

Rights to Confidentiality and Privacy In an Age of Transparency

The world is witnessing a fascination with generating greater amounts of tax information and then disseminating it more broadly. The unstated assumption is that more and more visible information will change the behaviour of taxpayers and / or assist the efforts of tax administrations. Disclosure probably works as a deterrent for some subsets of tax non-compliance – extremely wealthy individuals, organised crime or national despots – all of whom who rely on secrecy jurisdictions. But for the world of multinational enterprises, if those beliefs are not just misguided, they are certainly naive. Taxpayers in many countries could point to examples where the administration is simply unable to process and evaluate information it already has. If pursuing increased information were simply harmless and ineffective, it might be ignored. Unfortunately, the current fascination distracts attention and diverts resources from more pressing projects.