

How Transparent are Think Tanks about Who Funds Them 2016?

A survey of 200 think tanks in 47 countries worldwide

Transparify, Tbilisi/Georgia, 29 June 2016

www.transparify.org

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Transparency as a One-Way Street

“Transparency appears to be a one-way street. Year by year, more think tanks around the world have become transparent. At the same time, there has been very little backsliding. Where we have seen reductions in transparency scores, it was usually because information had become out of date, rather than through purposeful reduction of disclosure. More and more think tanks are discovering that while transparency carries low costs, it can bring huge benefits in terms of signalling commitment to intellectual independence, integrity, excellence in research, and the credibility that comes from respecting democratic norms while participating in democratic debates.¹

Think tanks have become an integral part of modern democracies worldwide. They are here to stay, and that is good news. Several Transparify team members have worked in countries lacking a vibrant think tank ecosystem, and we are fully aware that democracy suffers without the data, insights, advice and debates generated by independent policy research institutions. However, the key word here is independent.

The more lobbyists try to hijack the ‘think tank’ label in an attempt to mask their paid-for spin as research-driven advocacy,² the more important it becomes for the think tank sector as a whole to fight back. The best weapon in that fight is transparency.

This year, results from the UK show yet again that most respectable think tanks see no need to conceal who funds their research and advocacy. The majority of British institutions clearly have confidence in the quality of their research and the integrity of their policy recommendations. In this context, Transparify’s role is to enable citizens, journalists, researchers and policy makers to distinguish, at a glance, the transparent from the opaque. By publicly revealing who is transparent and who is not, we seek to bolster the credibility of the many think tanks committed to independent research, while pinpointing the handful of rogue players whose behaviour indicates that they may have something to hide.”



Dr Hans Gutbrod
Executive Director of Transparify



¹ Many think tanks share this view:

<http://www.transparify.org/blog/2015/8/14/why-transparency-matters-the-think-tanks-perspective>

² Many examples of lobbyists abusing the think tank label can be found in our four annotated bibliographies:

<http://www.transparify.org/publications-main/>

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 the precise amounts given, 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 as they fail to disclose even the names of some or all of their donors.

Transparify used the same rating criteria as in previous years' assessments. The rating criteria for the number of stars to award are defined as follows:

RATING		CRITERION
Five stars	*****	highly transparent: all donors listed, clearly identifying funding amounts for, and sources of, particular projects ³
Four stars	****	broadly transparent: 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"] ⁴
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 ⁵ information

Note: Organizations may exceptionally list privacy-minded donors as "anonymous", but in order to qualify as transparent, an organization needs to disclose the sources of over 85% of its funding volume.

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 selected think tanks
- Full replicability of results by third parties

The ratings for the main cohort of think tanks in this report capture the status quo as of January 20, 2016.

Our rating methodology is explained in detail in the Annex.

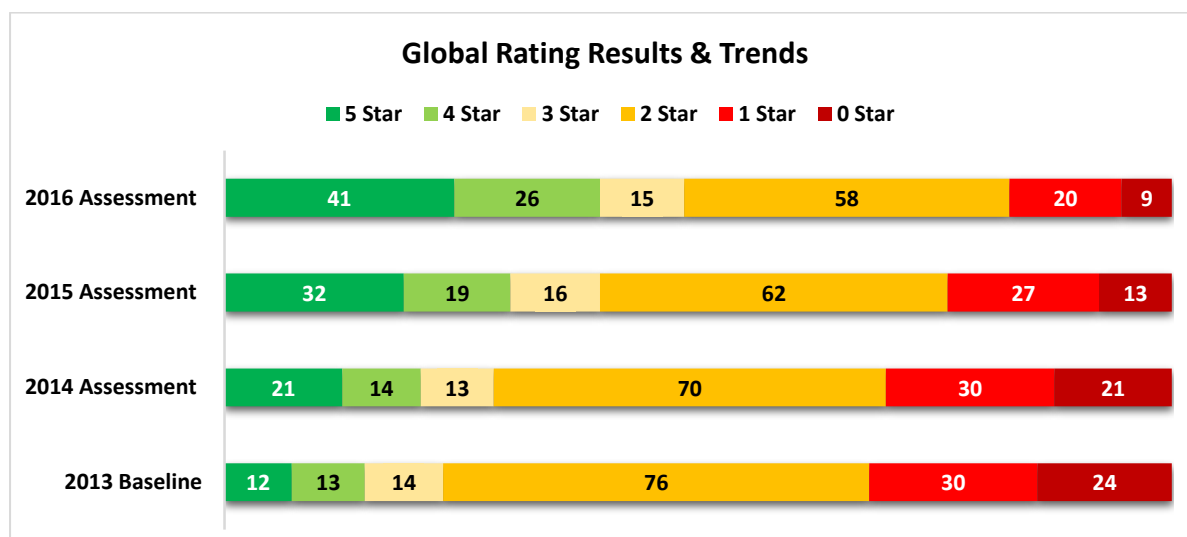
³ Transparify has compiled a brief guide for think tanks wishing to pursue excellence in financial disclosure, available here: <http://www.transparify.org/get-five>. We encourage institutions aspiring to five-star disclosure to contact us beforehand as Transparify may in future review and slightly modify the criteria for 5-star ratings.

⁴ Transparify also awarded three stars to institutions that were fairly transparent yet did not fully meet four star criteria.

⁵ Please see the section on adjudication in the Annex for more details.

GLOBAL RESULTS AND TRENDS

Transparify has been able to document a strong and sustained global movement towards greater transparency in policy research and advocacy. In 2013, when Transparify conducted its baseline assessment, rating 169 institutions on a five-star scale, only 25 think tanks in our sample were transparent (4 or 5 stars). Today, among the same original sample population, 67 think tanks are transparent, and 41 of these are 5-star or “highly transparent”, meaning that they disclose the precise sum that each donor provides. The chart below shows the increase in transparency among our original sample of institutions over the past four years.



This year, we are delighted to be able to document 5-star role models in six additional countries: Bosnia, Ethiopia, Ghana, Hungary, South Africa, and Ukraine. Highly transparent think tanks can now be found in 23 countries worldwide, including in countries with highly challenging operating environments, illustrating that the trend towards funding transparency in policy research and advocacy is as broad as it is deep.

For this report, we expanded our original sample to include a number of new think tanks and policy-relevant organizations. In total, an additional 31 organizations are covered, yielding a total number of 200 assessed institutions. (Our selection methodology is explained in detail in the Annex.)

All of the 31 institutions added to our sample also work on policy research and advocacy:

- For the UK, we included additional think tanks in this year’s assessment.
- Internationally, we assessed the transparency of key participants in the May 2015 International Open Data Conference (IODC) in Ottawa; some of these were found to be highly transparent.⁶ We list these transparent organizations in recognition of their commitment to leading by example.
- Eleven organizations proactively contacted us and asked us to rate them and certify that they meet the gold standard for non-profit transparency, a 5-star level of disclosure.

In our results tables, we collectively list these 31 organizations as “new”, together with their regional and national peers. However, we do not include their data in the bar charts documenting global, regional or national transparency shifts over time. The charts thus exclusively reflect progress among the original sample population. (Please see the Annex for further details.)

⁶ See our report on the transparency of IODC 2015 participants: <http://www.transparify.org/publications-main/>

STRONGEST IMPROVERS 2015-2016

Dozens of think tanks worldwide have disclosed more funding data over the past year, including 27 from our original sample.

The table below lists 12 think tanks worldwide from our initial cohort of 169 think tanks that improved significantly, by two or more stars. Note that even a two point 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.

Leaving aside the UK,⁷ the most dramatic improvers were *CEDOS* (Ukraine), *Eötvös Károly Institute* (Hungary), *Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute* (Ethiopia), and *Institute of World Policy* (Ukraine), all of which became highly transparent in one giant leap.

TREND	THINK TANK	COUNTRY	2016 SCORE
+5	CEDOS	Ukraine	5
+4	Eötvös Károly Institute	Hungary	5
	Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute	Ethiopia	5
	Institute of World Policy (IWP)	Ukraine	5
+3	Analitika - Center for Social Research	Bosnia	5
	Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD)	Georgia	5
	Centre of Policy and Legal Reform (CPLR)	Ukraine	5
	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER)	Ghana	5
	ISET Policy Institute	Georgia	5
	South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)	South Africa	5
+2	Institut für Weltwirtschaft IFW	Germany	3
	Political Capital Kft.	Hungary	2

Only two think tanks became significantly more opaque during 2015:

- *Hayek Institute* (Austria) reduced its disclosure level and is now classified as highly opaque, having dropped from 3 stars to 1 star.
- The *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies* (Singapore) significantly reduced its level of disclosure and dropped from 5 stars to 3 stars.

The slight decreases in transparency observed among some other think tanks were typically due to funding information not being up to date (resulting in the subtraction of one star), not to deliberate changes in their disclosure policies.

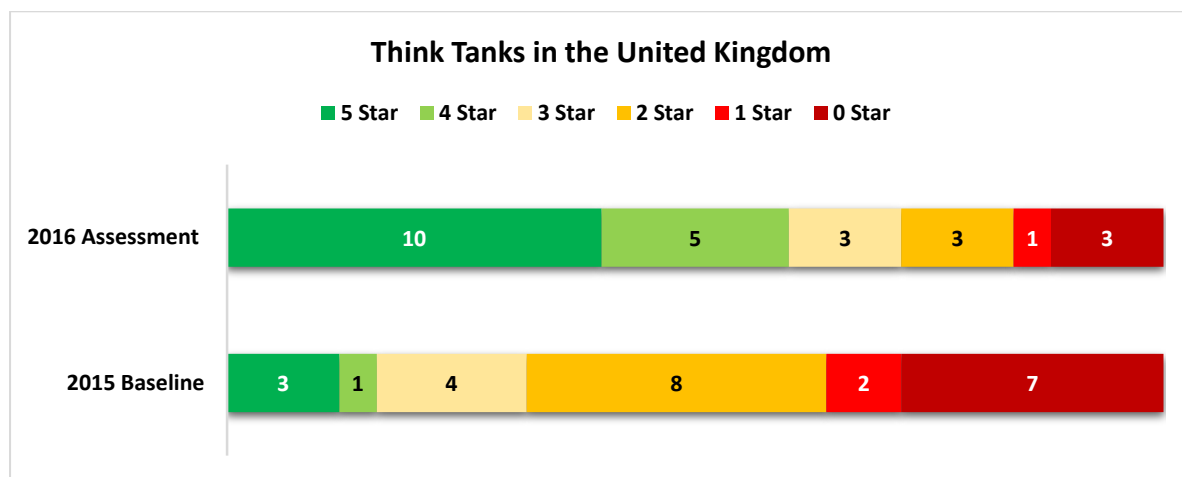
⁷ The many UK think tanks that improved their disclosure are not included in this list, as most of them were only added to the sample this year. The table also does not include IODC participants or institutions that contacted Transparify requesting to be assessed. Including all these institutions, there were 25 significant improvers during 2015-2016.

SPECIAL FOCUS: THINK TANKS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

A systemic shift towards greater disclosure within the United Kingdom’s think tank scene over the past year has established transparency as the new norm among policy research institutions in the country.

Following British think tanks’ disappointing performance in last year’s rating, Transparify decided to focus its advocacy efforts on the UK during 2015-2016. Using an external list to select institutions (see the Annex), we reached out to a larger number of think tanks. In total, 14 British think tanks decided to put more funding data online, typically increasing their score by three or more stars.

A year ago, only a small minority of those UK think tanks were financially transparent. Today, over half of them allow outsiders to see who funds their research and advocacy. As a result, the UK’s average transparency score has leapt from 2.0 stars to 3.4 stars, placing British think tanks as a group ahead of their peers in most European countries and the United States in terms of funding transparency.



Note: The chart above does not include UK-based institutions previously assessed as part of the separate IODC rating or those that proactively approached us requesting to be rated. Thus, numbers here can differ from those in the results table.

Overall, twelve UK institutions now excel in transparency and were awarded the maximum 5-star rating for disclosing not only who funds them, but also the precise amount given by each donor, signalling their strong commitment to transparency and integrity in policy research and advocacy.

A further five think tanks are broadly transparent and received a 4-star rating for grouping their donors into funding brackets that allow citizens to determine who their main financial backers are.

At the bottom of the pile are a handful of think tanks that refuse to reveal even the identities of their donors. When Transparify’s raters assessed their websites, they were unable to discover who bankrolls their research and advocacy. Today, only four think tanks in the country – the Adam Smith Institute, Centre for Policy Studies, Institute of Economic Affairs and Policy Exchange – still consider it acceptable to take money from hidden hands behind closed doors.

UNITED KINGDOM RESULTS TABLE

ORGANIZATION	SCORE	
Amnesty International	*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
Development Initiatives	*****	
European Council on Foreign Relations	*****	
Fabian Society	*****	
GODAN	*****	
Institute for Fiscal Studies	*****	
Institute for Government	*****	
Institute of Development Studies	*****	
New Economics Foundation	*****	
Overseas Development Institute	*****	
Tax Justice Network	*****	
Transparency International UK	*****	
Chatham House	****	
Demos	****	
Institute for Public Policy Research	****	
International Institute for Strategic Studies	****	
ResPublica	****	
Royal United Services Institute ⁸	***	
Center for European Reform	***	
LSE IDEAS	***	
Policy Network	**	
Civitas: Institute for Study of Civil Society	**	
Center for Economic Policy Research	**	
Adam Smith Institute	*	
Centre for Policy Studies	0	
Institute of Economic Affairs	0	
Policy Exchange	0	

Note: As most of the UK institutions listed above are new to our data base, we have not included historical data and trends in the UK results table. Organizations are listed in alphabetical order.

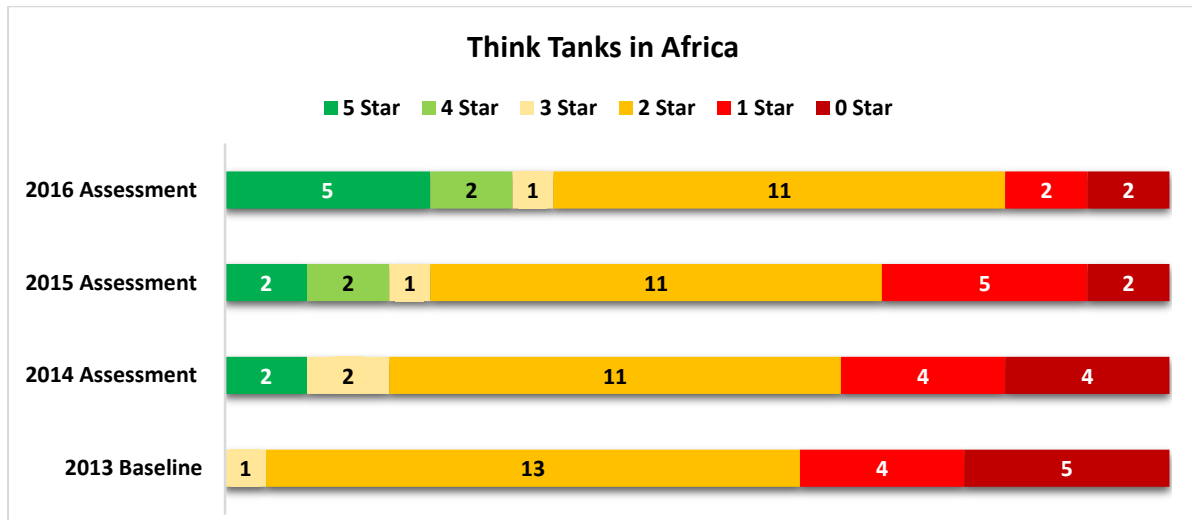
It is worth noting that a 2-star or 3-star rating in some cases already represents a significant improvement over last year's disclosure levels, indicating that many of these think tanks have embarked on the road to transparency. Transparify's experience in the U.S. and elsewhere shows that large institutions in particular often require more than one year to become fully transparent.

Several UK think tanks have already informed us that they plan to put even more data online before Transparify next re-rates them in November 2016.

⁸ The Royal United Services Institute informed Transparify that it plans to update its disclosure in July 2016.

THINK TANKS IN AFRICA

Transparency levels among African think tanks continue to improve at a rapid pace. Back in 2013, the best performer in our sample was a single 3-star institution. Today, out of the 23 think tanks in the original cohort, seven are transparent. Only four organizations remain highly opaque.



Several think tanks in Africa distinguished themselves this year by becoming 5-star transparent. For several years, Transparify was only able to find two highly transparent think tanks on the continent, transparency pioneers *African Economic Research Consortium* and *IEA Kenya*, both based in Nairobi. This year, the *Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute*, Ghana’s *ISSER*, and South Africa’s *Corruption Watch* and *SALIA* also earned a 5-star rating and joined the global club of top transparency performers.

The embrace of transparency by think tanks across three additional African countries this year is a huge step forward. Transparify believes that having a globally recognized role model of transparency inside a country is extremely important. It provides a tangible local example of what transparency actually looks like in practice. It raises the bar for all players, including other non-profits, private companies and public bodies. And, as a Kenyan think tanker has pointed out, it strengthens think tankers’ credibility when they call on their governments to share more data and make public budgets more transparent.



AFRICA RESULTS TABLE

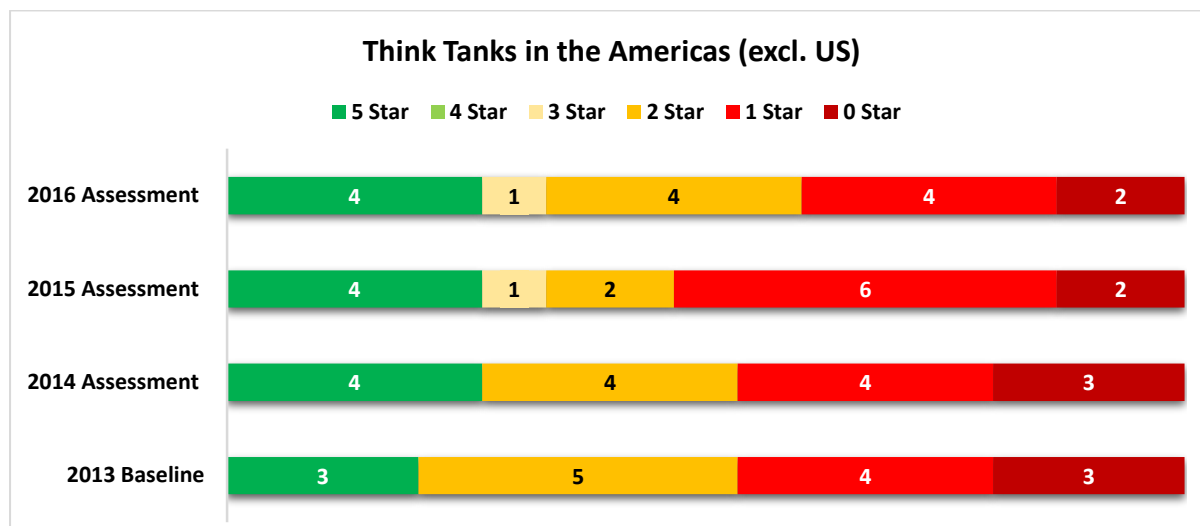
The existence of highly transparent think tanks in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and South Africa clearly demonstrate that other African institutions can also excel in transparency if they choose to.

For example, the three highly opaque think tanks in Ghana will now find it difficult to argue that there is something unique about their country that prevents them from disclosing who funds them, and think tanks in Nigeria may want to reflect on why they cannot meet the high standards set by some of their peers in other large African states.

ORGANIZATION	COUNTRY	TREND	SCORE	
Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Inst (EEA/EEPRI)	Ethiopia	+4	*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
Institute of Statistical, Social & Econ Research (ISSER)	Ghana	+3	*****	
African Economic Research Consortium	Kenya		*****	
IEA Kenya	Kenya		*****	
Corruption Watch	South Africa	new	*****	
South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)	South Africa	+3	*****	
Botswana Institute for Devp Policy Analysis (BIDPA)	Botswana		****	BROADLY TRANSPARENT
Institute for Public Policy Research	Namibia		****	
Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA)	Tanzania		***	
Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI)	Ethiopia		**	
IEA Ghana	Ghana		**	
Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research (KIPPRA)	Kenya		**	
Centre for Population and Environmental Devp (CPED)	Nigeria		**	
IPAR Rwanda	Rwanda		**	
Council for Devp of Social Science Research (CODESRIA)	Senegal		**	
Center for Development and Enterprise	South Africa		**	
Institute for Security Studies (ISS)	South Africa		**	
Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF)	Tanzania	+1	**	
Advocates Coalition for Develp (ACODE)	Uganda		**	
Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC)	Uganda	+1	**	
Center for Policy Analysis	Ghana		*	
IMANI Center for Policy and Education	Ghana	+1	*	
Centre for Democratic Development	Ghana		0	
Centre for the Study of Economies of Africa (CSEA)	Nigeria	-1	0	
				HIGHLY OPAQUE

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

Our original sample of think tanks in the Americas has only marginally improved over the past four years, presumably because Transparify did not prioritize the region for engagement and advocacy.



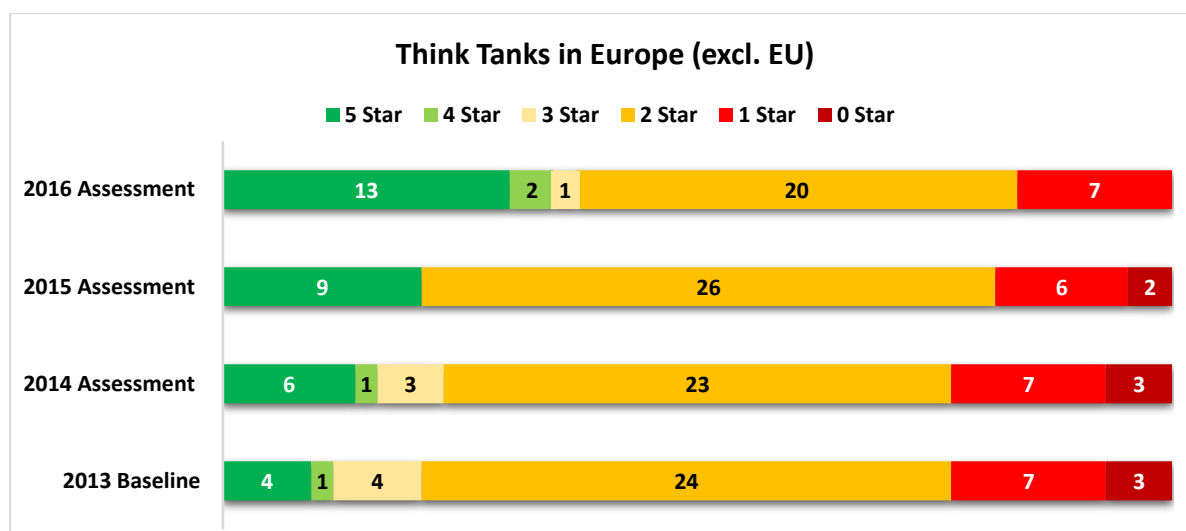
Canada’s policy research and advocacy scene now includes three highly transparent institutions, with the *International Institute for Sustainable Development* and *Publish What You Pay Canada* joining transparency veteran *CIGI* at the top of the table. Sadly, *Fraser Institute* is still highly opaque and remains at the bottom end of the spectrum.

In Ecuador, *Grupo FARO* has maintained its excellent performance of previous years, as has *Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* in Brazil.

Organization	COUNTRY	TREND	SCORE	
Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA)	Brazil		*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI)	Canada		*****	
International Inst for Sustainable Development (IISD)	Canada	new	*****	
Publish What You Pay - Canada (PWYP-CA)	Canada	new	*****	
Grupo FARO	Ecuador		*****	
International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)	International		*****	
CIPPEC	Argentina		***	HIGHLY OPAQUE
Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento (CEBRAP)	Brazil	+1	**	
Centro Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais (CEBRI)	Brazil		**	
Centro de Estudios Públicos (CEP)	Chile	+1	**	
Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Económica (CERES)	Uruguay		**	
Instituto Fernando Henrique Cardoso	Brazil		*	
Fraser Institute	Canada		*	HIGHLY OPAQUE
Libertad y Desarrollo	Chile		*	
CEDICE Libertad	Venezuela	+1	*	
Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV)	Brazil	-1	0	
CIDE (Mexico)	Mexico		0	

THINK TANKS IN EUROPE (excluding EU countries)

Think tanks in Europe have continued their movement towards greater transparency. At the time of our first baseline assessment, only five institutions were transparent, and ten were highly opaque. Today, 15 think tanks are transparent, including 13 that are highly transparent. Only seven highly opaque institutions remain.



Six additional think tanks became highly transparent during the past year:

- **Bosnia. *Analitika*** became the country's first think tank transparency champion by publishing detailed funding data online.
- **Georgia.** Prominent local think tanks *CIPDD* and *ISSET Policy institute* became highly transparent. (In addition, the newly rated *IDFI* and *PMC Research Center*⁹ approached Transparify to request a 5-star certification.) Georgia is now the world champion in policy research transparency. Seven out of ten institutions assessed in the country are highly transparent.
- **Ukraine.** Three institutions in Ukraine have embraced the gold standard for transparency and became 5-star transparent. The *Centre of Policy and Legal Reform*, *Institute of World Policy* and *CEDOS* now disclose exactly how much they receive from each donor, bolstering their claim to intellectual independence and integrity in a context where intense political rivalry has often raised questions about the credibility of data and policy recommendations.

The *Center for Research and Policy Making* (Macedonia) and *Centre for Monitoring and Research* (Montenegro) each lost a point as their online data was slightly out of date. Both have stated their commitment to maintaining 5-star disclosure, and report that they have updated their websites since the assessment was conducted.

Throughout the region, numerous models of transparency now exist. Think tanks aspiring to excellence in Bosnia, Georgia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Ukraine can all turn to local role models for inspiration and guidance. Only **Serbia** still lacks a local champion for full disclosure.

⁹ Hans Gutbrod, Transparify's ED, joined PMC Research's board at the end of May 2016. This is not a compensated position.

EUROPE RESULTS TABLE (excluding EU countries)

Organization	COUNTRY	TREND	SCORE	
Analitika - Center for Social Research	Bosnia	+3	*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy, Devp (CIPDD)	Georgia	+3	*****	
ISET Policy Institute	Georgia	+3	*****	
Economic Policy Research Center	Georgia		*****	
Institute for the Devp of Freedom of Information (IDFI)	Georgia	new	*****	
JumpStart Georgia	Georgia		*****	
PMC Research Center	Georgia	new	*****	
Transparency International Georgia	Georgia		*****	
European Policy Institute - Skopje	Macedonia		*****	
Reactor - Research in Action	Macedonia		*****	
Center for Democratic Transition	Montenegro		*****	
Institute Alternative	Montenegro		*****	
Centre of Policy and Legal Reform (CPLR)	Ukraine	+3	*****	
Institute of World Policy (IWP)	Ukraine	+4	*****	
CEDOS (formerly: Center for Society Research)	Ukraine	+5	*****	
Center for Research and Policy Making	Macedonia	-1	****	BROADLY TRANSPARENT
Centre for Monitoring and Research (CeMI)	Montenegro	-1	****	
Center for Research and Studies Udruzenje	Bosnia	+1	***	
Centre for Policy and Governance	Bosnia		**	
Centre for Security Studies	Bosnia		**	
Think Tank Populari	Bosnia		**	
Foundation Liberal Academy Tbilisi	Georgia		**	
Institute for Policy Studies	Georgia		**	
Analytica	Macedonia		**	
Center for Regional Policy Research Studiorum	Macedonia		**	
Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities - Skopje	Macedonia		**	
Center for Entrepreneurship and Executive Devp	Montenegro	+1	**	
Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM)	Montenegro		**	
Belgrade Center for Security Policy	Serbia		**	
European Movement in Serbia	Serbia		**	
International and Security Affairs Centre	Serbia		**	
National Alliance for Local Economic Development	Serbia		**	
PALGO Center	Serbia		**	
Center for Social and Economic Research - CASE Ukraine	Ukraine		**	
International Centre for Policy Studies	Ukraine		**	
Resource & Analysis Center "Society & Envirmt" (RACSE)	Ukraine		**	
Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research	Ukraine		**	
Ukrainian Institute for Public Policy	Ukraine		**	
Association European Studies for Innovative Development	Georgia		*	HIGHLY OPAQUE
Center for Economic Analyses	Macedonia	-1	*	
Macedonian Centre for European Training	Macedonia	-1	*	
Center for Economic and Financial Research	Russia	+1	*	
Center for Advanced Economic Studies	Serbia		*	
Center for Liberal-Democratic Studies	Serbia		*	
Center for Political Studies	Ukraine		*	

THINK TANKS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION (excluding the UK)

Within the European Union, transparency is slowly but surely becoming the norm among leading think tanks.¹⁰ The *International Crisis Group* improved further on last year's strong performance by disclosing the precise sums received from each of its donors, and Hungary's *Eötvös Károly Institute* became highly transparent in one giant leap. *Transparency International's European Union office* also joined the ranks of European organizations recognized for their outstanding transparency.

Germany's *Institut für Weltwirtschaft* and Hungary's *Political Capital* have both improved significantly, and now disclose the names of all of their donors (but not full financial details, yet).

ORGANIZATION	COUNTRY	TREND	SCORE	
Bruegel	Belgium		*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
International Crisis Group	Belgium	+1	*****	
Transparency International EU	Belgium	new	*****	
Center for the Study of Democracy	Bulgaria		*****	
Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik	Germany		*****	
Eötvös Károly Institute	Hungary	+4	*****	
European Centre for Devp & Policy Managmnt (ECDPM)	Netherlands		*****	
Norwegian Institute for International Affairs	Norway		*****	
Stockholm Environment Institute	Sweden		*****	
Stockholm International Peace Research Institute	Sweden		*****	
Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS)	Czech	-1	****	BROADLY TRANSPARENT
German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP)	Germany		****	
Centre for European Policy Studies	Belgium		***	HIGHLY OPAQUE
Institut für Weltwirtschaft	Germany	+2	***	
CASE	Poland		***	
FRIDE ¹¹	Spain		***	
Centre for Liberal Strategies	Bulgaria		**	
Institute for Market Economics	Bulgaria		**	
DIW Berlin - Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung	Germany		**	
European Stability Initiative	Germany		**	
German Development Institute (DIE)	Germany	-1	**	
Budapest Institute for Policy Analysis	Hungary		**	
Political Capital	Hungary	+2	**	
Basel Institute on Governance	Switzerland		**	
World Economic Forum	Switzerland		**	
Hayek Institute	Austria	-2	*	
Clingendael	Netherlands		*	

Austria's Hayek Institute became one of only two institutions in the world to significantly backslide on its disclosure during 2015-2016. Its new 1-star rating puts it into the highly opaque bracket, a lonely position it shares only with consistently poor performer *Clingendael* of the Netherlands. These two institutions are anomalies in a region where all other players at a minimum disclose the identities of all of their major donors, and many do far better than that.

¹⁰ In previous Transparify reports, the EU data set included UK think tanks. This year, we list UK think tanks separately and add many new UK institutions. To prevent confusion, we do not present a progress chart for this region this year.

¹¹ FRIDE was assessed in late 2015. It ceased operating at the end of 2015.

THINK TANKS IN SOUTH ASIA AND OCEANIA

India's Centre for Policy Research and Pakistan's Social Policy and Development Centre continue to set an example for South Asian think tanks with their excellent level of transparency.

Overall performance remains disappointing in South Asia. Despite their global aspirations, many prominent policy research institutes in the world's largest democracy still fall short of global transparency standards.

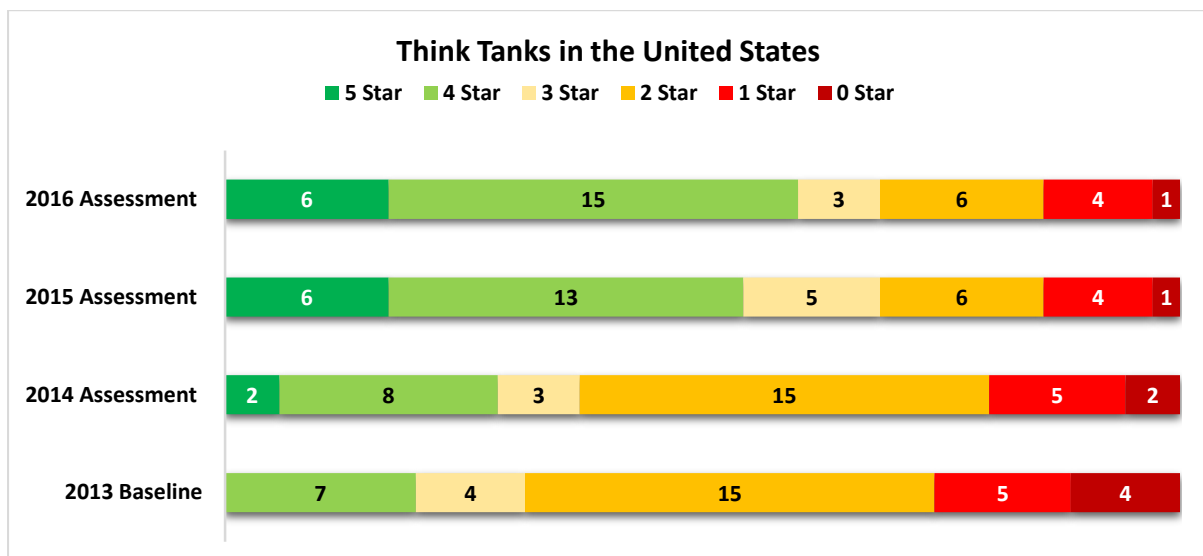
Oceania presents an equally mixed picture. The *Centre for Independent Studies* (Australia) and the *Centre for Strategic Studies* (New Zealand) are highly opaque. They do not even disclose the names of the donors who fund their work. In contrast, the *Lowy Institute* does disclose donors' names, but does not reveal who pays how much. Only the *Australian Institute of International Affairs* and the *Development Policy Centre* demonstrate broadly transparent levels of disclosure.

ORGANIZATION	COUNTRY	TREND	SCORE	
Centre for Policy Research	India		*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
Social Policy and Development Centre	Pakistan		*****	
Australian Institute of International Affairs	Australia		****	BROADLY TRANSPARENT
Development Policy Centre	Australia	new	****	
Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies	Bangladesh		***	
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies	Singapore	-2	***	
Institute of Policy Studies of Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka	+1	***	
Lowy Institute	Australia		**	
Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh	Bangladesh		**	
Center for Study of Science, Tech & Policy (CSTEP)	India		**	
Centre for Civil Society	India		**	
Observer Research Foundation	India	+1	**	
The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)	India		**	
Institute of Policy Studies	Pakistan		*	
Centre for Independent Studies	Australia		0	
Delhi Policy Group	India		0	
Centre for Strategic Studies	New Zealand		0	

THINK TANKS IN THE UNITED STATES

In the United States, three additional major think tanks have become transparent. *Atlantic Council*, *Center for American Progress* and *Center for Strategic and International Studies* have all grouped their donors into financial brackets, allowing citizens and policy makers to gain insight into their funding structures.

The average transparency score among Transparify’s original population of U.S. think tanks is now **3.3**, up from just **2.1** when we first assessed them in late 2013. The field is becoming increasingly polarized between a growing transparent majority and a small highly opaque minority, with fewer and fewer institutions remaining in the middle ground.



Eight new institutions have been added to Transparify’s list this year. All of these are U.S. based research and advocacy organizations whose work revolves around promoting transparency and integrity in a variety of sectors. Transparify is delighted to be able to certify that each of these eight players put their principles into practice, embracing the highest standard of financial transparency when it comes to disclosing their own sources of funding.

UNITED STATES RESULTS TABLE

ORGANIZATION	TREND	STARS	
Center for Global Development		*****	HIGHLY TRANSPARENT
Natural Resource Governance Institute		*****	
Pew Research Center		*****	
Stimson Center		*****	
Woodrow Wilson Center		*****	
World Resources Institute		*****	
Financial Transparency Coalition	new	*****	
Global Integrity	new	*****	
GovLab @ NYU	new	*****	
International Budget Partnership	new	*****	
Open Contracting Partnership	new	*****	
Publish What You Pay - United States	new	*****	
Sunlight Foundation	new	*****	
World Wide Web Foundation	new	*****	
Atlantic Council	+1	****	BROADLY TRANSPARENT
Brookings Institution		****	
Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs		****	
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace		****	
Center for a New American Security		****	
Center for American Progress	+1	****	
Center for Strategic and International Studies	+1	****	
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities		****	
Freedom House		****	
German Marshall Fund of the US		****	
Heritage Foundation		****	
New America Foundation		****	
Peterson Institute for International Economics		****	
RAND Corporation		****	
Urban Institute		****	
Cato Institute		***	
Council on Foreign Relations		***	
Foreign Policy Research Institute		***	
Baker III Institute for Public Policy		**	
Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs		**	
Center for International Development		**	
Human Rights Watch		**	
National Bureau of Economic Research		**	
United States Institute of Peace		**	
American Enterprise Institute		*	
Earth Institute		*	
Hoover Institution		*	
Hudson Institute		*	
Open Society Foundations		0	

TRANSPARIFY'S FUTURE PLANS

Follow-up ratings of think tanks

Transparify will continue to conduct periodic ratings of think tanks in order to track their progress over time. We have already scheduled a re-rating of all UK think tanks covered in this study for November 2016.

Cohort approach to advocacy

Transparify's experience shows that our engagement and advocacy is particularly effective when we work with cohorts of think tanks that identify and compare themselves with each other. This year, we piloted this approach with think tanks based in the UK and achieved outstanding results. In future, Transparify will increasingly work with national, sectoral and other types of cohorts.

New target groups

Many institutions not conventionally classified as think tanks also engage in policy research and advocacy, and as participants in democratic debates should be expected to disclose who pays them for their work. In 2015, Transparify took a first step beyond think tanks, narrowly defined, to look at the websites of several dozen **pro-transparency organizations**, and discovered that many of those were surprisingly opaque about where their own money came from.¹² We plan to continue engaging with our fellow pro-transparency advocates in the near future. In addition, we believe that the arguments for transparency equally apply to many **other NGOs working in policy-relevant fields**, such as non-profit media and campaigning, and plan to open a debate around transparency with them.

Advocacy with donors

Even some donors who care about transparency are somewhat inconsistent in their approach, often funding opaque outfits. Donors, especially a handful of systematic donors, could make transparency the default by insisting on disclosure in their funding applications. This would not only increase disclosure, and thus serve citizens – it would also help donors themselves. Some foundations have already taken steps in this direction, and we aim to convince more to make transparency the norm.¹³

Assistance to think tanks and voluntary certification

Transparify's team is available to advise and assist think tanks and similar non-profit organizations that wish to become more transparent. This includes institutions that we have not rated yet. Transparify also certifies organizations as being 5-star transparent upon request. Contact us, we have worked with many institutions and are happy to help. Transparify does not charge think tanks for its services.

¹² Full report here: <http://www.transparify.org/publications-main/>

¹³ Details here: <http://www.transparify.org/blog/2016/2/17/transparent-donors-opaque-grantees-high-time-for-a-nudge>

ANNEX: 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.

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 the precise amounts given, 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 as they fail to disclose even the names of some or all of their donors.

Rating criteria

Transparify used the same rating criteria as in previous years' assessments. The rating criteria for the number of stars to award are defined as follows:

RATING		CRITERION
Five stars	*****	highly transparent: all donors listed, clearly identifying funding amounts for, and sources of, particular projects ¹⁴
Four stars	****	broadly transparent: 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"] ¹⁵
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 ¹⁶ information

Note: Organizations may exceptionally list privacy-minded donors as "anonymous", but in order to qualify as transparent, an organization needs to disclose the sources of over 85% of its funding volume.

Data quality

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 selected think tanks¹⁷
- Full replicability of results by third parties

To date, our 338 data points from the 2014 and 2015 reports stand unchallenged, highlighting the strength of the methodology and the quality control process.

¹⁴ 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 as Transparify may in future review and slightly modify the criteria for 5-star ratings.

¹⁵ Transparify also awarded three stars to institutions that were fairly transparent yet did not fully meet four star criteria.

¹⁶ Please see the section on adjudication further below for more details.

¹⁷ For the 2016 ratings, we did not undertake an additional validation with think tanks that scored 0-3 stars, as this validation had repeatedly been undertaken for previous ratings.

Timeline

The ratings process for the main cohort was conducted between 01 November and 05 December 2015, with the adjudication concluding at the end of January 2016. The organizations marked “new” in the results tables and the minority of newly rated UK institutions not selected through the “Global Go To Think Tank Index” (see also below) may have been rated at other points between April 2015 and April 2016.

The data presented for the main cohort in this report is correct as of January 20, 2016.

Sample selection: new additions in 2016

- **Expanding the sample from 169 to 200 institutions**

For this report, we maintained our core sample of 169 think tanks worldwide that we have already rated twice (excluding the initial baseline rating) in past years. To expand our reach, we also added three more groups of think tanks. The Transparify team focused on think tanks in the United Kingdom this year, so we added 11 think tanks from the UK to the original sample. We also added 11 think tanks and other policy relevant non-profits that we engaged with on voluntary certification, as well as 9 pro-transparency organizations.

Thus, in total, we present rating results for 200 institutions (169 plus 31) this year.

- **Core sample: 169 think tanks worldwide**

For its 2016 ratings, Transparify re-rated the same group of 169 think tanks it had already rated during its first and second rounds, which had run from 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, respectively.

To achieve the maximum amount of coverage and a good cross-selection, Transparify identified leading think tanks from around the world, drawing on third party lists. The selection, undertaken in 2013, 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.¹⁸ These institutions were selected from a list provided by the Think Tank Fund.

Our core sample does not include think tanks in Chinese- or Arabic-speaking countries as our raters do not have the required language skills.

- **IODC rating: 9 institutions**

In addition, in May 2015, we rated 34 nonprofit organizations taking part in the IODC international transparency conference.¹⁹ We rated 9 of those organizations as highly transparent and have added them to the results tables in this report.²⁰

¹⁸ See: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/think-tank-fund>

¹⁹ The full IODC rating report can be found here: <http://www.transparify.org/publications-main/>

²⁰ On that occasion, in line with our usual approach, we did not disclose the names of those institutions that were rated non-transparent in their first-ever rating because we wanted to give those willing to disclose detailed funding data enough

- **Voluntary certification: 11 institutions**

Transparify added 11 think tanks and other policy relevant nonprofits that we engaged with for a voluntary certification. In some cases, these institutions approached us on their own initiative. In other cases, we spotted good examples of disclosure online and offered institutions to certify them.

- **Adding more UK think tanks**

British think tanks on average performed surprisingly weakly in our 2015 study. Thus, this year, Transparify decided to make the UK a focus country for its engagement. For the United Kingdom, Transparify expanded its sample population by adding all²¹ UK institutions that were ranked among the top twenty in the “Global Go To Think Tank Index” for Western Europe to the institutions it rated. We also (re-)rated three think tanks that were not among the top twenty in that index, but that Transparify had already rated in previous years.

We rated 27 UK institutions overall, 11 of these for the third year running and an additional 11 for the first time in the cohort. In the table representing UK results, we also show 2 British based organizations we assessed as part of our IODC rating, and another 3 organizations we assessed as part of voluntary certification.

- **Tracking transparency trends over time: original core sample only**

All bar charts in the report that visualize global, regional and national changes in transparency over multiple years only cover the 169 think tanks of the original core sample to allow the tracking of progress across a consistent population. This means that the numbers displayed in bar charts frequently add up to less than the total number of think tanks listed in the subsequent results tables.

The UK progress bar chart is a partial exception. It includes all UK think tanks from the original core sample, plus all think tanks newly selected through the “Global Go To Think Tank Index”. However, it does not include UK-based institutions previously assessed as part of the separate IODC rating or those that proactively approached us requesting to be rated. Hence, the numbers given there are also lower than the total number of think tanks listed in the UK results table.

Pre-rating engagement with think tanks

- **Core sample: 169 think tanks worldwide**

Transparify individually contacted all 169 think tanks in the core (old) sample at least twice during 2013-2015. These think tanks know what we are doing, understand why we are doing it, and know that they can approach us for help with becoming more transparent should they wish to do so. They were also aware, through our 2015 report, that we would re-assess them again in late 2015 for the present report.

Therefore, during this rating round, we did not systematically reach out to all of these think tanks again. However, in isolated cases, members of Transparify’s team did approach some institutions – typically those considered particularly likely to be responsive – and encouraged them to update their

time to update their websites. We will re-rate this cohort during the coming months and publish the full results of our follow-on rating.

²¹ We eventually decided not to rate one of the institutions listed by the “Global Go To Think Tank Index”, the Oxford Council on Good Governance, because that think tank appears to have been inactive for several years.

websites. In other cases, think tanks approached us, or we continued ongoing conversations. Transparify did not systematically track these interactions.

- **Think tanks in the UK**

During August and September 2015, Transparify emailed the media contacts (where discernible from the website) at all UK think tanks scheduled for rating to inform them of the upcoming rating and to invite them to place additional funding information online by 01 November 2015. We contacted both 'old cohort' think tanks and the new additions to our sample in this way. In cases in which think tanks did not acknowledge receipt of the original email, we followed up through additional emails, tweets and/or phone calls until we had ascertained that each institution had received an email explaining the rating's purpose, methodology and timeline.

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.

- Six of these raters had already rated think tanks for Transparify in previous years, and demonstrated their ability to return reliable results. They were provided with a refresher training.
- Two 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

In total, we assessed 180 think tanks during this formal rating round: our old core sample of 169 institutions, plus 11 new think tanks in the UK. The 20 other new think tanks, all of them 5-star, were covered in separate ratings that used the same rating methodology.²²

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).

²² Transparify did separate ratings for the 11 institutions that we had engaged with on voluntary certification. All of these institutions were formally rated as 5-star by two trained raters working independently from each other at various points between April 2015 and April 2016. Similarly, there was a separate rating process for the 9 institutions in the IODC cohort.

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.

Using adjudication to ensure quality and consistency

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 68 out of the 180 (169+11 new UK) ratings we conducted in detail. Out of these:

- 47 ratings needed resolution due to disagreements between raters
- 21 ratings were marked for in-depth adjudication, requiring substantive judgement²³

Adjudication of results was completed by 31 January 2016.

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 2012 or earlier. If most recent financial information is presented in an annual report from 2013, one star is deducted from the overall rating.

Other borderline cases arose where think tanks identified ‘partners’, mixing 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

- **Core sample: 169 think tanks worldwide**

Following extensive validation in previous rating rounds by contacting all organizations rated with 0-3 stars, Transparify for the 2016 ratings only contacted selected think tanks whose rating scores had declined.

- **Think tanks in the UK**

Transparify emailed all think tanks located in the UK to inform them of their rating results and invite them to double-check our findings and request adjustments from us if appropriate. Transparify addressed these emails to its interlocutors from the earlier engagement phase to ensure that emails reached relevant addressees within each think tank.

²³ These were either cases where one rater had not found information, or think tanks with unusual institutional setups or funding models, or those whose financial information was fragmented across several web pages.

Opening our findings to public scrutiny

Anyone can visit the website of any think tank rated by Transparify 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.

If Transparify gets notified of a rating result that was incorrect at the time of rating, we will follow up and, if applicable, correct that result and announce the corrected result as quickly as possible on our blog and Twitter account.

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***Transparify walks the transparency talk.
Our project proposal, including a detailed budget, can be found on our website.
www.transparify.org***

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



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