

What Europe does for me

My EU rights and freedoms

Whistle-blowers

You may have heard of the [Panama papers](#) or the [Cambridge Analytica](#) scandal, brought to light by ordinary people. Known as whistle-blowers, these citizens take personal and professional risks in exposing wrongdoing in our workplaces.

Whistle-blowers have an important role in revealing unlawful activities that damage the public interest. However, much wrongdoing goes unreported, as employees fear legal and financial [consequences](#), or harassment in the workplace. Whistle-blower [protection](#) is crucial to encouraging the reporting of fraud and corruption. However, only 10 EU countries fully protect whistle-blowers. In the other EU countries, only specific sectors or categories of employee are protected. Lack of whistle-blower protection leads annually to billions of [losses](#) in potential benefits for the EU.



The good news is that whistle-blowers will be better protected in Europe. Following the European Parliament's [calls](#) for EU-level legislation, the Commission [proposed legislation](#) in 2018 that ensures EU-wide protection for whistle-blowers who expose breaches of EU law in public procurement; financial services, money laundering and terrorist financing; product and food safety; environment; public health; competition; and corporate tax rules. The proposed [law](#) adds to other EU employment and social law measures and sets up safe channels for reporting within an organisation and to authorities. It will also protect whistle-blowers against dismissal or demotion. Meanwhile, the Commission's [Anonymous Whistle-blower](#) tool can be used by any individual to signal unfair business practices.

Further information

- EPRS publication on protection of whistle-blowers at EU level, 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2017/608774/EPRS_ATA\(2017\)608774_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2017/608774/EPRS_ATA(2017)608774_EN.pdf)
- European Commission, fact-sheet on whistle-blower protection, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/placeholder_11.pdf
- European Commission, website on whistle-blowers protection, https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/whistleblowers-protection_en
- EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service: www.eprthinktank.eu

[Photo credits: © areebarbar / Fotolia]