



# Whistleblowers in Europe: Why we need protection for all



The Greens | EFA  
in the European Parliament

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# Protection for all whistleblowers

## Europe needs comprehensive whistleblower protection

There has been widespread coverage in recent years of whistleblowers such as Edward Snowden who exposed widespread surveillance and spying by national governments and telecommunication companies; or Antoine Deltour, who went public with information about the favourable tax deals given to multinational corporations by the Luxembourg government. Despite revealing information that was in the public interest however, both individuals have faced serious repercussions for their whistleblowing, laying bare the inadequacy of existing whistleblower protection. These scandals have convinced the public of the important role whistleblowers play in helping to fight corruption and crime, and a recent study showed that 96% of the public support EU legislation aimed at protecting whistleblowers.

Although tax injustice and privacy have drawn most headlines, it is important to remember that [whistleblowers expose wrongdoing in all sectors and industries](#), both public and private. In countless examples across Europe, individuals continue to expose corruption and other illegal activities or misconduct. In most cases they suffer serious consequences, including harassment, isolation, dismissal, legal action, violence and defamation, not to mention the psychological and financial problems that result from the experience of such hostility or retaliation. If we are to be serious about combatting corruption and crime we urgently need to protect those who are leading the charge, those who are often putting their lives on the line to expose wrongdoing.

The EU thus needs to ensure that protection is given to all whistleblowers. This short report will document some recent whistleblowing cases from each of the Member States, touching upon issues such as corruption, privacy, doping, public health and more. With so many gaps in the protection afforded to whistleblowers across the EU, this report thus renews the long-standing Greens/EFA call for comprehensive, EU-wide protection for whistleblowers. Without such protection, the risk that people who expose wrongdoing are punished will remain. This is a deterrent that only stands to weaken our fight against corruption and crime.



Whistleblowers  
lack basic  
protection in  
many EU  
Member States

# Recommendations for effective whistleblower protection

**The Greens/EFA Group** thus calls for the following principles to be respected if comprehensive whistleblower protection is to become a reality across the EU:

- Both public and private bodies should be obliged to protect whistleblowers
- Whistleblowers should be protected in all fields of EU competence
- Whistleblowers should be free to report both internally and externally
- Whistleblowers' reports should be quickly and seriously investigated
- There should be a broad definition of protected disclosure so that whistleblowers can report on wrongdoing and reveal information that is in the public interest
- Whistleblowers should not suffer due to their disclosures
- Whistleblowers should not bear the burden of proof
- There should be sanctions for harassing whistleblowers, or their family or colleagues
- Whistleblowers should be entitled to compensation and to legal and psychological support



# WHISTLEBLOWER CASES IN EU MEMBER STATES

## Austria

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector, Foundations

**Issue(s) exposed:** Misuse of public funds

In early 2017, an anonymous whistleblower disclosed documents from meetings held by the Province of Lower Austria government office, one of the country's Federal provinces.<sup>1</sup> These secret documents showed that a foundation named after an Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) politician Erwin Pröll (then governor of the province) had received €150,000 annually from the Province of Lower Austria between 2006 and 2016.<sup>2</sup> This amounted to a total of €1.3 million, although neither the federal state auditors or the public were ever informed of this, and the foundation itself did not provide full transparency on what the subsidies were to be used for; what's more the mission of the foundation itself was unclear.<sup>3</sup> Of the €1.3 million, €300,000 was made directly available to the foundation, with the remaining amount set aside by the Province and made available for the foundation to withdraw at any time.<sup>4</sup> Following the revelation, the ÖVP labelled the coverage of the investigation fake news and a smear campaign, but in May 2017, the foundation was dissolved and the €300,000 was transferred from the foundation back to the provincial government.

## Belgium

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector

**Issue(s) exposed:** Misuse of public funds

In late 2016, Cédric Halin, a councillor in the municipality of Olne in Belgium, blew the whistle on what became known as the Publifin scandal, a political earthquake that led to the resignation of several officials, including a Minister, as well as judicial and parliamentary inquiries.<sup>5</sup> Publifin is a public body in Wallonia involved in energy, telecommunications and media, a complex structure with ties to a large private company Nethys.<sup>6</sup> It was revealed that numerous elected councillors were being paid up to €500 a minute for Publifin meetings at which they were not obliged to attend (and some were indeed paid despite never attending).<sup>7</sup> One particular elected councillor received over €20,000 over three years without ever attending a meeting.<sup>8</sup> It appears Publifin had become a tool for political patronage.<sup>9</sup>



## Bulgaria

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector

**Issue(s) exposed:** Lack of public accountability



In 2017 the Bulgarian government proposed a controversial piece of legislation that would have imposed a requirement that a citizen can only vote in parliamentary or presidential elections if they have lived uninterrupted in Bulgaria for at least the 3 previous months.<sup>10</sup> The proposal was met with outrage given it would exclude the thousands of Bulgarians living abroad.<sup>11</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Justice Ministry withdrew the proposal and fired Lubomir Talev, the Director of the Legislative Council, who was publicly blamed for including such a proposal in the text without

the knowledge of the Justice Minister Maria Pavlova.<sup>12</sup> Talev however revealed that the President at the time Rumen Radev, had in fact suggested the proposal himself and then had it drawn up by his legal counsel. The President later admitted to this series of events and Talev was ultimately reinstated to his position.<sup>13</sup>

## Croatia

**Area(s) affected:** Private sector, Oil refining

**Issue(s) exposed:** Environmental pollution

Tonči Majica was a judge in Sisak leading a lawsuit against INA, a Croatian multinational oil company charged with having caused environmental pollution. However, throughout proceedings he was subjected to harassment at his workplace by colleagues and stopped from copying the documents that proved the environmental pollution caused by INA.<sup>14</sup> He was hit by a car and when his father died and he took a day off, he was pushed to prove he had indeed died.<sup>15</sup> His superiors refused to extend his 5-year term for unexplained reasons, something he claims was politically motivated and spent years in the courts fighting.<sup>16</sup>



## Cyprus

**Area(s) affected:** Tax, Public sector

**Issue(s) exposed:** Tax avoidance, Lack of financial transparency

Maria Efimova had been a source for Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia until the latter was murdered in 2017.<sup>17</sup> Caruana Galizia, a leading journalist in the Panama Papers leak, had been heavily involved in exposing corruption in Malta that reached the highest levels of government. Maria Efimova reportedly revealed to Caruana Galizia that the wife of Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat held a secret bank account to which Azerbaijan's ruling clan had sent dirty money.<sup>18</sup> Ms Efimova lived in Cyprus until 2014, and the country has now issued an EU arrest warrant for her over accusations from her former employer Fragrance Distribution that she stole money from them.<sup>19</sup> Russia and Malta are also after the whistleblower, with the latter wanting her on charges she defrauded expenses from another former employer Pilatus Bank.<sup>20</sup> She is convinced the Cypriot authorities are doing this in an attempt to have her extradited to Malta, and she has expressed that she is afraid for her life.<sup>21</sup> The European Parliament has asked for Member States to grant her asylum, and she has given testimony to a number of MEPs via videolink from an undisclosed location.<sup>22</sup>

## Czech Republic

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption, Misuse of public funds



In 2009-2010 Jiří Chytil was working as a city council official in Prague and had been cooperating with the police by providing evidence for a case about an irregular public tendering process for the OpenCard project, a multifunctional card to be used for various public services in the city.<sup>23</sup> Mr. Chytil was reporting on how the tendering process was manipulated with its costs rising from 165 million CZK to over 1.2 billion CZK.<sup>24</sup> He had been promised secret witness status in return for cooperating with the police but the officer who promised him this was later replaced and the decision was overturned, meaning he and four other colleagues suddenly faced criminal charges.<sup>25</sup> His identity was then leaked to the public, he was fired from his position and ultimately given an 18-month suspended jail sentence in 2014.<sup>26</sup>

## Denmark

**Area(s) affected:** Public and private sector, Energy

**Issue(s) exposed:** Fraud, Corruption

Dong Energy (now known as Ørsted) is one of the largest energy companies in Denmark. Thanks to the company's own whistleblower scheme (Denmark has no specific law that protects whistleblowers, nor does it have a dedicated channel for whistleblowers to disclose information) six employees and the company's director Anders Eldrup (a former Permanent Secretary at the Department of Finance) were fired.<sup>27</sup> This was after a whistleblower informed the company's chairman Fritz Schur about overly generous conditions for certain employees granted by Eldrup, dubious agreements with suppliers, the abuse of company credit cards, conflicts of interest, money being paid under the table, and breaches of confidentiality agreements.<sup>28</sup> An internal investigation launched by Schur confirmed the wrongdoing and ultimately led to the dismissals.<sup>29</sup>



## Estonia

**Area(s) affected:** Private sector, Finance

**Issue(s) exposed:** Money laundering, Financial crimes

Allegations of money laundering operations linked to Russian personalities were revealed by an unnamed whistleblower employed at Danske Bank in Estonia in early 2018 (although the case dates back to 2013).<sup>30</sup> The whistleblower at the time sent a report to management at the bank's headquarters in Copenhagen detailing alleged money laundering at Lantana Trade LLP, a company making suspicious payments that had already apparently made false representations to the British authorities.<sup>31</sup> The report linked this company to members of the Russian intelligence service (FSB) and even members of the Russian President Vladimir Putin's family.<sup>32</sup> It also claimed that the bank's management may have broken the law and possibly helped launder the money held in accounts by these people, which possibly originated from illegal activities.<sup>33</sup> Because of fears of reprisals from the individuals linked to the report or from Danske Bank, the whistleblower has decided to remain anonymous.<sup>34</sup> The Estonian Financial Supervisory Authority has now launched an investigation into Danske Bank to find out if it knowingly withheld information during routine inspections it conducted at the bank in 2014.<sup>35</sup>



## Finland

**Area(s) affected:** Private sector, Nuclear industry

**Issue(s) exposed:** Breaches of public health and safety standards

Concerns over safety practices at the nuclear company Fennovoima led a number of employees to report these to the Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority, who then began an investigation.<sup>36</sup> Nils Merikanto, one of the employees who had contacted the authority and a director at the company, subsequently lost his job.<sup>37</sup> He claims he was asked to tell his colleagues he had decided to retire despite actually being fired, and a non-disclosure agreement in his contract disallowed him from telling the truth about why he had to leave the company.<sup>38</sup> His notice of termination later confirmed that he had indeed been fired because of his contact with the Finnish Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority.<sup>39</sup> The company's CEO Jussi Lehto, who had initially denied any link between Mr Merikanto's dismissal and his contact with the safety authority, later accepted this was a factor in his dismissal, but added in a TV interview that there had been longer-term problems with Mr Merikanto.<sup>40</sup>



## France

**Areas(s) affected:** Private sector, Technology

**Issue(s) exposed:** Mass surveillance

In 2007, James Dunne, a longtime employee of French technology company Qosmos, began to have concerns that the company's products could be used for spying purposes.<sup>41</sup> Raising these concerns several times with management, he was continuously assured that this was not the case.<sup>42</sup> Unconvinced, in 2009 he began to copy internal documents and hide them, when in 2011 and 2012 it was revealed by media organisations that Qosmos had in fact been contributing to two mass surveillance schemes used by the Libyan dictator General Gheddafi, and the Syrian dictator Bashar Al-Assad.<sup>43</sup> This led James Dunne to hand over the documents he had collected to Mediapart (a French news site), the International Federation for Human Rights, and the French authorities.<sup>44</sup> At the end of 2012 he was fired from his job and spent four years in court over defamation.<sup>45</sup> The debacle caused him to fall into depression and he suffered financial difficulties.<sup>46</sup> Having won his court battles however, he has now started to rebuild his life.<sup>47</sup>



## Germany

**Area(s) affected:** Sports

**Issue(s) exposed:** Doping

Two whistleblowers who have revealed widespread doping in sports in Russia and China have been forced to flee to Germany because of fears about their safety. Andrey Dmitriev, a Russian former athlete, fled after he accused the Russian Athletics Federation of ignoring sanctions imposed by the International Association of Athletics Federations, which had banned the coach Vladimir Kazarin from working with the country's athletes.<sup>48</sup> Kazarin had been banned for his alleged involvement in systematic doping in Russian athletics but thanks to footage shot by Andrey Dmitriev, it came to light that the Russian Athletics Federation was ignoring the ban.<sup>49</sup> Having had his sports scholarship taken away from him in Russia and afraid for his safety because of threats being made against him, Dmitriev fled to Germany.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, a Chinese whistleblower who alleged widespread doping in China in the 1980s and 1990s fled to Germany because of fears for her own safety.<sup>51</sup> Warned by the Chinese government about revealing any information about doping (particularly before the 2008 Beijing Olympics), she claims she faced regular intimidation by the authorities, which included a continuous police presence outside her home.<sup>52</sup>



## Greece

**Area(s) affected:** Public finances

**Issue(s) exposed:** Misreporting by statistics agency

Andreas Georgiou is a statistician who was recruited in 2010 to be head of Greece's statistical agency Elstat by the International Monetary Fund.<sup>53</sup> Under his leadership, Elstat increased the estimate of the budget deficit from 13.5% to 15.4% of Gross Domestic Product, which helped trigger the Eurozone debt crisis.<sup>54</sup> Mr Georgiou has since been the focus of intense media scrutiny, with various accusations and charges levelled against him, particularly from political figures including the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and the President Prokopis Pavlapoulos.<sup>55</sup> In 2013 he faced charges (later dropped) of having manipulated the figures himself to exaggerate Greece's debt, and of having acted against the national interest.<sup>56</sup> In August 2017 he was given

a suspended sentence for 'violating his duties', namely failing to inform the Greek statistics agency board that he had communicated his revised data to Eurostat, the EU's statistics agency. Many commentators argue Mr Georgiou is simply a scapegoat to distract from the country's financial mismanagement in the years preceding the debt crisis.<sup>58</sup>



## Hungary

**Area(s) affected:** Tax

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption

András Horváth, a former tax inspector at Hungary's National Tax and Customs Administration (NVA), became Hungary's most famous whistleblower in 2013 when he went public with allegations of vast fraud and other misconduct by the NVA, including: ignoring tax fraud worth billions of forints by the country's largest companies; of failing to investigate tax arrears and the associated penalties and fines; and of prematurely ending tax audits.<sup>59</sup> The NAV then brought charges against Mr Horváth, accusing him of damaging its reputation, violating tax secrecy measures and of abusing personal data when he was putting together his dossier.<sup>60</sup> Despite the legal battles, Mr Horváth remains determined in his battle against corruption having been recently tasked with reviewing years of public procurement contracts by the Mayor of Hódmezővásárhely because of suspected irregularities.<sup>61</sup>



## Ireland

**Area(s) affected:** Health and safety

**Issue(s) exposed:** Malpractice, Breaches of health and safety standards

Despite making protected disclosures under the Protected Disclosures Act, legislation designed to protect whistleblowers from punishment for reporting workplace issues, a member of the Air Corps in Ireland was brought before its medical board in August 2017, seemingly in retaliation for making a disclosure.<sup>62</sup> The reasons given by the board were "chronic ineffectivity" caused by anxiety and a "work-related industrial dispute".<sup>63</sup> However, two other whistleblowers have also come forward to report on the same issue, namely health and safety concerns over air quality and the management of hazardous chemicals at Casement Aerodrome, and the destruction of documents that substantiated the threat to health and safety.<sup>64</sup> One of the whistleblowers revealed that an official had been destroying documentary evidence of the dangerous levels of toxic chemicals at the aerodrome over the years, but had not been aware that copies of the files had been made.<sup>65</sup> Six former staff at the aerodrome are suing the Irish State over their exposure to the chemicals that they claim are the cause of their chronic illnesses.<sup>66</sup>



## Italy

**Area(s) affected:** Education

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption/Nepotism

Philip Laroma Jezzi was preparing for his exam to qualify as a tax law professor, when he came under pressure by several professors to withdraw his candidacy in favour of another candidate less qualified than him.<sup>67</sup> In exchange for pulling out, he was promised he would be able to pass the exam the next time it was held.<sup>68</sup> However Jezzi, who is half-Italian, half-English, rejected the offer. After he questioned the process for awarding professorships, he was asked, “What will you do, appeal? That way you’ll risk your career. Stop doing things the English way and do them the Italian way”.<sup>69</sup> He then began to secretly record his conversations with senior academics over the following year to document the extent of nepotism in the university and an evaluation system based on personal or professional interests rather than merit.<sup>70</sup> Mr Jezzi then provided this material to the police, which led to a police investigation targeting 59 academics.<sup>71</sup> Seven university professors were ultimately put under house arrest and 22 were banned from academic roles for the following year.<sup>72</sup>



## Latvia

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector, Health

**Issue(s) exposed:** Risks to public health

Iveta Ozoliņa was dismissed from her job as Director of the State Blood Donor Centre in Latvia in 2017 for revealing to the media that patients were at risk of contracting hepatitis C because of old testing machines which possibly failed to register positive results.<sup>73</sup> She faced disciplinary proceedings from the Ministry of Health that claimed the procedure was in fact safe and that by scaring blood donors she had harmed the interests of the State.<sup>74</sup>



## Lithuania

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector, Prison system

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption

In late 2016 Ms. Rasa Kazėnienė, an accountant working at the Kaunas Interrogation Isolation Ward, filed a report documenting various procedural and financial violations, including inflated prices and a sham tendering process.<sup>75</sup> The report was about systemic corruption and the misuse of public funds within the penitentiary system, which allegedly implicated the responsible Vice-Minister. While the report was being assessed by the Special Investigation Service (the country's anti-corruption agency) Ms. Kazėnienė was subjected to threats and humiliation by colleagues and her boss.<sup>76</sup> However, after details of the report were leaked to the press, it created a huge political scandal and several high-level figures resigned or were dismissed. Her then boss Mr. Evaldas Kviatkauskas and the head of the Department of Prisons Ms. Živilė Mikėnaitė were dismissed while the Minister and Vice-Minister of Justice Ms. Milda Vainiūtė and Mr. Raimundas Bakšys resigned in March 2018 over what was seen as a failure to respond adequately to the scandal.



## Luxembourg

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector, Cyber security

**Issue(s) exposed:** Flaws in security system

A radio station in Luxembourg called Radio 100.7 recently broke a story about an individual who, because of a security flaw on a State-owned platform, had managed to obtain over 1000 account passwords belonging to Ministers, Members of Parliament, journalists and civil servants.<sup>77</sup> It appears these passwords are also used to access other State-owned networks or platforms.<sup>78</sup> This individual then approached GovCert, a State body responsible for cyber security in the country, informing them she wished to provide them with this information, but only on the condition that she be protected from criminal prosecution.<sup>79</sup> Having failed to receive such an assurance, she did not report the information.<sup>80</sup>

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## Malta

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption

A former police inspector, Jonathan Ferris, lost his job in June 2017 shortly after beginning a new role investigating cases of fraud at a Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit within the police.<sup>81</sup> He claims that his dismissal was politically motivated, the result of Ministerial intervention, and an attempt to stop his investigations into money laundering and corruption among Malta's political elite.<sup>82</sup> Ferris had been working on a case that overlapped with the work of murdered journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia. Fearing for his life after her murder, he said he has arranged for incriminating documents to be released should anything happen to him.<sup>83</sup> MEPs, including Green/EFA MEP Sven Giegold, have called for Ferris to be granted full police protection and whistleblower status.<sup>84</sup>



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## Netherlands

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector

**Issue(s) exposed:** Breach of laws and regulations

In the Netherlands, the Dutch Whistleblowers Authority has collected testimonies from a number of whistleblowers, which despite the comparatively strong support afforded to whistleblowers in the country, still demonstrate the retaliation they can face for exposing wrongdoing. In one example, a whistleblower believed the government institution he was working for was breaching laws and regulations, and so he first raised the matter internally with management, and then externally when his concerns were ignored.<sup>85</sup> This standoff caused him significant stress, and he was harassed and eventually dismissed from his position.<sup>86</sup> Although he was recognised as a whistleblower by an investigatory body, his dismissal for what management claimed was unsatisfactory performance became the focus of a court case.<sup>87</sup>

## Poland

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector, Public tender process

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption

Dorota Zira, a doctor who was working in a public management role was offered a promotion in 2010 by her boss.<sup>88</sup> However, the promotion was conditional on her accepting to rig public tenders, and she refused. Her boss then asked one of Zira's colleagues to do so, and this involved purchasing unnecessary medical equipment at inflated prices from a business with which she claims he had ties.<sup>89</sup> Refusing to follow his orders led to Zira being threatened and insulted by him. She was then gradually isolated by her colleagues in the office, as her boss instructed them not to engage with her.<sup>90</sup> Complaints to her supervisors led nowhere. She then reported the perceived irregularities in the tendering process to a public body investigating economic crimes. After two years of criminal proceedings the case was dismissed, although a number



of instances of malpractice were identified, including that her boss had lied about his ties to the company that was awarded the contract,<sup>91</sup> and that product specifications were so detailed that they seemed to be designed to exclude any other potential bidders.<sup>92</sup> Her boss was then reinstated to his position and continued as Ms. Zira's boss.<sup>93</sup>

## Portugal

**Area(s) affected:** Military police

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption

In 2006 an unnamed whistleblower in the National Republican Guard (NRG) in Portugal exposed corruption at the highest levels of the organisation. He revealed that the commandant-in-chief of the NRG, Colonel Mourato Nunes, had been involved in corruption and other illegal activities, which led to his dismissal.<sup>94</sup> For blowing the whistle however, the whistleblower was subjected to harassment within the NRG for his actions, and indicted for bribery, which led to a six-year freeze in the advancement of his career.<sup>95</sup> These allegations were however later proven false and he was acquitted, with the judges declaring that the personal and professional consequences were an inadmissible form of punishment for what he had done.<sup>96</sup>

## Romania

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption

Mariana Rădulescu, head accountant at the Brukenthal National Museum in Sibiu spotted a number of irregularities in the museum's management of its funds and activities, and so reported them to its Director.<sup>97</sup> In doing so, she accused a manager at the museum Professor Sabin Adrian Luca, who reportedly had created a hostile working environment where harassment and discrimination were rife.<sup>98</sup> Soon after reporting the irregularities, Ms Rădulescu was sanctioned for a mistake she had made in an invoice, a decision she appealed against, only to find she had been sanctioned for her absence from work, an absence due to her very attendance in court.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, Professor Luca brought a civil case against her for defamation.<sup>100</sup>



## Slovakia

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector, Public procurement

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption, Misuse of public funds

In preparation for the Slovak presidency of the Council of the European Union set for the latter half of 2016, Zuzana Hlavkova was involved in helping promote the country abroad as part of her role at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>101</sup> She soon noticed that pre-determined budgets were increasing massively, and that despite rules on public tendering requiring an open call, an exemption was applied for a media company helping to organise a ceremony unveiling the country's logo for the Presidency.<sup>102</sup> Other events also saw their budgets increase massively and not all had their funding sourced through the appropriate body.<sup>103</sup> All of this caused Hlavkova to resign and to seek a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs to explain her concerns, but she was told by the Minister that there were cartels in the IT sector that the State was powerless against.<sup>104</sup> Dissatisfied with the response, she decided to go public, which led to threats of legal action from a leading government official, and to the Prime Minister Robert Fico labelling journalists investigating her concerns "dirty, anti-Slovak prostitutes".<sup>105</sup>



## Slovenia

**Area(s) affected:** Public procurement

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption

In 2016 Marjana Mrak, an employee of the public company Infrastructure Bled, reported irregularities in the public procurement process to the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption in Slovenia. This organisation subsequently confirmed these allegations were true, but Ms Mrak was nevertheless dismissed from her position. The Labour Inspectorate subsequently reinstated her to her position deeming the dismissal was most likely a retaliatory measure for her whistleblowing. This was in addition to threats she received from her director, and the isolation she suffered within the workplace because of her actions.<sup>106</sup>



## Spain

**Area(s) affected:** Trade Unions

**Issue(s) exposed:** Corruption, Misuse of public funds



Roberto Macías has spent years fighting in the courts after he revealed fraud at the Andalusian chapter of one of Spain's two biggest trade unions, the General Union of Workers.<sup>107</sup> He has been accused of stealing computer files and faces several years in jail and a €60,000 fine.<sup>108</sup> The Andalusian regional government has accused the same union of spending €1.8 million on parties and gifts for its staff, rather than for unemployed workers, which the money was intended for.<sup>109</sup> For revealing this alleged fraud, Roberto Macías has faced harassment, and after he lost his job at the union, much financial difficulty as he has remained unemployed ever since.<sup>110</sup> The Secretary-General of the General Union of Workers tried to imply equivalence in an interview, arguing that both the alleged theft of documents by Mr. Macías and the public money fraud should be investigated.<sup>111</sup>

## Sweden

**Area(s) affected:** Public sector, Cyber security, Privacy

**Issue(s) exposed:** Data breach

In a case dating back to 2015, whistleblowers in Sweden raised the alarm about a potential data leak of information from the country's driving licence database.<sup>112</sup> Due to a rushed outsourcing contract between the country's Transport Agency and IBM Sweden, IT contractors without security clearances based outside the country were given access to this information.<sup>113</sup> The rushed contract was down to cost-cutting measures and involved bypassing laws and internal procedures.<sup>114</sup> It was subsequently revealed that these IT workers also had access to citizens' criminal records and a police database containing intelligence on people suspected of crimes.<sup>115</sup> In response, the Swedish government launched an investigation and promised to tighten laws on how sensitive information is handled.<sup>116</sup>

## United Kingdom

**Area(s) affected:** Privacy, Democratic process

**Issue(s) exposed:** Data breach, Breach of electoral spending limits

Two recent high profile cases have caused political upheaval in the United Kingdom. The first relates to a UK-based data analytics firm called Cambridge Analytica, which with the personal information of 50 million Facebook users that was harvested without permission, the company targeted and manipulated voters in the United States to sway the presidential election in favour of Donald Trump.<sup>117</sup> The whistleblower, Christopher Wylie (who helped set up the company) revealed that Facebook failed to retrieve and secure this data, or to inform the users of the breach.<sup>118</sup> Cambridge Analytica has provided services in multiple election campaigns and its



CEO has been caught on camera admitting to using blackmail as a way to intimidate its clients' political opponents.<sup>119</sup>

In a related case, a whistleblower who volunteered with Vote Leave (the official Brexit campaigning group) has revealed that the group broke spending rules, circumventing the £7 million spending limit by illegally funding and directing an organisation known as BeLeave.<sup>120</sup> The extra £625,000 that the whistleblower Shahmir Sanni claims was spent, was funnelled through this organisation (which he was the

treasurer of) and used to buy targeted advertising from the company AggregateIQ, a firm that Christopher Wylie has stated has strong ties to Cambridge Analytica.<sup>121</sup> An adviser to the British Prime Minister Theresa May who worked closely with Shahmir Sanni, has been accused by him of illegally coordinating the work of BeLeave. In a public response to the allegations, he outed Mr. Sanni as gay, something that has caused much personal stress for him.<sup>122</sup>

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Greens/EFA Group in the European Parliament

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