

# How Transparent are Think Tanks about Who Funds Them 2015?

## A survey of 169 think tanks in 47 countries worldwide

Transparify, Tbilisi/Georgia, 17 February 2015

[www.transparify.org](http://www.transparify.org)

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*Transparify is part of the [On Think Tanks Labs](#), a collection of innovative ventures in policy research.*

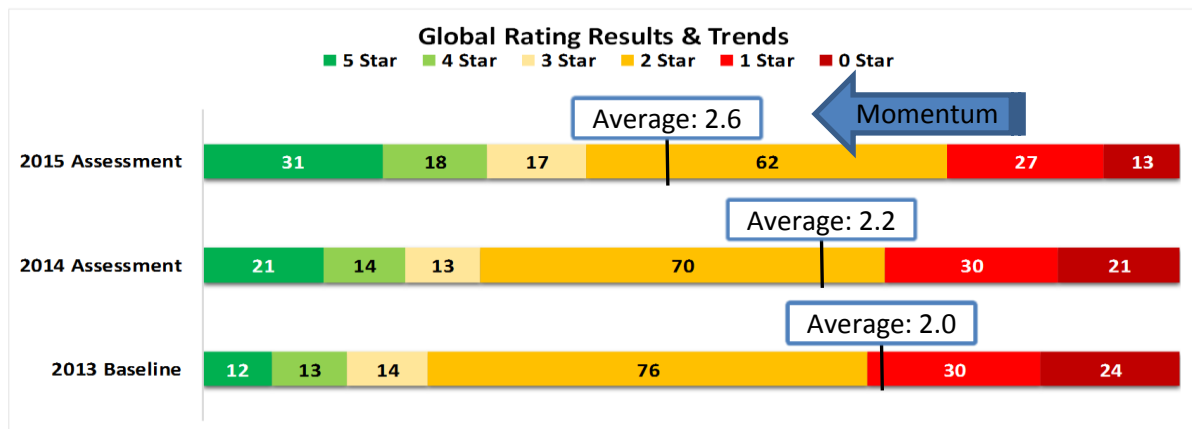


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# Donors Board the Transparency Train

“Nearly a year after Transparify released its first rating of the financial transparency of think tanks,<sup>1</sup> we have gone back to the websites of the same 169 institutions to document their current levels of disclosure.

Great news: think tanks are embracing transparency in ever increasing numbers. In 2013, when we conducted our baseline assessment, rating 169 institutions on a five-star scale, only 25 think tanks in our sample were transparent (4 or 5 stars). By early 2014, when we launched our first report, that number had climbed to 35. Today, 49 think tanks worldwide are transparent. Of those, 31 are highly transparent (5-star), meaning that they disclose the precise sum that each donor provides.



Highly transparent think tanks can now be found in 18 countries worldwide, in places as diverse as Ecuador, Pakistan and Montenegro, demonstrating that excellence knows no borders. Taken as a whole, their funding portfolios contain the vast majority of large national and international donors, including foundations, corporations, trade unions and public bodies. Clearly, none of these donors have any objections to being named and honoured for financially supporting good policy research.

In other words, some think tanks’ concerns that full disclosure may drive away donors have not been substantiated. On the contrary: over the past year, many 5-star think tanks have been displaying the Transparify award on their fundraising pages to advertise their commitment to integrity and independence in policy research to institutional and private supporters alike. We share their belief that most donors know a commitment to excellence when they see it.

During the coming year, Transparify’s team will reach out to the leading donors in the field and ask them to proactively communicate their commitment to transparency to the think tanks they support. At the same time, we plan to directly engage with even more think tanks to spread the message: transparency pays dividends not only in credibility, but also in financial terms.

**Think tanks can be a great asset for a society. Their contribution is even more valuable if they are also role models of transparency. ”**



Dr Hans Gutbrod  
Executive Director of Transparify

<sup>1</sup> Transparify’s 2014 report is available at <http://bit.ly/1tecPkY>

## WHAT WE MEASURE

Transparify rates the extent to which think tanks publicly disclose through their websites where their funding comes from.

We visited think tanks' websites and looked at the funding and donor information disclosed online, including in online annual reports.

**Institutions rated with the maximum of five stars are highly transparent about who funds them.** Think tanks with four stars are broadly transparent; typically, they do not disclose exactly who gave how much, but instead group their donors into several funding brackets. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the funding of think tanks with zero stars or one star is highly opaque.

Transparify used the same rating criteria and process as in last year's assessment. The rating criteria for the number of stars to award are defined as follows:

RATING		CRITERION
Five stars	*****	<b>highly transparent:</b> all donors listed, clearly identifying funding amounts for, and sources of, particular projects <sup>2</sup>
Four stars	****	<b>broadly transparent:</b> all donors above USD 5,000 listed in 4+ precise funding brackets, with anonymous donors no more than 15%
Three stars	***	all or most donors listed in 2 or 3 broad contribution brackets [e.g. "USD 5,000 to 15,000, the following donors"] <sup>3</sup>
Two stars	**	all or many donors listed, but little or no financial information
One star	*	some donors listed, but not exhaustive or systematic
Zero stars	0	no relevant or up-to-date <sup>4</sup> information

Multiple steps reinforce the reliability of Transparify's rating results:

- Systematic and transparent approach with clear categories
- Ratings by two separate raters
- Adjudication process
- Respondent validation with all think tanks rated 0-3 stars
- Full replicability of results by third parties

**The ratings for think tanks in this report capture the status quo as of January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015.**

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

Transparify will begin re-assessing all think tanks again for its third round of annual ratings on **October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015**. We may slightly **adjust our rating criteria** before then. As we plan to expand the sample, we may not be able to communicate individually with every single think tank in the future. We therefore strongly encourage all institutions listed in this report to subscribe to our email updates:

<http://www.transparify.org/blog/2014/1/30/website-setup>

<sup>2</sup> Transparify has compiled a brief guide for think tanks wishing to pursue excellence in financial disclosure, available here: <http://www.transparify.org/get-five> We encourage institutions aspiring to five-star disclosure to contact us beforehand (and subscribe to our email updates) as Transparify may review and slightly modify the criteria for 5-star ratings during the course of 2014. At present, 5-star think tanks may list donors contributing up to 15% of total funding as 'anonymous'.

<sup>3</sup> Transparify also awarded three stars to institutions that were fairly transparent yet did not fully meet four star criteria, for example by not explaining more than 15% of their funding.

<sup>4</sup> Institutions whose latest funding information was three years old or even older at the time of rating (for example, 2011 annual reports) received zero stars because whatever information they were providing was significantly out of date.

## STRONGEST IMPROVERS 2014-2015

A total of 34 think tanks worldwide have disclosed more data over the past year.

Of these, 26 improved significantly, by two or more stars. Note that even a two-star increase from a very low baseline (from 0 to 2 stars or from 1 to 3 stars) represents a big step forward in disclosure, and deserves to be honoured as such.

The most dramatic improvers were the Pew Research Center (United States), the Social Policy and Development Centre (Pakistan), and Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (Germany), all of which became highly transparent in one giant leap.

TREND	THINK TANK	COUNTRY	2015 SCORE
<b>+4</b>	Pew Research Center	United States	5
	Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC)	Pakistan	5
	Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)	Germany	5
<b>+3</b>	European Policy Institute - Skopje	Macedonia	5
	JumpStart Georgia	Georgia	5
	Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI)	Norway	5
	Stimson Center	United States	5
	Botswana Institute for Devp Policy Analysis (BIDPA)	Botswana	4
<b>+2</b>	IEA Kenya	Kenya	5
	Natural Resource Governance Institute	United States	5
	Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA)	Australia	4
	Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs	United States	4
	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	United States	4
	Center for a New American Security	United States	4
	German Marshall Fund of the US	United States	4
	Peterson Institute for International Economics	United States	4
	Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS)	Bangladesh	3
	Center for American Progress	United States	3
	Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)	United States	3
	Civitas: Institute for Study of Civil Society	United Kingdom	3
	FRIDE	Spain	3
	German Development Institute (DIE)	Germany	3
	Advocates Coalition for Devp (ACODE)	Uganda	2
	Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs	United States	2
	Centre for Civil Society (CCS)	India	2
	IEA Ghana	Ghana	2

Only three think tanks got significantly more opaque during 2014:

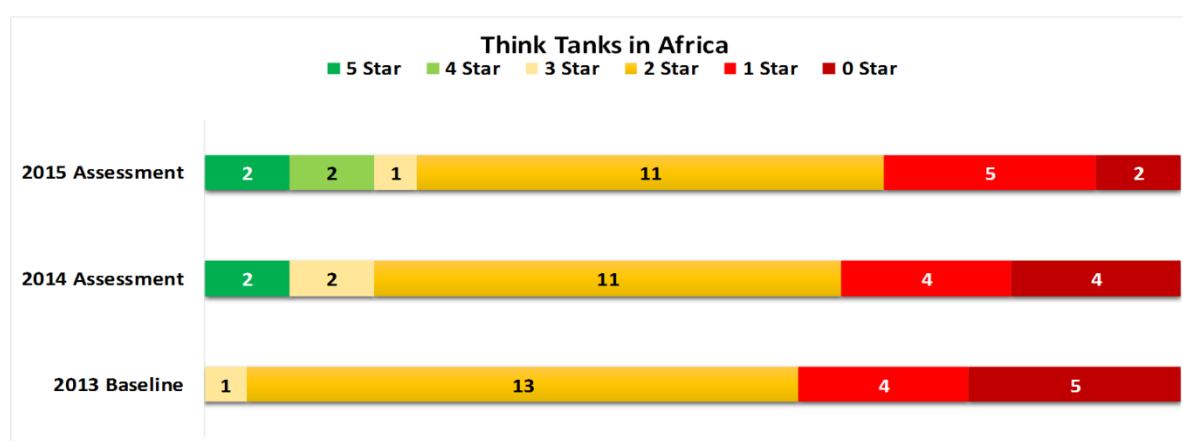
- Britain's Overseas Development Institute (dropped from 5 stars to 2 stars)
- Tanzania's Economic & Social Research Foundation (from 3 stars to 1 star)
- Ghana's Centre for Democratic Development (from 2 stars to 0 stars)

## THINK TANKS IN AFRICA

The number of transparent think tanks in Africa has doubled to four since last year's rating. Two think tanks in Kenya – the African Economic Research Consortium and the Institute of Economic Affairs – excel in disclosure with a 5-star performance; Namibia's IPPR is likely to soon (re)join that group.<sup>5</sup> The Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis also performs well.

The overall trend is positive: seven think tanks became more transparent, versus three whose ratings declined. From the original baseline of 1.4 stars, the average increased to 2.2 stars.

THINK TANK	COUNTRY	TREND	SCORE		
African Economic Research Consortium (AERC)	Kenya		*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT	
Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA - Kenya)	Kenya	+2	*****		
Botswana Institute for Devp Policy Analysis (BIDPA)	Botswana	+3	****	BROADLY TRANSPARENT	
Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) – Namibia	Namibia	-1	****		
Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA)	Tanzania	+1	***		
Advocates Coalition for Devp (ACODE)	Uganda	+2	**		
Center for Development & Enterprise	South Africa		**		
Centre for Population & Environmental Devp (CPED)	Nigeria		**		
Council for Devp of Social Science Research (CODESRIA)	Senegal		**		
Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI)	Ethiopia		**		
Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA - Ghana)	Ghana	+2	**		
Institute for Security Studies (ISS)	South Africa		**		
Institute of Statistical, Social & Econ Research (ISSER)	Ghana		**		
Institute of Policy Analysis & Research (IPAR Rwanda)	Rwanda		**		
Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research (KIPPRA)	Kenya		**		
South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)	South Africa		**		
Center for Policy Analysis	Ghana		*		HIGHLY OPAQUE
Centre for the Study of Economies of Africa (CSEA)	Nigeria		*		
Economic & Social Research Foundation (ESRF)	Tanzania	-2	*		
Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC)	Uganda		*		
Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Inst (EEA/EEPRI)	Ethiopia	+1	*		
Centre for Democratic Development	Ghana	-2	0		
IMANI Center for Policy & Education	Ghana		0		



<sup>5</sup> IPPR Namibia lost one point as the data it discloses online had become slightly out of date (see Annex II). The institution has informed us that it plans to update its funding data over the coming weeks.

## THINK TANKS IN SOUTH ASIA AND OCEANIA

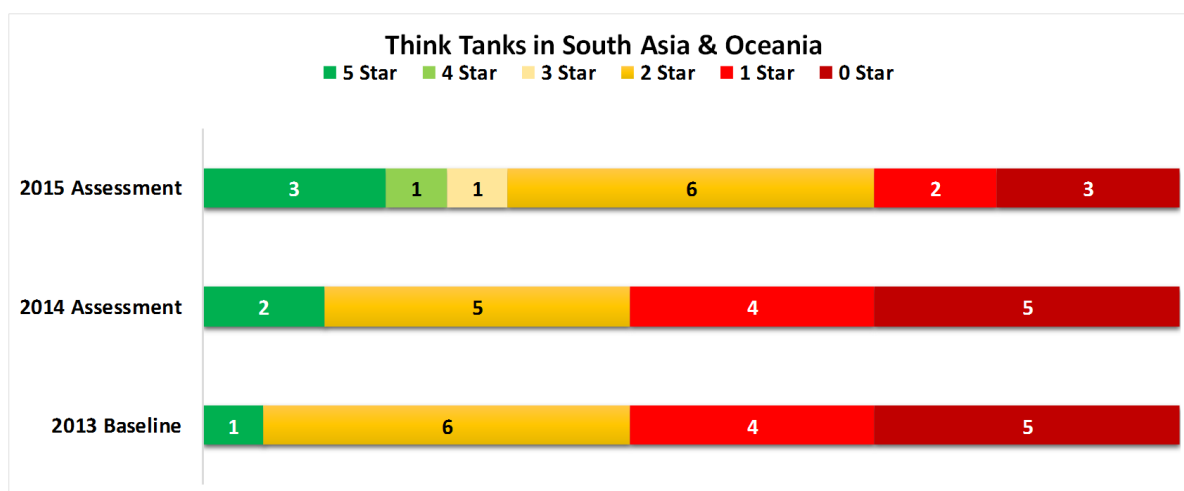
There was a significant shift towards greater transparency by think tanks in South Asia and Oceania over the course of 2014. The number of transparent think tanks doubled from two to four, while the number of highly opaque policy outfits nearly halved from nine to five. The average soared from 1.3 stars in our last rating to 2.3 stars this year.

Transparency and opacity seem to depend less on national regulatory and operating environments than on individual think tanks’ decisions: some choose to open their books – and some do not.

Both India and Pakistan now contain one highly transparent national role model, and both think tanks located in Bangladesh have moved toward greater disclosure. We hope that by the end of this year, these leaders in transparency will have inspired most of their peers on the subcontinent to follow suit.

The Australian Institute of International Affairs is the sole transparent player we found in the otherwise remarkably opaque policy research landscape of Australia and New Zealand.

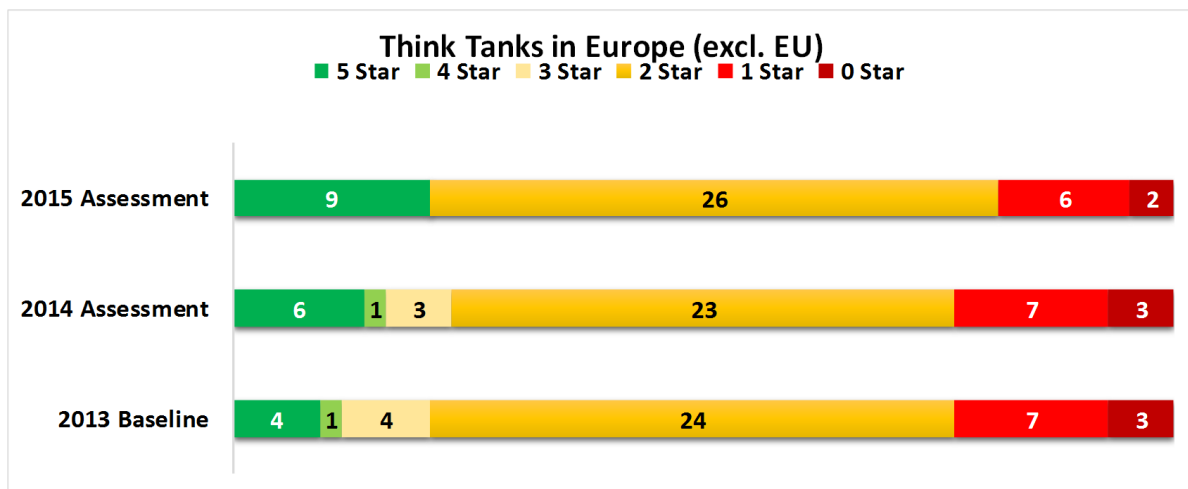
THINK TANK	COUNTRY	TREND	SCORE	
Centre for Policy Research	India		*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS)	Singapore		*****	
Social Policy & Development Centre (SPDC)	Pakistan	+4	*****	BROADLY TRANSPARENT
Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA)	Australia	+2	****	
Bangladesh Institute of Devp Studies (BIDS)	Bangladesh	+2	***	
Centre for Civil Society (CCS)	India	+2	**	
Center for Science, Technology & Policy (CSTEP)	India		**	
Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka (IPS)	Sri Lanka		**	
Lowy Institute	Australia		**	
Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh	Bangladesh	+1	**	
The Energy & Resources Institute (TERI)	India		**	
Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)	Pakistan		*	
Observer Research Foundation	India	+1	*	
Centre for Independent Studies	Australia		0	
Centre for Strategic Studies (CSS)	New Zealand		0	HIGHLY OPAQUE
Delhi Policy Group	India		0	



## THINK TANKS IN EUROPE (excluding EU countries)

THINK TANK	COUNTRY	TREND	SCORE	
Transparency International Georgia	Georgia		*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC)	Georgia		*****	
Reactor - Research in Action	Macedonia		*****	
Center for Democratic Transition	Montenegro		*****	
Centre for Monitoring and Research	Montenegro		*****	
Institute Alternative	Montenegro		*****	
JumpStart Georgia	Georgia	+3	*****	
European Policy Institute	Macedonia	+3	*****	
Center for Research and Policy Making (CPRM)	Macedonia	+1	*****	
Analitika - Center for Social Research	Bosnia		**	
Center for Research Udruzenje	Bosnia		**	
Centre for Policy and Governance	Bosnia	+1	**	
Centre for Security Studies	Bosnia		**	
Think Tank Populari	Bosnia		**	
Caucasus Institute (CIPDD)	Georgia		**	
Foundation Liberal Academy Tbilisi	Georgia		**	
Institute for Policy Studies (IPS)	Georgia		**	
ISET Policy Institute	Georgia		**	
Analytica	Macedonia		**	
Center for Economic Analyses	Macedonia		**	
Center for Regional Policy Research	Macedonia	+1	**	
Institute of Social Sciences & Humanities	Macedonia		**	
Macedonian Centre for European Training	Macedonia	-1	**	
Centre for Democracy & Human Rights	Montenegro		**	
Belgrade Center for Security Policy	Serbia		**	
European Movement in Serbia (EminS)	Serbia		**	
International and Security Affairs Centre	Serbia		**	
National Alliance for Local Economic Development	Serbia	-1	**	
PALGO Center	Serbia		**	
Center for Social & Economic Research	Ukraine		**	
Centre for Political and Legal Reforms	Ukraine	-1	**	
International Centre for Policy Studies	Ukraine		**	
Resource & Analysis Ctr. Society & Environment	Ukraine		**	
Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research	Ukraine		**	
Ukrainian Institute for Public Policy	Ukraine	+1	**	
European Studies for Innovative Development	Georgia		*	HIGHLY OPAQUE
Center for Entrepreneurship & Exec. Development	Montenegro		*	
Center for Advanced Economic Studies	Serbia		*	
Center for Liberal-Democratic Studies	Serbia	+1	*	
Center for Political Studies	Ukraine	-1	*	
Institute of World Policy	Ukraine		*	
Center for Economic & Financial Research	Russia		0	
Center for Society Research	Ukraine		0	

**Think tanks in Europe (outside the EU) have become polarized between nine institutions with excellent disclosure and 34 whose performance lags far behind.** While the overall trend is positive, change has been very slow: the average has improved modestly from 2.1 stars to 2.4 stars since our last report.



**Montenegro is the European champion in think tank transparency**, with three highly transparent institutions versus only two that remain opaque. Macedonia and Georgia are now also home to three highly transparent think tanks each. In contrast, not a single think tank we rated in Bosnia, Serbia or Ukraine performed strongly.

**Regional donors clearly do not object to disclosure by their grantees.** Nine institutions across the region have revealed detailed funding data that includes the names of all their donors and the precise sum that each donor contributed. Taken together, these think tanks' funding portfolios include most, if not all, of the limited number of major institutional donors active in the region.



## THINK TANKS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The think tank sector in the European Union countries<sup>6</sup> moved towards greater transparency during 2014, albeit at a slower pace than in other regions. Eight think tanks are now highly transparent, up from four last year. Since our last report, a total of nine think tanks have improved their transparency. The overall average increased from 2.4 stars to 2.8 stars.

THINK TANK	COUNTRY	TREND	SCORE	
Bruegel	Belgium		*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
European Centre for Develop & Policy Management	Netherlands		*****	
Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)	Sweden		*****	
Center for the Study of Democracy	Bulgaria		*****	
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP)	Germany	+4	*****	
Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI)	Norway	+3	*****	
Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS)	International	+1	*****	
Stockholm Int’nal Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)	Sweden	+1	*****	
International Crisis Group (ICG) <sup>7</sup>	Belgium		****	BROADLY TRANSPARENT
German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP)	Germany		****	
Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)	United Kingdom		****	
German Development Institute (DIE)	Germany	+2	***	
FRIDE	Spain	+2	***	
Chatham House	United Kingdom	+1	***	
Civitas Institute for Study of Civil Society	United Kingdom	+2	***	
Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)	Belgium		***	
CASE – Poland	Poland		***	
Hayek Institut	Austria		***	
Institute of Development Studies (IDS)	United Kingdom		***	
Centre for Liberal Strategies	Bulgaria		**	
Institute for Market Economics	Bulgaria		**	
DIW Berlin - Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung	Germany		**	
Budapest Institute for Policy Analysis	Hungary		**	
European Stability Initiative (ESI)	International		**	
Basel Institute on Governance	Switzerland		**	
World Economic Forum (WEF)	Switzerland		**	
Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR)	United Kingdom		**	
Center for European Reform (CER)	United Kingdom		**	
Demos UK	United Kingdom	-1	**	
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)	United Kingdom	-3	**	
Institut für Weltwirtschaft (IFW)	Germany	-1	*	
Eötvös Károly Institute	Hungary		*	
Clingendael – NL	Netherlands		*	
LSE IDEAS	United Kingdom	+1	*	
Political Capital	Hungary		0	
Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA)	United Kingdom		0	
International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)	United Kingdom		0	

<sup>6</sup> We also included think tanks located in two EFTA countries, Norway and Switzerland, in our EU results.

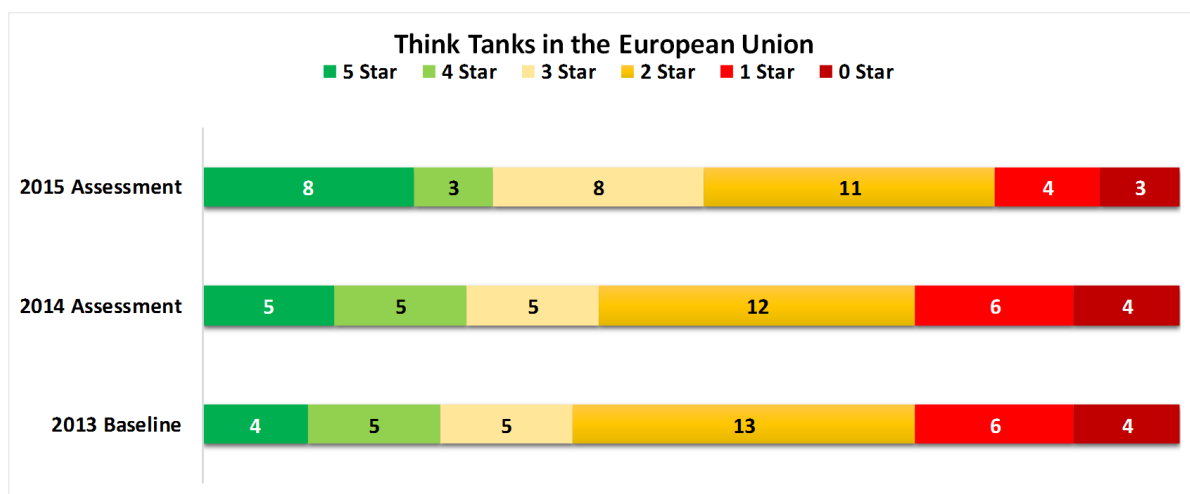
<sup>7</sup> ICG told us that they do not consider themselves to be a think tank, “but regardless are happy to be scrutinized for our practices and procedures”.

**There are strong country-level differences in financial disclosure practices.** Five out of seven highly opaque think tanks in the European Union are located in Britain and Hungary.

**Taken as a group, British think tanks drag down the European average** (2.0 stars versus 2.8 stars). Out of eleven British think tanks that we assessed, only a single one – the Institute for Public Policy Research – is transparent; two reveal no funding information whatsoever. While Chatham House and Civitas moved towards greater transparency last year, the Overseas Development Institute plummeted from 5 to 2 stars, the steepest decline registered worldwide. We hope that this report, and a forthcoming study by our fellow disclosure advocates at Who Funds You? in London (see Annex I), will spark a national debate in Britain about the importance of financial transparency in policy research.

In Spain, this debate has already begun. Transparify has only rated one Spanish think tank, FRIDE, which has recently taken a big step in the right direction. However, data independently compiled by other researchers – and covered by the Spanish media – suggests that the country’s think tank scene as a whole is highly opaque (see Annex I).

During 2015, Transparify will continue to work with individual European think tanks to accelerate the ongoing sector-wide shift towards more financial disclosure. In the meantime, we strongly encourage national transparency advocates based in the region to contact us to explore collaborations on national-level think tank ratings (see also Annex I).

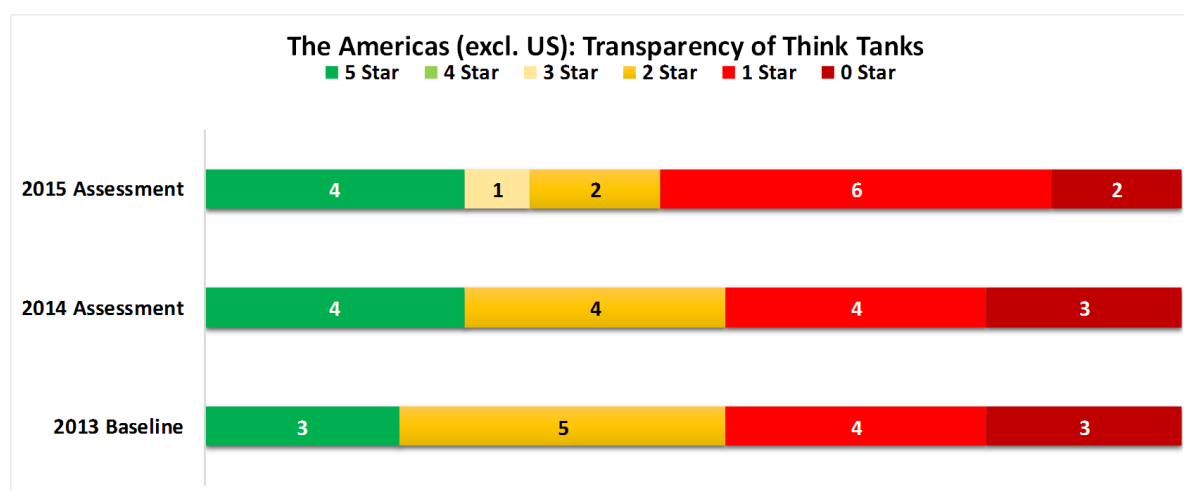


## THINK TANKS IN THE AMERICAS (excluding the U.S.)

There was little movement either way among think tanks in the Americas (outside the U.S.). Four think tanks in the region continued to disclose their funding in great detail and maintained their 5-star status. CIPPEC in Argentina inched towards becoming broadly transparent.

There are still twice as many highly opaque think tanks in the region as there are transparent ones. Transparify hopes that the table below will stimulate the weak performers to take a close look at the positive role models in their neighbourhood and follow in their footsteps during 2015.

THINK TANK	COUNTRY	TREND	SCORE	
Grupo FARO	Ecuador		*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI)	Canada		*****	
International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)	International		*****	
Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA)	Brazil		*****	
CIPPEC	Argentina	+1	***	
Centro Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais (CEBRI)	Brazil		**	
Centro de Estudios Real. Económica y Social (CERES)	Uruguay		**	
Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento (CEBRAP)	Brazil	-1	*	HIGHLY OPAQUE
Centro de Estudios Públicos (CEP)	Chile		*	
Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV)	Brazil	+1	*	
Instituto Fernando Henrique Cardoso	Brazil	+1	*	
Fraser Institute	Canada		*	
Libertad y Desarrollo (LYD)	Chile		*	
CEDICE Libertad	Venezuela		0	
CIDE <sup>8</sup>	Mexico	-1	0	



<sup>8</sup> While also undertaking some policy research, the overwhelming part of CIDE's budget appears to go towards undergraduate and postgraduate instruction. Transparify will review whether to include CIDE in future ratings.

## THINK TANKS IN THE UNITED STATES

Excellent news from the United States: over half of U.S. think tanks are now transparent.

THINK TANK	TREND	SCORE	
Center for Global Development		*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
World Resources Institute		*****	
Pew Research Center	+4	*****	
Stimson Center	+3	*****	
Natural Resource Governance Institute	+2	*****	
Woodrow Wilson Center	+1	*****	
Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs	+2	****	BROADLY TRANSPARENT
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace	+2	****	
Center for a New American Security	+2	****	
German Marshall Fund of the US	+2	****	
Peterson Institute for International Economics	+2	****	
Brookings Institution		****	
Center On Budget & Policy Priorities		****	
Freedom House		****	
Heritage Foundation		****	
New America Foundation		****	
RAND Corporation		****	
Urban Institute		****	
Center for Strategic & International Studies <sup>9</sup>	+2	***	
Center for American Progress <sup>10</sup>	+2	***	
Atlantic Council	+1	***	
Cato Institute	+1	***	
Council on Foreign Relations		***	
Foreign Policy Research Institute		***	
Belfer Center for Science & International Affairs <sup>11</sup>	+2	**	
Baker III Institute for Public Policy		**	
Center for International Development		**	
Human Rights Watch		**	
National Bureau of Economic Research		**	
United States Institute of Peace <sup>12</sup>		**	
American Enterprise Institute	-1	*	HIGHLY OPAQUE
Earth Institute	-1	*	
Hoover Institution <sup>13</sup>		*	
Hudson Institute		*	
Open Society Foundations		0	

<sup>9</sup> The Center for Strategic & International Studies has informed Transparify that it will be disclosing all of its donors to 4-star level from February 2015 onwards.

<sup>10</sup> After our ratings had closed, CAP informed Transparify that it added a clarification on the actual percentage of anonymous donations, to achieve 4-star disclosure in the future. See our blog post on this at [www.transparify.org](http://www.transparify.org)

<sup>11</sup> The Belfer Center is affiliated with Harvard University. Belfer provides exemplary disclosure (5-star equivalent) on funding received by individual scholars (see <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/research-publications/research-central/new-awards>), but its overall institution-level funding data is less detailed.

<sup>12</sup> United States Institute of Peace is by statute a wholly and exclusively state-funded institution. Transparify will review whether to continue rating it in the future.

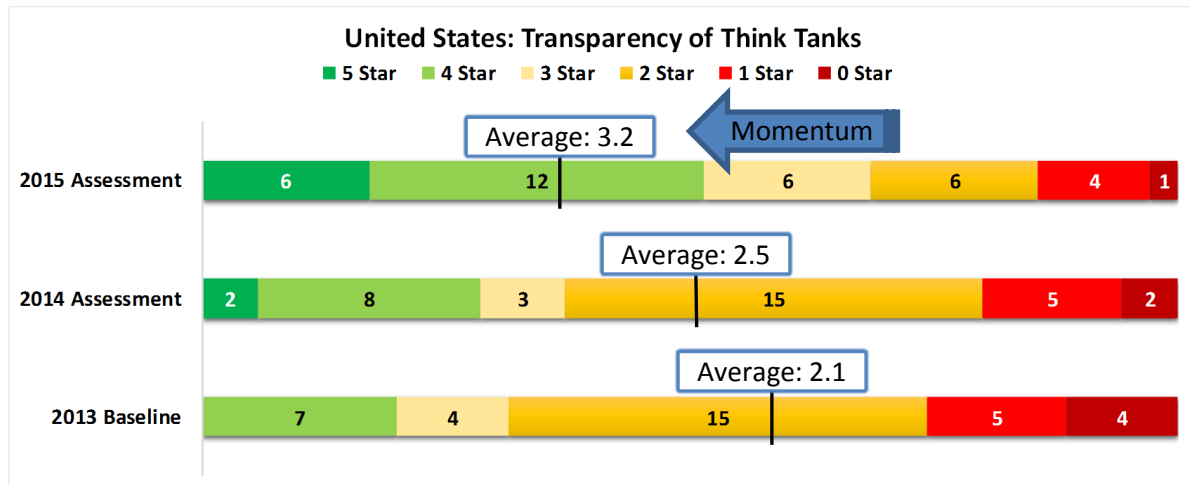
<sup>13</sup> The Hoover Institution sent a printed report with more disclosure. Transparify rates accessible disclosure on the web.

**In the United States, a strong trend towards greater transparency accelerated even further.** Four high profile think tanks – Pew, Stimson, Natural Resource Governance Institute<sup>14</sup> and the Wilson Center – became highly transparent (5-star), thereby joining the Center for Global Development and World Resources Institute, which maintained their excellent levels of disclosure.

**Five major think tanks became broadly transparent during 2014** by publishing donor lists with precise funding brackets:

- Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
- Center for a New American Security
- German Marshall Fund of the US
- Peterson Institute for International Economics

**This year, for the first time, transparent think tanks form a majority in the U.S.** With eighteen think tanks<sup>15</sup> of all stripes opening their books, and several others visibly moving towards greater disclosure, transparency has now become the new norm in the sector. (We expect at least one more prominent institution to publicly announce a shift towards greater transparency soon.)



**Transparify’s intention was and remains to promote the credibility of the sector as a whole.** We are delighted that so many more think tanks have joined this collective effort by opening their books during 2014. The U.S. think tanks we rate collectively spend over a billion dollars a year<sup>16</sup> on conducting and communicating policy relevant research, and those dedicated to transparency and integrity have much of value to contribute to democratic politics.

<sup>14</sup> The Natural Resource Governance Institute was formerly called the Revenue Watch Institute.

<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch and Open Society Foundations emphasized to us that they do not consider themselves to be think tanks. Pew Research Center describes itself as a “fact tank”.

Two institutions with a strong United States presence that we rated are not included in the US results table and averages. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) is headquartered in the United States, but is best characterized as an international think tank. The International Crisis Group (ICG) is headquartered in Belgium. IFPRI is highly transparent (five stars), and ICG is broadly transparent (four stars).

<sup>16</sup> See: “America’s Top Think Tanks: A One Billion Dollar Business”, Transparify, December 2014 <http://bit.ly/1vUakLe>

## OUTLOOK: TRANSPARIFY'S NEXT ROUND OF RATINGS

**Transparify will launch its next round of ratings on October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015.**

**A quick look at what lies ahead for 2015-2016:**

- **Changes in ratings criteria**

Transparify may slightly adjust its ratings criteria for the next round of ratings, including those for 5-star institutions. As we plan to expand our sample, we may not be able to individually communicate such changes to every single think tank on our list. We therefore encourage institutions to subscribe to our email updates (see box below), and to follow us on Twitter.

- **Deadline for updates: October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015**

Think tanks that plan to put additional or updated information online are advised do so by the date above, as Transparify will not be able to re-rate institutions to take later updates into account. Also, we believe that transparency is excellent practice for think tanks, and should not rely on email reminders from our team. The best time to increase your transparency is now.

- **Assistance to think tanks**

Transparify's team is always available to advise and assist think tanks that wish to become more transparent. This includes think tanks we do not rate. Contact us, we have worked with many institutions and are happy to help.

**Please subscribe to our email updates now to stay in the loop:**  
<http://www.transparify.org/blog/2014/1/30/website-setup>

## ANNEX I: EXTERNAL RATING RESULTS 2014-2015

Transparify has deliberately posted its methodology and assessment criteria online in order to encourage others to adopt our approach and conduct ratings on their own initiative.

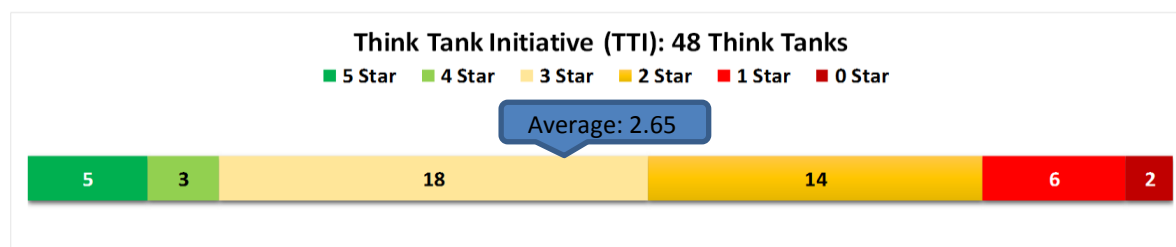
During 2014-2015, people working independently from Transparify rated think tanks (and in one case also some advocacy groups) on six occasions, with two more to follow soon. These ratings, covering more than 180 institutions in total, were usually conducted by a single person, and sometimes according to slightly modified assessment criteria, so neither the reliability nor the comparability of individual data points is assured. Each of these mini-studies should be evaluated on its own merits. However, we believe that taken as a whole, each data set provides an interesting and salient snapshot of one particular corner of the global think tank landscape, and thus adds value to the broader debate.

Please note that Transparify has not in any way verified, endorsed or adopted as its own the data or conclusions presented in the studies discussed below.

### 1. Transparency of 48 grantees of the Think Tank Initiative: average 2.65 stars

In May 2014, Enrique Mendizabal, who runs the On Think Tanks blog, independently rated a cohort of grantees of the Think Tank Initiative, a programme dedicated to building the capacity of think tanks. His assessment criteria differed from those used by Transparify, but are roughly comparable in spirit if not in letter.<sup>17</sup>

He rated a total of 48 think tanks across three regions: 20 in Africa, 12 in Latin America and 16 in South Asia. He found some top performers, with the rest of institutions spread across the range of results. There were no large differences in average scores across the three regions.

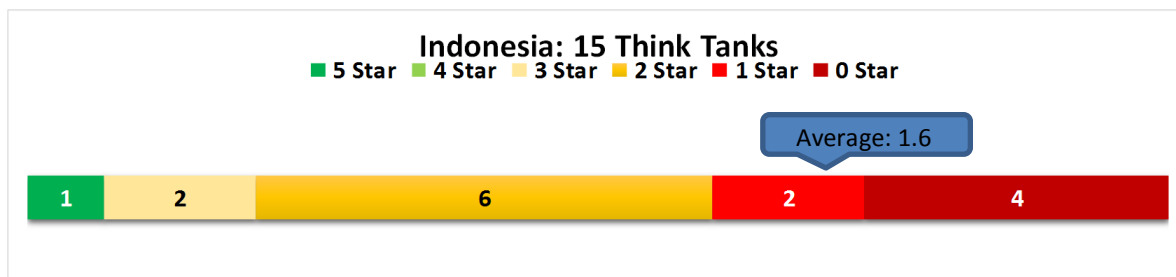


Source: <http://onthinktanks.org/2014/05/12/a-quick-and-dirty-transparify-assessment-of-tti-think-tanks/>

### 2. Transparency of 15 Indonesian think tanks: average 1.6 stars

Later that month, Enrique Mendizabal additionally rated a cohort of 15 think tanks in Indonesia funded by the [Knowledge Sector Initiative](#), again using his own assessment criteria. (Interestingly, he also rated the funder itself and the programme's main contractors; that data is not included in the chart below.)

<sup>17</sup> For example, Mendizabal uses intermediate scores (e.g. "1.5 stars"). In the case of intermediate scores, we added half of these think tanks to the higher integer and half to the lower to compile the data charts on this page, erring on the side of statistical generosity where numbers were uneven. Thus, five think tanks scored at 1.5 stars by Mendizabal will appear in the corresponding chart here as three 2-star think tanks and two 1-star think tanks.

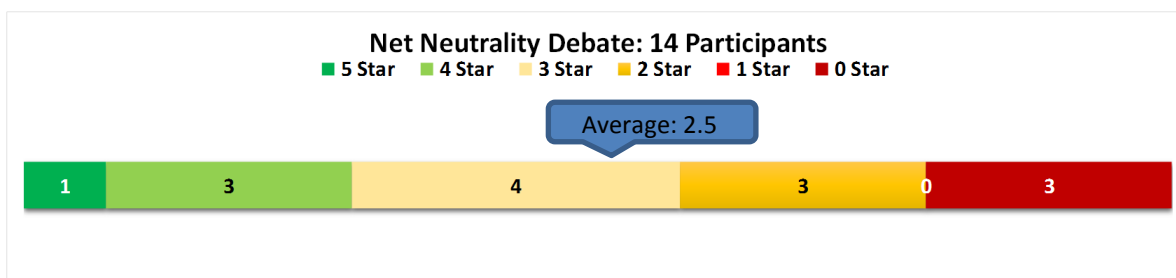


Results: <http://onthinktanks.org/2014/05/19/a-quick-and-dirty-transparify-like-assessment-of-the-ksi-think-tanks/>

### 3. Transparency of 14 participants in a U.S. policy debate: average 2.5 stars

In October 2014, following reports about hidden corporate-financed advocacy shaping the U.S. net neutrality debate, the publication PC World ran a story examining the funding transparency of 14 prominent American think tanks and advocacy groups involved in the issue. Its assessment criteria were inspired by, and are roughly analogous to, those used by Transparify.

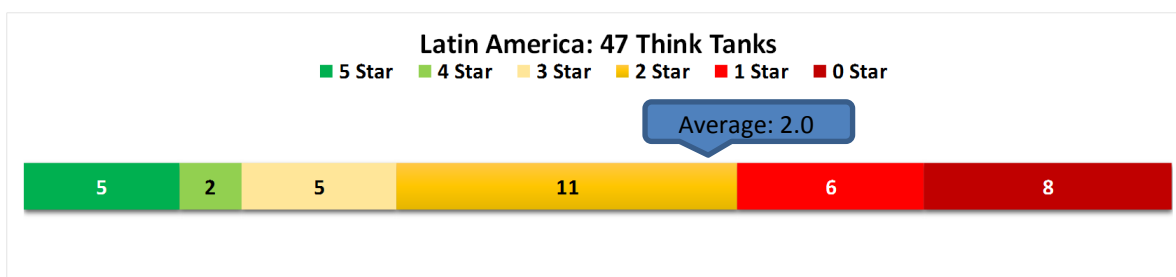
The article structured the data into two groups – supporters versus opponents of net neutrality – allowing readers to compare their respective performance.



Source: <http://www.pcworld.com/article/2838955/the-ratings-most-net-neutrality-groups-get-poor-grades-for-funding-transparency.html>

### 4. Transparency of 47 think tanks in Latin America: average 2.0 stars

In October 2014, Enrique Mendizabal rated 47 institutions based in Latin America with the explicit aim of kick-starting a regional discussion about think tank transparency. He again used his own assessment criteria, which slightly differ from those of Transparify (see above). Individual think tank results ranged from crystal clear all the way down to highly opaque.

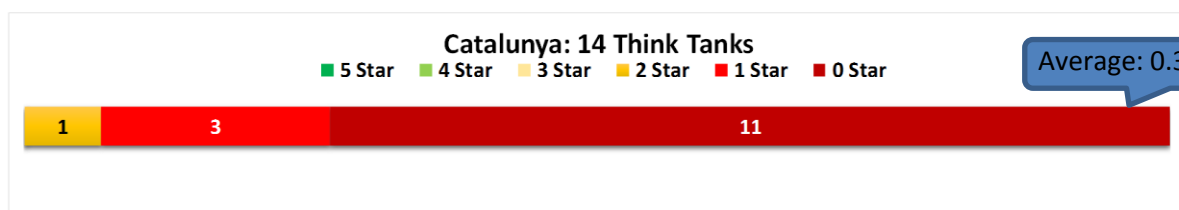


Source: <http://onthinktanks.org/2014/11/22/a-quick-and-dirty-transparify-like-analysis-of-latin-american-think-tanks/>



## **5. Transparency of 15 think tanks in Catalonia: average 0.3 stars**

Francesc Ponsa Herrera from the [Observatori dels Think Tanks](#) in Barcelona found in November 2014 that 11 of out 15 think tanks in Catalonia disclosed no financial data whatsoever; the least opaque performer in the group scored merely two stars.

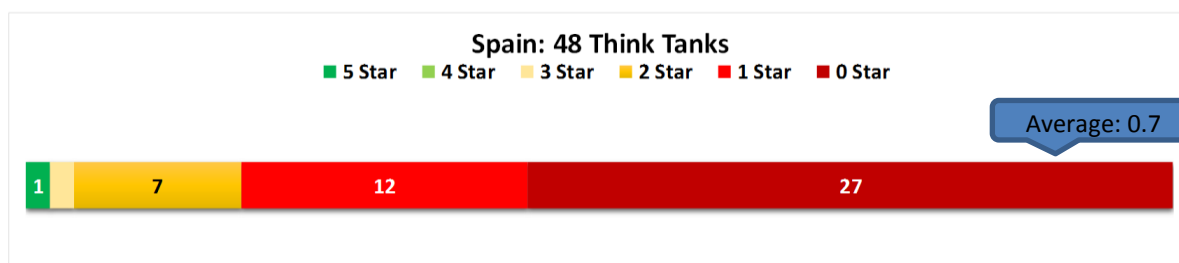


Source: <http://francescponsa.blogspot.com/2014/11/els-think-tanks-catalans-suspenen-en.html>

## **6. Transparency of 48 think tanks in Spain: average 0.7 stars**

Jaime Gonzalez-Capitel from [OpenPolicyResearch.com](#) and Francesc Ponsa Herrera from the [Observatori dels Think Tanks](#) between them rated 48 Spanish think tanks in January 2015, using Transparify's assessment criteria.

Their findings were grim: only one single institution, [ECODES](#), was transparent about its funding. In contrast, over half of the overall population (27 think tanks) disclosed no funding data whatsoever, generating the worst country-level performance documented so far. The study was covered by the Spanish media (see links [here](#) and [here](#)).



English source: <http://onthinktanks.org/2015/01/21/how-transparent-are-spanish-think-tanks-a-diy-rating-with-transparifys-framework/>

Spanish source: <http://francescponsa.blogspot.com/2015/01/son-transparentes-los-think-tanks.html>

## **7. COMING SOON: Transparency of more think tanks in the United States**

Enrique Mendizabal has informed us that he plans to rate a number of major American think tanks not covered by Transparify, this time using the same assessment criteria as Transparify to ensure that the results are fully comparable. He intends to publish the results on the On Think Tanks blog shortly before we release this report to the public – so when you read this, his data is probably already online at:

[www.onthinktanks.org](http://www.onthinktanks.org).

## **8. COMING SOON: Transparency of think tanks in Peru**

Enrique Mendizabal has informed us that he plans to publish an updated version of a rating he conducted in mid-2014 of think tanks in Peru. The update will seek to explore if any changes have been achieved following a regional meeting of think tanks where transparency featured as a key issue, and the announcement of the PODER awards for the best Peruvian think tanks. He intends to publish the results on the On Think Tanks blog around the release date for this report. Check at:

[www.onthinktanks.org](http://www.onthinktanks.org)

## **9. COMING SOON: Transparency of TTI grantees 2015**

Enrique Mendizabal will follow up on his 2014 rating of Think Tank Initiative grantees in Africa, Latin America and South Asia (see above) by rating the same cohort once again in March 2015. The results, which enable him to track transparency trends over time, will be released via the On Think Tanks blog:

[www.onthinktanks.org](http://www.onthinktanks.org)

## **10. COMING SOON: Transparency of major think tanks in Britain**

Our fellow transparency advocates at Who Funds You? in London, who pioneered think tank disclosure ratings long before Transparify was launched, will rate major British think tanks in spring 2015. Who Funds You? uses a methodology and rating criteria very different from our own. While results will not be easily comparable, we very much look forward to learning what they will find:

[www.whofundsyou.org](http://www.whofundsyou.org)

## **11. COMING SOON: Your own rating?**

Transparify is always happy to hear from, and support, individuals and organizations who wish to use (or adapt) our methodology and tools to rate think tanks or other institutions. Note that this is easy to do – one rater can typically assess over ten institutions per day. Please contact us for details.

## ANNEX II: RATING CRITERIA AND METHODOLOGY

### What we measure

Transparify rates the extent to which think tanks publicly disclose through their websites where their funding comes from.

Transparify used the same rating criteria and process as in last year's assessment. To date, all of our 169 data points from the 2014 report and data set stand unchallenged, highlighting the strength of the methodology and the quality control process.

We visited think tanks' websites and looked at the funding and donor information disclosed online, including in annual reports. Institutions rated with the maximum of five stars are highly transparent about who funds them. Think tanks with four stars are broadly transparent; typically, they do not disclose exactly who gave how much, but instead group their donors into several funding brackets. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the funding of think tanks with zero stars or one star is highly opaque.

Multiple steps reinforce the reliability of Transparify's rating results:

- Systematic and transparent approach with clear categories
- Ratings by two separate raters
- Adjudication process
- Respondent validation with all think tanks rated 0-3 stars
- Full replicability of results by third parties

The ratings process was conducted between December 1<sup>st</sup> and December 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014, and responses received from think tanks until January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015, were taken into account.

### Rating criteria

The rating criteria for the number of stars to award are defined as follows:

RATING		CRITERION
Five stars	*****	<b>highly transparent:</b> all donors listed, clearly identifying funding amounts for, and sources of, particular projects <sup>18</sup>
Four stars	****	<b>broadly transparent:</b> all donors above USD 5,000 listed in 4+ precise funding brackets, with anonymous donors no more than 15%
Three stars	***	all or most donors listed in 2 or 3 broad contribution brackets [e.g. "USD 5,000 to 15,000, the following donors"] <sup>19</sup>
Two stars	**	all or many donors listed, but little or no financial information
One star	*	some donors listed, but not exhaustive or systematic
Zero stars	0	no relevant or up-to-date <sup>20</sup> information

<sup>18</sup> Transparify has compiled a brief guide for think tanks wishing to pursue excellence in financial disclosure, available here: <http://www.transparify.org/get-five> At present, 5-star think tanks may list donors contributing up to 15% of total funding as 'anonymous'.

<sup>19</sup> Transparify also awarded three stars to institutions that were fairly transparent yet did not fully meet four star criteria, for example by not explaining more than 15% of their funding.

<sup>20</sup> Institutions whose latest funding information was three years old or even older at the time of rating (for example, 2011 annual reports) received zero stars because whatever information they were providing was significantly out of date.

## **Sample selection**

For its 2015 ratings, Transparify re-rated the same group of 169 think tanks it had already rated during its first round, which had run from late 2013 to early 2014.

To achieve the maximum amount of coverage and a good cross-selection, Transparify in advance of last year's rating identified leading think tanks from around the world, drawing on third party lists. The selection emphasized a diversity of countries, and focused on institutions working broadly on public policy. United States institutions were selected according to the 2012 "Global Go To Think Tank Index" by the University of Pennsylvania, probably the most widely cited global think tank ranking. Institutions located in Central and Eastern Europe are overrepresented in the sample, as this is an area of particular interest to our donor, the Think Tank Fund.<sup>21</sup> These institutions were selected from a list provided by the Think Tank Fund.

We did not rate think tanks in Arabic-, Chinese- or French-speaking countries as our raters did not have the required language skills.

## **Recruiting and training raters**

Transparify's rating team consisted of a total of eight individuals with completed university degrees and a broad portfolio of language skills.

- Four of these raters had already rated think tanks for Transparify a year earlier, and demonstrated their ability to return reliable results. They were provided with a refresher training.
- Four additional raters were newly recruited, and trained from scratch. After the training, Transparify tested all new candidate raters on calibrated ratings to ensure that they returned reliable results.

Both the refresher training and the training of new raters were done via an updated PowerPoint presentation that provided all raters with a standard protocol to follow when searching for financial data online.

## **Rating think tanks**

Two raters assessed each institution independently from each other. No rater knew which other person assessed the same institution, and all raters worked from different lists. They visited think tank websites and searched for financial data following a standard protocol, and then awarded between zero and five stars according to the type and extent of information available on how the think tank was funded. The criteria for the number of stars to award were clearly defined (see above).

In exceptional cases in which think tanks did not seem to fall into any fixed category, raters could return a verdict of "other". All institutions rated as "other" by at least one rater subsequently underwent separate review, first by the ratings manager, then by the adjudicator (see below).

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<sup>21</sup> See: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/think-tank-fund>

All institutions were assessed on the information they provided in their national language by raters with relevant language skills. The sole exceptions were think tanks in Hungary, which were assessed using Google Translate.

## **Quality control through adjudication**

In cases where a rater returned a verdict of “other”, or where two raters returned different results, an experienced adjudicator revisited the think tank’s website and determined the final score, using Transparify’s rating methodology.

The adjudicator reviewed 65 out of the 169 ratings we conducted in detail. Out of these:

- 47 ratings needed resolution, as they had a 1-star disagreement between raters
- 18 ratings were marked for in-depth adjudication, requiring substantive judgement (these were either cases where one rater had not found information, or think tanks with unusual state- or endowment funding models, or those whose financial information was fragmented across several web pages)

Adjudication of results was completed by January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

The overall gradation of categories worked well though as in all quantitative research there can be challenges in identifying exact cut-offs. For example, at what point is information given in an annual report outdated and no longer relevant? In consultation, we decided that an institution receives zero stars if its most recent financial information is presented in an annual report from 2011 or earlier. If most recent financial information is presented in an annual report from 2012, one star is deducted from the overall rating.

Other borderline cases arose where think tanks identified ‘partners’, mixing in research partners and donors. Additional adjudication was required in cases of partial transparency, for example when a think tank discloses all information about a particular funding category but provides less information on other sources of funding. In such cases, adjudication provided consistency across ratings, ensured the integrity of the process and contributed to refining future ratings.

## **Respondent validation**

The final score was sent to the executive director of each think tank rated with 0-3 stars with a letter inviting the institution to double-check our findings and request adjustments from us if appropriate. The email was addressed to the generic contact email address (such as “info@”), to allow each think tank to handle the engagement as they preferred. In cases where there was a point of contact from previously being in touch, we notified this person. In the two cases where think tanks did not provide email addresses on their website, we contacted them via their web forms.

We contacted all institutions rated with 0-3 stars this way,<sup>22</sup> sending personalized emails to 117 institutions. Two links embedded in most of those emails were clicked a total of 130 times, across 37 countries. Of the think tanks contacted, 27 replied by our deadline of January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015, mostly expressing interest in the initiative. Fifteen institutions acknowledged the results, most saying that they were planning to increase their disclosure in the future.

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<sup>22</sup> Transparify did not reach out to two institutions, one in the US that had previously clarified its approach, and a think tank in the Donetsk region in Ukraine that had previously reported that it faced a particularly difficult situation.

Twelve institutions had queries about their results:

- One think tank queried its two star rating, pointing to significant disclosure. The Transparify team reviewed the website in detail, noting that the think tank had partially met four-star criteria by providing contribution levels of most donors but that other donors were only listed by name but without financial data, aligning more with a two star rating. As contribution levels could be deduced and overall disclosure was higher than for typical two stars, the rating was adjusted to three stars.
- Two institutions pointed out information that Transparify's raters had missed. In one case the disclosure information was under the 'Contact' page, in the second raters had focused on English language information that had appeared comprehensive, missing local language information. We re-rated these two think tanks, taking the highlighted information into account, and awarded a higher rating.
- In four cases Transparify determined that its original rating results had been correct, and left them unchanged.
- Five think tanks updated their websites after being contacted. (For example, two of them said that their most recent annual report or financial report accidentally had not been uploaded to the website.) We re-rated these five think tanks, so our 2015 ratings reflect the status quo after these 'last minute' updates.

The adjudicator assisted in several of the decisions. Overall, the feedback from think tanks underscored the reliability of Transparify's data.

### **Opening our findings to public scrutiny**

Anyone can visit the website of any think tank we rated and compare the information provided there against our rating criteria. Thus, the results can be verified and replicated by any interested third parties, keeping in mind that Transparify's ratings period covered web content available during the assessment time periods outlined above.

Indeed, on several occasions, researchers working independently from Transparify have already used our rating system to rate institutions on their own initiative, and additional independent ratings are already in the works (see Annex I for details).

If Transparify gets notified of an incorrect rating result, we will follow up and, if applicable, correct that rating and announce the corrected rating on our blog and Twitter account.

*This report has been made possible through the support of the Think Tank Fund of the Open Society Foundations. The contents are the sole responsibility of Transparify and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Think Tank Fund or the Open Society Foundations.*



***Transparify walks the transparency talk.  
Our project proposal, including a detailed budget, can be found on our website.  
[www.transparify.org](http://www.transparify.org)***

## A big thank you to...

Next to all think tanks who engaged with us in detailed and invariably constructive discussion from which we have learnt much, we want to thank Enrique Mendizabal at [onthinktanks.org](http://onthinktanks.org) for providing a forum and contribution to think tank debates, and all our colleagues at the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) Georgia ([www.crrc.ge](http://www.crrc.ge)), who have been a huge help in the logistics and the operations for Transparify.

### The Transparify team

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Dr Till Bruckner	Advocacy Manager
Dr Kristie Evenson	Ratings Adjudicator
Therese Svensson	Special Projects
Aaron Erlich	Statistical Analysis Expert
Vazha Burduli	Technical Support

Our raters, who do great work by bringing a citizen's perspective to transparency, are acknowledged on our website.



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