

Transparency and EU aid: a Year in Review

This paper complements the [2013 Aid Transparency Index \(ATI\)](#), an annual measure of the transparency of the world's major donor organisations. The paper provides additional detail about the progress made by European Union (EU) Member States and EU institutions since the publication of the 2012 ATI and offers specific recommendations for areas of improvement.¹

2013 marks the fifth anniversary of the campaign for aid transparency. Transparency is now seen as a key pillar of development – a necessary condition to enable effectiveness, accountability and social change. The High Level Panel report on the post-2015 development agenda has called for a “data revolution” placing transparency and accountability at the heart of this new framework. The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) remains the only way for donors to share openly aid information that is timely, comprehensive, comparable and accessible.

Since the publication of the 2012 Aid Transparency Index, **progress in aid transparency across the EU has been very mixed**. While the European Commission (EC) and a few major EU donor governments have made significant progress, the majority of Member States have made no or little discernible progress in making their aid more transparent. This lack of progress across the board seriously jeopardises the ability of the EU as a whole to deliver on its commitment to full transparency by the end of 2015.²

As a group, the EU Member States perform poorly, scoring an average of only 23%, compared to the average score of 31% for non-EU bilaterals (looking only at principal aid agencies). Brazil, which has not committed to aid transparency and does not consider itself a donor, ranks 56th, higher than 10 of the EU's bilateral agencies. Only five Member States – the UK (DFID), Sweden (Sida), Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany – and the EC received places in the top three categories (very good, good or fair) of the ATI. This leaves the remaining 22 Member States and the European Investment Bank (EIB) placed in the poor or very poor categories.

In 2013, some of the largest EU providers of aid reaffirmed their commitment to transparency and started publishing more information in more useful formats. In June 2013, the G8 members – including France, Germany, Italy and the UK – reaffirmed their commitment to implement IATI at Lough Erne. In July 2013, France announced its intention to commence publication to the IATI standard in 2014. At the same time, the main EC departments managing the EU's external assistance followed DG DEVCO's lead and began publishing to IATI. The EIB joined IATI in October 2013.

Some progress has been made but it's clearly not enough. If EU Member States are serious about delivering on their aid transparency commitments by the end of 2015, they must begin publishing to IATI in early 2014.

¹ CONCORD AidWatch's Report 2013 on [The Unique Role of European Aid](#) includes Publish What You Fund's analysis of EU donor plans for implementing aid transparency.

² See paragraph 23 of the Busan Partnership Agreement http://effectivecooperation.org/files/OUTCOME_DOCUMENT_FINAL_EN2.pdf

The 2013 Aid Transparency Index (ATI)

Since its pilot in 2011, the ATI has become the industry standard for assessing the state of aid transparency among the world’s major donors while encouraging progress and holding them to account. The data collection process has evolved, with the introduction in 2013 of the [Aid Transparency Tracker](#), an online data collection platform. The Tracker includes three components – an automated data quality assessment tool; an online survey tool; and an implementation schedules tool. The Tracker highlights what information donors have committed to publish, as well as what they are currently publishing.

Table 1. Ranking of the EU Member States and Institutions in 2013 ATI. N.B. number denotes place in overall ranking of 67 donor organisations.

Very Good (scores of 80–100%)	Good (scores of 60–79%)	Fair (scores of 40–59%)	Poor (scores of 20–39%)	Very Poor (scores of 0–19%)
3. UK, DFID (83.5%)	9. Sweden, Sida (60.4%)	12. EC, ECHO (54.2%) 13. EC, DEVCO (52.1%) 14. EC, FPI (51.1%) 15. Denmark, MFA (50.7%) 16. Netherlands, MFA (49.4%) 17. EC, Enlargement (48.1%) 20. Germany, BMZ-GIZ (45.9%) 23. Germany, BMZ-KfW (43.7%)	26. UK, FCO (34.7%) 32. Ireland, Irish Aid (26.7%) 33. EIB (26.6%) 35. Czech Republic, CzDA (24.4%) 36. Estonia, MFA (23.6%) 38. Belgium, DGCD (23.4%) 39. Finland, MFA (23.0%) 41. Austria, ADA (20.4%)	42. Luxembourg, MFA (19.2%) 45. Latvia, MFA (17.8%) 46. Portugal, CICL (17.4%) 47. Spain, MAEC-AECID (17.4%) 49. France, AFD (16.3%) 51. Romania, MFA (14.8%) 52. France, MAE (13.3%) 53. France, MINEFI (12.2%) 54. UK, MOD (12.0%) 55. Slovakia, SAIDC (12.0%) 57. Poland, MFA (11.3%) 58. Slovenia, MFA (10.8%) 59. Germany, AA (10.0%) 60. Italy, MAE (10.0%) 61. Lithuania, MFA (8.2%) 62. Cyprus, CyprusAid (6.5%) 63. Bulgaria, MFA (5.7%) 64. Hungary, MFA (4.7%) 65. Malta, MFA (3.8%) 66. Greece, HellenicAid (3.6%)

In recognition of the EU's role as the world's biggest aid donor and its influence in development, the ATI assesses 27 EU Member States³, as well as the four principal external assistance departments of the EC and the EIB. The 2013 ATI includes 67 donors worldwide and has an improved methodology to reflect progress in the aid transparency landscape and a resulting need to better assess the quality of published data – including the *format* of data.⁴

Several European agencies or organisations, including Directorates General ECHO and Enlargement, the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments and Germany (BMZ), have made big improvements in 2013 by publishing more information in accessible and comparable formats such as IATI XML or CSV, leapfrogging others that have not made any significant changes to the amount of information they publish, or who publish in less useful formats such as websites or PDFs. The top 12 EU agencies all publish at least some information in IATI XML. Two IATI publishers – UK FCO and Ireland – fall into the poor category largely because they are not yet publishing comprehensively in IATI XML. Spain, also an IATI publisher, is scored as very poor because its IATI data is not current, which is not compliant with the IATI standard.

European Commission

The 2013 Index assessed the transparency of four departments of the European Commission:

- EuropeAid Development and Cooperation (**DG DEVCO**), which is the EC's main aid agency and responsible for formulating EU development policy;
- **DG Enlargement**, which is responsible for managing and assisting the process whereby countries join the EU;
- DG Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (**ECHO**), which is responsible for programming and implementing the EU's humanitarian aid instrument and coordinating the EU's disaster response;
- the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (**FPI**), which is responsible for implementing EU external cooperation in relation to common foreign and security policy issues.

All four EC departments are placed in the fair category, reflecting their significant investments in aid transparency over the past year. EC departments have worked closely together to share knowledge and best practice and as result only six percentage points separate the highest performer, ECHO (ranked 12th), from the lowest, DG Enlargement (ranked 17th). The EC should be congratulated for rolling out IATI implementation across its main aid-spending departments, following DG DEVCO's initial publication in October 2011. DG Enlargement, ECHO and FPI all published to the IATI standard in July 2013. Led by DG DEVCO, the Commission is an original signatory to IATI and has played an active role in the development of the standard and its incorporation within the Busan common standard. It plays an important role within the EU on aid transparency, providing advice to Member States on fulfilling their commitments to the Busan common standard, of which IATI is a core component, and internationally within the framework of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

³ Croatia is not included in this analysis as data collection began before Croatia acceded to the EU on 1 July 2013.

⁴ Data in the IATI XML format was scored most highly because it is both machine-readable and internationally comparable.

EU Member States

The EU Member States have committed to the EU Transparency Guarantee with the aim of disclosing all information on aid programmes in a common standard format so that it can be more easily accessed, shared and published.⁵ The EC is responsible for publishing the annual EU Accountability Report on Financing for Development. The 2013 Accountability Report⁶ refers to the 2012 Aid Transparency Index and analysis of implementation schedules.⁷

The majority of EU Member States are in the very poor category. EU Member States represent 22% of the total volume of aid provided by agencies included in the Index and include a mixture of large and small agencies. A total of eight Member States – Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and UK – are publishing to IATI; and in some cases for more than one agency or ministry, such as Germany, Sweden and the UK. Although both Finland and Spain publish IATI data, it was not taken into consideration for the purposes of the Index as the data is not current. Some EU Member States with smaller development cooperation budgets – Czech Republic, Estonia and Latvia – have started publishing information on their aid activities in machine-readable formats including CSV or Excel.

Recommendations

Start publishing. All EU Member States should begin publishing to IATI in early 2014 so that they can aim to fulfil their aid transparency commitments in full by the end of 2015. Newer Member States should engage in the EU-13 project for enhancing Official Development Assistance (ODA) reporting capacity and systems to ensure it includes the full IATI standard and enables them to deliver on the 2015 deadline.

Plan openly. Each EU aid agency and organisation should produce or refresh an implementation schedule by mid-2014 to include ambitious plans for expanding its IATI publication. This is not a rote exercise – it helps organisations to set delivery targets and specific dates against which they will be held accountable. It also provides an opportunity to discuss priorities and approaches with data users.

Make the most of aid transparency. The European Commission and Member States should continue to champion improved aid transparency in international fora and within the EU. The EC should continue to strengthen the transparency of its external assistance by ensuring that all departments managing EU external funding publish to IATI. The EC should take steps to promote publication to IATI among implementing partners of EC aid. All development actors should actively use their IATI data in internal programming and coordination processes and promote the use of this information by others via an open data portal.

⁵ http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/126060.pdf.

⁶ Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/what/development-policies/financing_for_development/documents/financing_for_dev_2013_accountability_report_01_en.pdf.

⁷ <http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/resources/international-aid-transparency-initiative-iati/implementation-schedules/>.