democracy.org
+1 902 431 3688
www.law-democracy.org
twitter: @law_democracy