

EU countries must do more to combat corruption by better protecting whistleblowers

Berlin, 5 November 2013 – Most European Union countries fail to legally protect whistleblowers enough from retaliation in the workplace, shutting out an important actor in the fight against corruption, according to a new report from Transparency International.

Whistleblowers play a prominent role exposing and preventing corruption, yet only four EU countries – Luxembourg, Romania, Slovenia and the United Kingdom – have advanced whistleblower protection laws in place, according to the report *Whistleblowing in Europe*. Only in these four countries would a government or company employee who discloses serious wrongdoing be adequately protected by law from being fired or harassed.

Of the remaining 23 EU countries in the study, 16 partially protect employees who report wrongdoing, while seven have either no or very inadequate laws in place.

“Whistleblowers are very important to the fight against corruption. They take on risks that many, if not most, people are unwilling to assume and they expose crimes that few are interested in or brave enough to report,” said Anne Koch, Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia at Transparency International.

Transparency International urges all EU countries to enact and strongly enforce comprehensive whistleblower laws based on prevailing international standards, including those developed by Transparency International. Governments and companies should support whistleblowers when valid disclosures are brought to light.

Without strong legal protection and safe processes to report wrongdoing, government and corporate employees throughout Europe run the risk of being fired, demoted or harassed if they come forward to expose corruption and other crimes.

In the absence of strong whistleblower laws, major corruption scandals and disasters in Europe that have cost lives and money theoretically could have been prevented or lessened if employees felt they had the necessary protections to come forward.

Many laws are vaguely written, and contain loopholes and exceptions. Advanced disclosure channels for whistleblowers are missing from various laws, as well as a comprehensive definition of whistleblowing, a guarantee of confidentiality, and protection from defamation suits.

Whistleblowing in Europe is an element of Transparency International’s global effort to advocate for stronger whistleblower rights and promote the positive contributions of whistleblowers. Transparency International has led or joined efforts to pass, improve, propose or monitor whistleblower laws in dozens of countries worldwide.

Whistleblowing in Europe can be viewed online at www.transparency.org

Read our International Principles for Whistleblower Legislation.

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Transparency International is the civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption

Note to editors

Whistleblowing in Europe is Transparency International's second study on whistleblower protection in Europe. The first study, Alternative to Silence, was released in 2009 and is available [here](#). The new project was supported by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Home Affairs, Prevention of and Fight against Crime Programme.

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