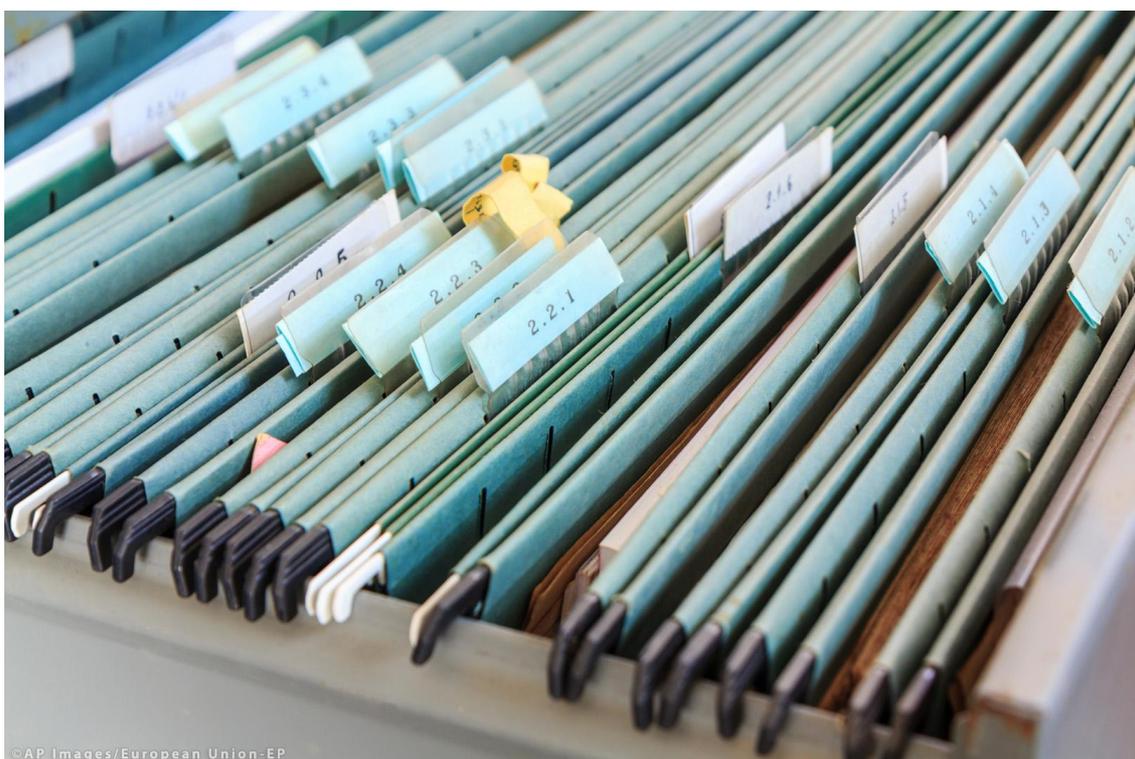


## Protecting whistle-blowers: new EU-wide rules approved

- New system to protect and encourage reporting of breaches of EU law
- Whistle-blowers will be able to choose between internal and external reporting
- Safeguards against reprisals from employers



© AP Images/European Union-EP

MEPs approve new rules that strengthen the protection of whistle-blowers across the EU © AP Images/European Union-EP

### **Those disclosing information acquired in a work-related context, on illegal or harmful activities, will be better protected, under new EU rules approved on Tuesday.**

The new rules, adopted with 591 votes in favour, 29 against and 33 abstentions and already agreed with EU ministers, lay down new, EU-wide standards to protect whistle-blowers revealing breaches of EU law in a wide range of areas including public procurement, financial services, money laundering, product and transport safety, nuclear safety, public health, consumer and data protection.

#### **Safe reporting channels**

To ensure potential whistle-blowers remain safe and that the information disclosed remains confidential, the new rules allow them to disclose information either internally to the legal entity concerned or directly to competent national authorities, as well as to relevant EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies.

In cases where no appropriate action was taken in response to the whistle-blower's initial report, or if they believe there is an imminent danger to the public interest or a risk of retaliation, the reporting person will still be protected if they choose to disclose information publicly.

#### **Safeguards against retaliation**

The law explicitly prohibits reprisals and introduces safeguards to prevent the whistle-blower from being suspended, demoted and intimidated or facing other forms of retaliation. Those assisting whistle-blowers, such as facilitators, colleagues, relatives are also protected.

Member states must ensure whistle-blowers have access to comprehensive and independent information and advice on available procedures and remedies free-of-charge, as well as legal aid during proceedings. During legal proceedings, those reporting may also receive financial and psychological support.

#### **Quote**

The rapporteur [Virginie Rozière](#) (S&D, FR) said: "Recent scandals such as LuxLeaks, Panama Papers and Football leaks have helped to shine a light on the great precariousness that whistle-blowers suffer today. On the eve of European elections, Parliament has come together to send a strong signal that it has heard the concerns of its citizens, and pushed for robust rules guaranteeing their safety and that of those persons who choose to speak out".

#### **Next steps**

The law now needs to be approved by EU ministers. Member states will then have two years to comply with the rules.

#### **Background information**

Recent scandals, from LuxLeaks to Panama Papers, have demonstrated how important whistle-blowers' revelations are to detect and prevent breaches of EU law harmful to the public interest and the welfare of society. Lack of effective whistle-blower protection at EU level can also negatively impact the functioning of EU policies in a member state, but can also spill over to other countries and the EU as a whole.

Currently, only [10 EU countries](#) (France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Slovakia, Sweden and UK) provide comprehensive legal protection. In the remaining countries, protection is only partial or applies to specific sectors or categories of employee.

[A 2017 study carried out for the Commission](#) estimated the loss of potential benefits due to a lack of whistle-blower protection, in public procurement alone, to be in the range of €5.8 to €9.6 billion each year for the EU as a whole.

### Further information

[Adopted text will be available here \(click on 16.04.2019\)](#)

[Text of the agreement](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Rapporteur Virginie Rozière \(S&D, FR\)](#)

[Multimedia package - Protection of whistle-blowers](#)

[Protection of whistle-blowers - At a Glance \(10.04.2019\)](#)

[Protecting whistle-blowers: EU safeguards for people acting in public interest \(EP News\)](#)

[Whistle-blower protection \(Commission factsheet\)](#)

[Q&A: Whistle-blower protection \(23.04.2018\)](#)

[Video from press conference \(16.04.2019\) \(starting at 15.00\)](#)

[EP Multimedia Centre: free photos, video and audio material](#)

### Contacts

---

Yasmina YAKIMOVA

Press Officer

 (+32) 2 28 42626 (BXL)

 (+33) 3 881 73774 (STR)

 (+32) 470 88 10 60

 [@EP\\_Legal](#)

 [yasmina.yakimova@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:yasmina.yakimova@europarl.europa.eu)

---