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European Parliament demands protection for whistleblowers uncovering fraud in the EU budget

A strong signal to the European Commission

The European Parliament has once again sent a strong signal to the European Commission that it needs to act swiftly and decisively to protect whistleblowers across Europe.

The report, adopted today, focusses on the crucial role played by whistleblowers in preventing and uncovering fraud and mismanagement of the EU budget. It proposes that better procedures for blowing the whistle be introduced within the EU institutions, and also warns that whistleblowers should get advice and support when they are thinking of blowing the whistle.

Most importantly, it calls for the establishment of an independent body which would receive alerts about budgetary fraud.

But more needs to be done...

The Greens/EFA group has been one of the leading forces in the European Parliament on the issue of whistleblower protection, having even drafted our own legislative proposal for a Europe-wide Directive in May as part of our campaign, and also launched a secure whistleblower platform called EUleaks (only accessible via a special TOR browser).

We think that urgent action should be taken to protect those exposing fraud and misspending in the EU budget, but we are also pushing for EU-wide legislation that would protect whistleblowers in all areas of EU competence. This is because we want citizens across Europe to be able to speak up about environmental crimes, human rights violations and any other wrongdoing without fear of reprisal.

For us, whistleblowing is an issue that goes far beyond money or budgets, it's a fundamental human right. Whistleblowers exercise their freedom of expression, and by doing so they guarantee the public's right to freedom of information. It's also a question of workers' rights, which cannot be reduced to monetary arguments.

What is the current situation on whistleblower protection in Europe?

Since the Greens/EFA group launched a proposal for a draft EU Directive in May, the Commission has faced increased calls to act to protect whistleblowers. The Financial Affairs Council called on the Commission to assess the scope for further action to protect whistleblowers in October. Plus, a coalition of almost 80 NGOs and trade unions was launched in the Autumn to push for whistleblower legislation in Europe.

The Commission, to its credit, is moving ahead: It is due to launch a public consultation on whistleblower protection in March, and recently published an Inception Impact Assessment in which they analyse the impact that a lack of whistleblower protection has on the EU market, on human rights and on the environment. The Commission is currently working on a complete Impact Assessment, with results expected before the summer. Once the impact assessment is complete, the Commission will decide whether and how to propose whistleblower legislation.

As for the European Parliament, in addition to the report from the Budgetary Control Committee voted today, the Legal Affairs Committee is working on another report on whistleblowers, which will go further in scope. Following some disagreement between the JURI Committee and Conference of Presidents on who should be the rapporteur for the file, a final decision on the matter is still pending. Once the rapporteur is nominated, the drafting process will begin.

More information

- About the Greens/EFA Draft Directive: http://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/whistle-blowers-directive/

- About EU leaks: http://www.greens-efa.eu/en/

- About the debate in the European Parliament on whistleblower protection in the spending of EU funds: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/video?debate=1487019272919&streamingLanguage=en

- About the report adopted today by the European Parliament: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=en&reference=2016/2055%28INI%29

- About the whistleblower campaign coalition: https://whistleblowerprotection.eu/

(Email Eurocadres if you want to join the coalition or join the mailing list)

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