

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Hello, and welcome to our first ICIC newsletter. The value of access to information rights has long been accepted, and a community of regulators and commissioners tasked with protecting those rights has existed for a number of years. When I put my name forward to chair the ICIC Governance Working Group, it was with the ambition of developing the ICIC into the natural home for that community. This newsletter shows that we have been successful in achieving that.

The stories that follow show how the ICIC represents our community in conversations with UNESCO, the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organization of American States. And the contributors show the breadth of our community, from Nepal to Australia, from Ireland to Hungary.

The past year has been a challenging one, and the impact of COVID-19 brought unprecedented challenges for us all. The public's right to access information has never been more important, amid crucial decisions about public health and civil liberty. Our community's role, in supporting those rights and in using our voices to reiterate their importance, has been essential, and we can be proud of the work we have done.

There is more work to be done, and a busy year ahead. The closed session aspect of our annual conference will take place virtually in June, with open session webinars and workshops lined up across the year. We recently held elections to appoint our newly formed Executive Committee, who will take over from the Governance Working Group at the close of the annual conference. Congratulations to successful candidates from Mexico, Albania, Bermuda, Chile, Kenya, South Africa and United States. And we have the United Nations International Day for Universal Access to Information to look forward to in September.

Throughout the year, we want to see the ICIC continue to grow and develop. We now have more than sixty members, sharing their expertise and assisting one another. Our community has such an



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important role to play: by working together we are all stronger.

Elizabeth Denham CBE

UK Information Commissioner, ICIC Governance Working Group Chair

In conversation with GWG Member Mahendra Man Gurung

We recently caught up with the Chief Information Commissioner, National Information Commission (NIC) of Nepal, Mr Mahendra Man Gurung. Chief Commissioner Gurung was appointed in November 2019. The NIC is a member of the ICIC Governance Working Group.

Tell us about the National Information Commission and its role in Nepal.

The Right to Information Act 2007 (RTIA) mandated that an independent National Information Commission (NIC) was set up with one Chief Information Commissioner and two Information Commissioners, with the inclusion of at least one female commissioner. The first NIC was formed in 2008, one year after the enactment of the RTI Act. In accordance with the Act, the NIC has the triple responsibility to protect, promote and enforce the RTI in Nepal. Its vision is to create an informed society for social development, economic prosperity and good governance through RTI.

The NIC has been instrumental, notably through running awareness-raising and orientation programmes for all stakeholders and discussions with policymakers, in the positive impact on the use of RTI in Nepal. The number of appeals and their adjudication has increased year on year, and so has the number of proactive disclosures being undertaken by public bodies. To date the NIC has run 255 orientation programmes with a total audience of 26,352 participants. The NIC also conducts RTI audits of public bodies.

Tell us a bit more about the Right to Information Act and how it has been implemented in Kathmandu and the rest of Nepal.

Article 27 of the constitution guarantees the right to information as a fundamental right. It states that “every citizen shall have the right to demand and receive information on any matter of his or her interest or of public interest”.

The RTIA also provides the right for citizens to lodge a complaint or appeal to the NIC against



Mahendra Man Gurung, Chief Information Commissioner, National Information Commission (NIC) of Nepal

public bodies or public officials where their request for information has been denied or if the information provided is incomplete or partial.

The implementation of the RTIA has not been without challenges: some public bodies have shown a lack of willingness towards RTI, the NIC has also faced some opposition and there is a low level of awareness on RTI among the population in general. There is still a long way ahead!

Nepal is a young Republic and the RTIA was adopted in 2007 shortly after the end of the civil war. How would you describe the dramatic changes which your country has faced in light of access to public information?

Nepal is the first country in South Asia to have formally recognised the right to information as a

fundamental right in its 1990 Constitution (Article 16).

After the end of the civil war, a political movement ensued which demanded changes to the whole governance system in Nepal. Citizen's rights were one of the key demands put forth by the political parties. One of the rights of the citizens was the right to access public information.

An interim constitution was initially adopted (interim constitution of 2063 (2006 AD)). It extended the provision of right to information and made it a fundamental right. Since then, a separate RTIA has been enacted to effectively implement the right to information in Nepal. The Constitution of Nepal, which was promulgated in 2072 (2015), contains the same provision of the right to information as a fundamental right in Nepal.

Have you noticed a greater awareness and greater use of the RTIA among the population?

With the enactment of the RTIA in 2007 and the establishment of the NIC in 2008, right to information became a key focus area by ministries of the Government of Nepal.

Over time there has been an improved capacity of officials in the federal ministries and their local agencies to respond to information requests. Government officials are now more conversant with RTIA, rules and regulations. Their belief in proactive disclosure has also been strengthened and they are now in a position to make a positive difference in their work.

The NIC is monitoring proactive disclosures undertaken by public bodies and there is a noticeable increase year on year due to regular orientation and orders issued by the Commission. Civil societies and information access activists have also been heavily involved and continue to play a significant role in ensuring a full implementation of the RTIA.

2020 has brought unique challenges for everyone. How has COVID-19 impacted the NIC and Access to Information in Nepal?

Right after the outbreak of the Coronavirus in Wuhan, China, the NIC issued directives to the Ministry of Health to provide information regarding the virus and precautions to be

taken by citizens. In May 2020, the NIC issued new directives to all public bodies to disclose information proactively about the lockdown measures, procurements and relief given to citizens.

A national lockdown was imposed by the Nepali Government on 23 March 2020. The NIC offices closed for a few weeks but the decision was rapidly made to reopen, when it became apparent that the lockdown period would last longer than expected. The NIC quickly issued directives to all public bodies to accept applications seeking information through email, phone, fax and post.

“Access to public information is not only the right of the citizens of Nepal, it is a global right, which requires all partners to work together.”

We recognise that the pandemic has impacted activities and resource allocation in many fields, including access to information. However, the NIC has repeated that state authorities have an obligation to afford maximum transparency, and that they have a direct interest in doing so, as it allows citizens to follow the government's response to the crisis (such as confinement rules, regulations of travel and schooling, virus testing, medical equipment supplies, and economic aid or stimulus packages) and build trust in government decision-making.

More recently, the NIC has issued a direction to provide the information on standards of sanitisers and masks and also asked departments to monitor the sale of these products, notably because of the large budget spent on these products.

What are your key priorities and projects for 2021?

The NIC has identified the following critical challenges for the coming months:

- Orientation programmes for newly created provincial and local public bodies;
- Limited public accountability and transparency within the government sector;

- Slow process of empowerment among different marginalised and socially excluded groups due to wide gap in the access to information between haves and have-nots, and limited mass awareness;
- Information gap between citizens and government, and lack of information flow among intra and inter political parties; and
- Inadequate practice of evidence-based decision-making in the public sphere.

Considering the current critical challenges and opportunities created by stakeholders' increased awareness for RTIA, the NIC will be preparing a 5-year Strategic Plan for the period of 2021-2026. We will be conducting awareness campaigns targeting citizens particularly the disadvantaged, citizens living in rural areas and women. We will also orient officials, politicians, policymakers, legal fraternity, academic sector. There will also

be a particular focus on new technologies and its impact on proactive disclosure.

First enacted in 2007, the RTIA is now 13 years old. Many things have changed since then and a review of the law has become a necessity in order to address novel issues. Institutionally, the NIC functioning also needs to be improved.

Nepal ranks 21 in global right to information positions. The NIC is a member of the Executive Committee of the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) and is committed to working alongside both the ICIC and global partners to nurture a strong right to information environment.

Access to public information is not only the right of the citizens of Nepal, it is a global right, which requires all partners to work together.

ICIC increases its collaboration with UNESCO

In December 2020, the ICIC and UNESCO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), in which both organisations agreed to continue working closely on joint projects and initiatives to advance the protection and promotion of the Right of Access to Public Information.

The connection between the ICIC and UNESCO is not new, as both organisations have long recognised the opportunities and benefits of joining up their resources. The MOU between UNESCO and the ICIC opens the door to very concrete activities, including: training programmes; members' and wider organisations' support and, legal or policy advocacy.

One activity particularly crystallises that newly formalised engagement: the International Day for Access to Public Information (IDUAI).

Initially adopted by the United Nations in 2015 through UNESCO [Resolution 38C/Resolution 57](#), the International Day was proclaimed a UN International Day four years later, in October 2019, by the 74th UN General Assembly ([UN resolution](#)

[74/5](#)). Now formally added to the UN calendar, the International Day is celebrated every year on 28 September.

Alongside UNESCO and other partners, the ICIC community is actively involved in celebrating the day. More than ever, the pandemic has shown how the right of access to public information should be protected and promoted.

As a good example of what can be achieved through cooperation, we have asked the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner to share with us how they prepared for and celebrated the day.

Australia's International Access to Information Day campaign

2020 marked a significant milestone for Australia in recognising 28 September, as national, state and territory regulators worked together to unify our campaigns for International Access to Information Day.



The coordinated name change followed the UN General Assembly proclamation of the International Day for Universal Access to Information, in late 2019.

The OAIC collaborated with communications teams from other jurisdictions to discuss and develop the new brand to develop a cohesive name, logo and theme to jointly recognise 28 September as International Access to Information Day. We also consulted on a shared theme – Building trust through transparency – to highlight the importance of providing access to government-held information in times of crisis and beyond.

As countries around the world continue to manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this theme resonated with many Australian jurisdictions and complemented the UNESCO 2020 theme.

The theme also encompassed our shared goals of promoting the role and responsibilities of government agencies in managing government-held information and increasing community awareness of their right to access government-held information.

Regular virtual meetings of communications representatives facilitated feedback on the logo development and an exchange of information

about campaign activities and outcomes. The communications group also coordinated approval of a [joint statement](#) for release by all jurisdictions on 28 September.

For the [OAIC campaign](#), we focused on raising awareness of access to information rights as a foundation of an open and accountable democracy, which strengthen transparency and accountability in policy making, administrative decision making and government service delivery.

We also launched a new digital toolkit, [FOI Essentials](#), to help Australian Government officers understand the principles of FOI and the benefits of releasing government-held information.

By harnessing the collective resources and insights of all Australian jurisdictions and acknowledging the day under a shared name, we were able to amplify our campaign. The OAIC's channels saw a significant growth in campaign reach for [#AccessToInfoDay](#) compared to the 2019 campaign.

The OAIC hopes to build on this collaboration for future campaigns, as we continue to promote awareness of the [#RightToKnow](#) and build public trust and confidence in access to information rights.

The Right to Information, Post Pandemic: **Where to Now?**

By Toby Mendel, Executive Director at the Centre for Law and Democracy.

Public attention during the COVID-19 pandemic has been firmly on the immediate and direct impact of the disease in terms of health and the economy. However, there was also a massive boost in global focus on access to information to the point where Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, famously stated in mid-February 2020, “We’re not just fighting an epidemic; we’re fighting an infodemic”.

The informational backdrop to the pandemic has many features. One has been a sharp reversal in the long decline in legacy media consumption in most countries as people return to established news sources in search of reliable information. Another, invoked by the term infodemic, has been a spike in the rate of dis- and mis-information being circulated and the harmful impact that it is having on both individuals and communities. The crisis required decisions of the greatest importance to be made at all levels right from the very beginning, when even the most informed scientists knew very little indeed about the disease and how it would spread and impact us. That fact significantly exacerbated the informational confusion and seriously fanned the flames of dis- and mis-information.

Formal systems for giving access to information have also been heavily impacted by the spread of COVID-19. In many jurisdictions, public authorities made a real effort to respond to the public need for reliable information about the pandemic through new and enhanced systems of proactive disclosure. At the same time, public authorities in many jurisdictions essentially stopped responding to requests, whether under cover of formal legal permissions to do this (see rti-rating.org/covid-19-tracker for a list of jurisdictions where formal legal changes to the rules were introduced) or simply as a matter of practice. My organisation argued from the beginning that maintaining right to information systems, both proactive and



reactive, needed to be seen as a key part of the response to the pandemic, as an essential service rather than as something to be put on ice (see [Maintaining the Right to Information During Health Emergencies](#)). Openness is essential to maintaining trust in government. Such trust is more crucial today than ever as citizens need to respect often harsh lockdown rules, to participate in the vaccination programmes that are rolling out around the world and to look to (and be able to look to) government as a trusted source of reliable information. Transparency is also a key accountability tool, even more so when many other accountability systems are operating either not at all or only partially.

The performance of information oversight bodies in this difficult time has been mixed. Some have actively supported request processing slowdowns, others have been passive while yet others have pushed back in an attempt to ensure that the continued processing of requests is a priority.

As we appear to be close to turning the page on the COVID-19 pandemic, with the availability of effective vaccines, it is of the greatest importance that right to information systems are at the very least restored to the status quo ante and, ideally, built back stronger. Oversight bodies, in collaboration with support networks, not least civil society organisations, should pave the way. The value placed on information in the eyes of ordinary citizens has never been higher. We need to take advantage of that to bolster the right to information.

President of the International Ombudsman Institute welcomes United Nations resolution

The ICIC Charter adopted in March 2019 recognises that the remit and nature of information commissioners span many functions and responsibilities, including the role of ombudspersons. As a growing global network, the ICIC proudly recognises the diversity of its membership and when we heard that the United Nations had adopted a Resolution on the important role of Ombudsman and Mediator institution, we asked the President of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) to explain its importance.

We marked a happy ending to a very difficult year on 16 December 2020, which was a notable day for the global Ombudsman community. On this day the UN General Assembly adopted [a revised motion on the Ombudsman](#). The motion was proposed by Morocco, which brings such a motion every two years, and co-sponsored by Ireland, the UK and Austria, amongst others.

The motion sets out a strong endorsement of the Ombudsman concept and sets high standards for independence, jurisdiction and powers. It refers to the role of the Ombudsman in protecting human rights and promoting good administration, good governance and the rule of law. It annexes the [Venice Principles](#) which have now become the global standard for the Ombudsman in the same way as the Paris Principles underpin the work of National Human Rights Institutions.

The adoption of the resolution marks the culmination of lengthy work by the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) of which I am President, together with other regional and language specific Ombudsman networks. The IOI is the only global Ombudsman network with more than 200 members in more than 100 countries worldwide. The General Secretariat is based in Vienna and is funded by Austria. The IOI provides regional grants, training, information exchange, best practice papers, publications and support for members under threat.

The IOI worked with the Venice Commission (the body which advises the Council of Europe and its members on legal matters) on the development of the “Principles on the Protection



Peter Tyndall, Ombudsman and Information Commissioner for Ireland and President of the International Ombudsman Institute

and Promotion of the Ombudsman Institution – the Venice Principles” which were adopted in 2019. Subsequently these principles were adopted by the Council of Europe, again with the participation of the IOI. The [Council of Europe motion](#) further strengthened the endorsement of the role of the Ombudsman and calls on all member states to establish strong, independent Ombudsman institutions compliant with the Venice Principles.

Having a global standard is of considerable value in promoting the creation of Ombudsman offices where they don't exist, making a case for strengthening those which are already present and protecting those which face threats to their independence, powers, funding or jurisdiction. Having these principles endorsed by the UN was the final step in a long campaign. We will work now to ensure that they bring about the positive benefits which they promise.

The journey from **right of access** to the first **binding international legal instrument**

Tromsø is famous for its northern lights and exporting talented electronic music bands but this Norwegian city also rose to fame in 2009 when it became eponymous with Convention 205 of the Council of Europe on Access to Official Documents. The Convention came into force on 1 December 2020. Dr Julia Sziklay, from the Hungarian NAIH, gives us more details about this important Treaty.

About the Convention

The official title is Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents, No. 205 in the CoE Treaty Series (CETS No.205). The short title is Tromsø Convention, named after the Norwegian city where the Treaty was originally signed on 16 June 2009 by eight countries. The document has now been ratified by 10 countries, the latest being the Ukraine in May 2020, which opened the door for its entry into force on 1 December 2020. Eight more member countries have signed it, but have yet to ratify it.

Special features

- The Convention is the first binding international legal instrument to recognise a general right of access to official documents held by public authorities.
- The Convention is open for signature by Council of Europe member States. Other States or any international organisation may also accede to the Convention.
- The Convention has a very practical approach and no provision may be interpreted as restricting access to documents which must be made available under other obligations (for instance, the European Convention on Human Rights recognises the basic principle of the publicity of judgments and the Aarhus Convention grants a wider right of access to environmental information).
- Under the Convention, a **Group of Specialists** will be formed by nominated experts. These experts will be nominated by the signatory member states and will sit in their



Dr. Julia Sziklay, Head of the Freedom of Information Department, Hungarian National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (NAIH)

individual capacity and exercise their function independently. The Group is to report regularly on the adequacy of the legal and practical measures taken by the Parties and to express opinions on any question concerning the application of the Convention.

What are **the main provisions of the Convention?**

- The term **public authorities** is defined to cover administrative authorities at national, regional and local level as well as legislative bodies and judicial authorities, insofar as they perform administrative functions. Natural or legal persons are also covered, insofar as they exercise an administrative authority.
- A clear distinction is made between documents received by **public officials** in the course of their duties and those received by them as **private persons** and which are not connected to their duties. The latter falls outside the definition of

official documents in the Convention.

- The right of access is limited to **existing documents**. The Convention does not oblige Parties to create new documents in response to requests for information, although some Parties recognise this wider duty to some extent.
- Official documents transferred to **archives** remain under the scope of this Convention.
- Documents containing **personal data** are covered by the scope of this Convention.
- Article 3, Paragraph 2, expresses two important principles, the **harm-test principle and the principle of balancing the interest** of public access to official documents against the interest protected by the limitations or exceptions.
- The Convention gives **everyone** the right to have access to official documents, irrespective of their motives and intentions. The person requesting an official document is not obliged to state the reasons why they wish to have access to it.

- The **applicant is not obliged to have identified the requested document** beforehand. The onus is on the trained public officer to identify the requested document and on the public authority to keep its documents in good order and indexed, so as to be able to identify them.
- In principle, **on-site consultation should be free of charge**.

The text of the convention as well as additional information are available on the [Council of Europe website](#).

Going forward

The Tromsø Convention was previously discussed by the ICIC at its 2009 meeting in Oslo. In its closing statement of that meeting, the ICIC supported the adoption of the Convention and issued a call to governments to sign and ratify it.

As the Convention has now entered into force, ICIC members are strongly encouraged to study the document and to start negotiating with their governments about the possible accession of their country to the Convention.

ICIC Governance Working Group

The Governance Working Group is currently comprised of 16 members. They are:

- **Alberta (Canada)** – Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner
- **Argentina** – Access to Public Information Agency (AAIP)
- **Bermuda** – Office of the Information Commissioner
- **Brazil** – Office of the Comptroller General (CGU)
- **Chile** – Chilean Transparency Council
- **Hungary** – National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information
- **India** – Central Information Commission
- **Kenya** – Commission on Administrative Justice, Office of the Ombudsman
- **Mexico** – National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Personal Data Protection (INA)
- **Nepal** – National Information Commission
- **Scotland** – Scottish Information Commissioner
- **Serbia** – Office of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection
- **Sierra Leone** – Right to Access Information Commission
- **South Africa** – Information Regulator (South Africa)
- **Tunisia** – Information Access Regulator
- **United Kingdom** – Information Commissioner's Office

What's next for the **Tromsø** Convention?

Christos Giakoumopoulos, Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law, discusses the Tromsø Convention.

In the Council of Europe, we welcome the interest of the ICIC in promoting the Tromsø Convention. We are proud to contribute to international law with the first binding legal instrument guaranteeing a general right of access to official documents. In the challenging times we are living where abundance of information and disinformation are commonplace, upholding the standards on access to official documents becomes even more important.

The Parties to the Convention held a consultation meeting on 18 January 2021 and we are now working with them to set up the monitoring mechanism of the Convention composed of the Group of Specialists on Access to Official Documents and the Consultation of the Parties, which we envisage to be in place in the second half of 2021.



Christos Giakoumopoulos, Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law

“In the challenging times we are living where abundance of information and disinformation are commonplace, upholding the standards on access to official documents becomes even more important.”

The monitoring mechanism of the Tromsø Convention will create new opportunities to strengthen the transparency and openness of public authorities as well as democratic governance in its Parties.

Also, the Tromsø Convention is a beacon of values for and open to accession by States which are not members of the Council of Europe. From that perspective, we welcome the work of the to promote the Convention in non-European

countries as a set of reference standards to discuss legal reform within the relevant jurisdictions.

Whilst we hope that more Council of Europe member States will ratify the Tromsø Convention, we are open to working together with the ICIC to promote the standards of transparency and openness of public authorities enshrined in the Convention, thus contributing to the empowerment of people in the exercise of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

We have recently launched [a website dedicated to the Convention](#) which provides links to the work of the Council of Europe on access to official documents. It will be completed with further information including the work and meetings of the monitoring bodies and the calendar of activities.

The OAS approves the Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information in collaboration with the RTA

The General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) met for its 50th regular session on 20-21 October 2020.



In conclusion of its meeting, the OAS approved [the Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information](#) that had been submitted by the Inter-American Juridical Committee (CJI).

The Model Law 2.0 comes nearly 10 years after the first Inter-American Model Law and followed the initial mandate given by the OAS General Assembly to the Department of International Law (DIL), in its capacity as Technical Secretariat of the CJI, to identify thematic areas to possibly update or expand the original Model Law.

“The Model Law 2.0 is one of the first legal instruments of the Inter-American System to incorporate a gender perspective by design.”

After an intensive consultation process of nearly two years involving legislators, guarantor bodies, civil society organisations, scholars and other social actors, which included the Red de Transparencia y Acceso a la Información (RTA) and the EuroSOCIAL + program, the DIL presented a first consolidated draft document in May 2019. The review incorporated topics identified as priorities for revision like guarantor bodies, exceptions regime, subject entities, active transparency, definition and scope of the right of access to public information. The document was subsequently revised to account for comments and suggestions made by CJI members and the final document was ultimately approved at the 96th regular session of the CJI in March 2020.

The OAS' Inter-American Model Law 2.0 on Access to Public Information represents the

latest effort to advance the establishment of standards to provide stronger guarantees to the citizens of the region as they face new challenges, and encapsulate best practices that have been cultivated in this field since the approval of the first Inter-American Model Law on Access to Public Information in 2010.

The Model Law 2.0 is one of the first legal instruments of the Inter-American System to incorporate a gender perspective by design. The OAS Department of International Law is now working to complement the Model Law 2.0 with custom-designed capacity-building sessions in Member States that request them, online learning resources and other dissemination activities.

ICIC members (and non-members) are invited to take a look at this instrument and consider incorporating it as a permanent addition to their tool kits.

For any queries, please contact the Department of International Law at the OAS (jmoreno@oas.org).

The RTA is a network representing transparency and access to public information agencies in Latin America. It has been a strong advocate for the review of the new Model Law and will continue to promote access to public information as a tool to help increase the levels of transparency and the effective fight against corruption, generate public trust and empower citizens in the Ibero-American region.

UNESCO 2021 Survey on Public Access to Information

At the end of March 2021, UNESCO launched its second global survey on public access to information to assist countries to report on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, particularly on its Target 16.10, which recognises the contribution of access to information to justice, peace and strong institutions.

Based on SDG Indicator 16.10.2, the survey will track progress on the adoption and implementation of constitutional, statutory and/or policy guarantees for public access to information. UNESCO is the custodian agency in the UN for monitoring this aspect of SDG performance. The survey will be undertaken as part of the Organisation's role to enhance norms and policies for the right to access information worldwide.

Responses to this survey will allow UNESCO to analyse and report on overall global progress in ensuring public access to information, which in turn plays a vital role in the achievement of the SDGs. Governments can also make good use of the collected data at the national level to keep track of their country's progress towards SDG 16, and to prepare their Voluntary National Review (VNR) and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) exercises.

The survey was developed in consultation with experts and information commissioners. Early in February 2021, UNESCO partnered with the International Conference of Information Commissioners (ICIC) and Red de transparencia y acceso a la información (RTA) to test the feasibility of the survey's questions, with a view to ensuring the quantity and quality of data to be collected in 2021. Around 70 representatives from oversight bodies for access to information worldwide participated in the consultation.

Acknowledging the important role of information commissioners as the data holders/producers for assessing Indicator 16.10.2 at the national level, UNESCO partnered again with ICIC in April 2021 in collecting data from its members through the survey.

A UNESCO webinar in September 2020 [Beyond the Numbers: Using Access-to-Information Data to Achieve Sustainable Development](#)



[Goals](#) discussed the significance of the 2020 data collection, which also formed the basis of the Organisation's first [Global Report on the Implementation of Access to Information Laws \(based on monitoring of SDG Indicator 16.10.2\)](#).

The 2020 responses revealed that states with a specialised Access to Information oversight body are likely to perform better than those without, and that such oversight bodies should have the capacity to perform their duties, which include the monitoring and reporting of access to information in their jurisdiction.

Based on the 2020 experience, UNESCO's updated survey for 2021 will have fewer key questions than the previous version. It will also introduce a scoring system for participating countries, enabling each country to see any changes in trends over time. Qualitative analysis will be possible through a number of follow-up questions to the key questions in the survey, touching on issues related to, among others, oversight and appeal functions of the Access to Information bodies, including statistics on appeals.

By conducting the survey annually, UNESCO and stakeholders will be able to assess the progress each year during the International Day for Universal Access to Information on 28 September.

More information on the survey can be found on [the UNESCO website](#).



Become a member of the ICIC

The ICIC's vision is to be the global forum which connects member Information Commissioners in order to improve transparency and accountability to the benefit of everyone.

To contribute to this vision, the ICIC offers a platform for members to share information and good practice to protect and promote the universal right of access to public information. The ICIC also acts collectively to improve the implementation of information rights at global level.

Benefits of membership

As a Member, your authority will be have their finger on the pulse and be able to shape the conversations on how transparency, accountability and citizens' rights can be improved for the greater global good. Your membership also entitles your authority to attend the open and closed sessions of the annual meeting, apply to host the annual meeting or become part of the Executive Committee.

Observers status

The ICIC encourages applicants who do not meet the membership criteria to apply for Observer status. Observers to the International Conference can also influence the workings of the International Conference and increase the visibility of issues and challenges they are confronted with, as well as share their successes at global level. Observers may also be invited to attend the closed session of the annual meeting.

Find out more

To find out more about becoming a Member or Observer, interested parties can visit the [International Conference of Information Commissioners website](#) or contact the ICIC Secretariat at icic-secretariat@ico.org.uk.

Meet the Secretariat

The ICIC Secretariat is here to help as a central point of contact for the ICIC community, please do get in touch if you have any queries or contributions. A summary of the areas of work we cover are:

- Right to Information (RTI) related enquiries
- Support for the Executive Committee and related matters
- Participation in Working Groups
- ICIC Member accreditation and Observer status
- Preparation for the annual meeting
- Host process for future annual meetings
- Support for RTI related activities (open to international participation)
- ICIC website
- Media enquiries



Gemma Brady, Programme Manager

Since joining the ICO in 2018, Gemma has worked in the Information Commissioner's Private Office, as a Corporate Business Project Manager and now as Regulatory Programme Manager. Prior to that she spent 15 years in the Middle East with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office working in Counter-Terrorism and Crisis Management, and later in the Maritime Private Security Industry.



Alain Kapper, Senior Policy Officer

Alain joined the ICO in 2014 after a spell at the UK Consumer Markets Authority and has focused most of his time dealing with international programmes. Prior to that, Alain worked on Holocaust compensation and restitutions programmes both in Belgium and in the UK.

You can contact the Secretariat at icic-secretariat@ico.org.uk and follow us on Twitter at [@ICICnet](https://twitter.com/ICICnet).

Would you like to contribute to the ICIC Newsletter?

We hope you have enjoyed reading the first edition of the ICIC Newsletter.

If you would like to contribute to its success and have ideas for our next edition, please contact the Secretariat at icic-secretariat@ico.org.uk.



Could you contribute to one of the ICIC's Working Groups?

The ICIC currently has two active working groups, the annual meeting **Planning Committee** and the **Funding Working Group**.

The **Planning Committee** provides support to the annual meeting Host in its preparation of the next annual conference.

The **Funding Working Group** looks into the future of the ICIC and is currently focused on the development of an independent Secretariat function.

All ICIC members with interest, expertise or experience are invited to get in touch with the Secretariat at icic-secretariat@ico.org.uk if they would like to join one of our Working Groups.

