Network of European Integrity and Whistleblowing Authorities (NEIWA)

Bratislava Declaration May 22, 2026

AUSTRIA	Viennese's External Reporting Office for EU Infringements
BELGIUM	Federal Institute for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights Federal Ombudsman Flemish Ombudsman Office Ombuds Brussels Ombudsman of the German-speaking Community Ombudsman of Wallonia and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation
BULGARIA	Commission for Personal Data Protection
CROATIA	Office of the Ombudswoman
CZECH REPUBLIC	Ministry of Justice
FRANCE	Defender of Rights
GERMANY	Federal Office of Justice
GREECE	National Transparency Authority
IRELAND	Fiosrú - Office of the Police Ombudsman Office of the Protected Disclosures Commissioner
ITALY	National Anticorruption Authority
LATVIA	Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau of Latvia (KNAB)
LUXEMBOURG	Office for Whistleblowers
LITHUANIA	General Prosecutors' Office
MONTENEGRO	Agency for Prevention of Corruption
POLAND	Commissioner for Human Rights
PORTUGAL	National Anti-Corruption Mechanism
ROMANIA	Ministry of Justice National Integrity Agency
SLOVAKIA	Whistleblower Protection Office
SLOVENIA	Commission for the Prevention of Corruption
SPAIN	Andalusian Office Against Fraud and Corruption Castilla y León´s Independent Authority on Corruption Matters Catalan Anti-Fraud Office Independent Authority for the Protection of Whistleblowers Valencian Anti-Fraud Agency
SWEDEN	Swedish Work Environment Authority
THE NETHERLANDS	Dutch Whistleblowers Authority

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Declaration on Strengthening the Effectiveness of Whistleblower Protection in the European Union

BRATISLAVA, May 22, 2026

Preamble

Recalling that NEIWA, currently representing 22 countries and 33 authorities, was established in The Hague in May 2019 and has strengthened its governance through the adoption of its Constitution in Rome (2023) and its Rules of Procedure in Valencia (2024), and recalling its previous declarations adopted since 2019;

Recalling that Directive (EU) 2019/1937 established a common framework for the protection of persons reporting breaches of Union law and marked a significant step in safeguarding the public interest across the European Union;

Recognising that whistleblowing plays a decisive role in exposing wrongdoing, strengthening accountability, and reinforcing democratic governance and the rule of law;

Highlighting that effective protection of whistleblowers is essential to ensuring transparency, preventing corruption, and maintaining public trust;

Noting, however, that implementation of the Directive has revealed persistent challenges, including fragmentation, legal uncertainty, and barriers to reporting;

Emphasising that limitations in scope, inconsistencies in enforcement, and insufficient support measures undermine its practical effectiveness;

Acknowledging that divergent national approaches further weaken coherence; and

Expressing concern that insufficient legal clarity, uneven enforcement, and structural pressures may jeopardise the independence and stability of whistleblowing authorities, thereby risking a decline in trust, accountability, and the effective enforcement of Union law.

Warning that weakening such authorities - whether through limited mandates, lack of resources, or threats to their independence - may significantly erode trust in reporting systems and deter individuals from coming forward, ultimately impairing democratic oversight and the enforcement of Union law;

Assembly Statement

We, members of NEIWA, gathered in Bratislava on May 22, 2026,

Welcome

- The continued commitment of NEIWA members to improving whistleblower protection frameworks and contributing to the ongoing evaluation and strengthening of Directive (EU) 2019/1937;

- The adoption of the new Directive (EU) 2026/1021 on combating corruption, which harmonises the definition of corruption offences across Member States and establishes a common level of effective, proportionate, and dissuasive penalties, and;
- In particular the requirement of the Directive (EU) 2026/1021 that Member States take the necessary measures to ensure that Directive (EU) 2019/1937 applies to the reporting of corruption-related offences, including bribery in both the public and private sectors, misappropriation, trading in influence, unlawful exercise of public functions, obstruction of justice, and enrichment derived from corruption, as well as incitement, aiding and abetting, concealment and attempts to commit such offences.

Recommend that our members:

- Contribute actively to ensuring the consistent interpretation and application of domestic rules, in alignment with both the wording and the underlying objectives of Directive (EU) 2019/1937.
- Continue to develop consistent practices in handling whistleblower reports, including improving the quality, clarity, and follow-up of reports.
- Strengthen expertise and professional capacity within competent authorities to ensure effective, independent, and impartial handling of cases.
- Promote trust in reporting mechanisms by ensuring transparency, fairness, and timely communication with reporting persons, as well as by providing high-quality advisory services, including access to appropriate psychological support.

Call upon legislators, governments and all stakeholders to:

Regarding the effectiveness and scope of the legal framework:

- Swiftly review and, where appropriate, adapt their national legislation to ensure alignment with the newly adopted Directive (EU) 2026/1021 on combating corruption, thereby strengthening coherence between anti-corruption frameworks and whistleblower protection systems.
- Expand the material scope of whistleblower protection to cover all serious wrongdoings and breaches of national law, thereby eliminating legal uncertainty and closing protection gaps.

Regarding support measures and protection against retaliation:

- Establish minimum standards requiring the provision of legal and psychological support for whistleblowers across all Member States.
- Promote comprehensive and accessible information on available support measures to ensure that whistleblowers can effectively exercise their rights.
- Strengthen safeguards against retaliation by explicitly addressing its indirect and informal forms and by ensuring that protection applies effectively in practice.
- Introduce preventive and interim measures to protect whistleblowers from harm at an early stage, including during ongoing proceedings.
- Ensure consistent application of procedural safeguards, including the reversal of the burden of proof, across all Member States.
- Guarantee that protection is not limited by restrictive conditions or procedural ambiguities that may exclude legitimate reporting persons.

Regarding enforcement and institutional capacity:

- Establish clear and effective enforcement mechanisms, including proportionate and dissuasive sanctions, to ensure compliance with whistleblower protection rules.
- Maintain and safeguard the existing institutional independence of whistleblower protection authorities, ensuring that they are adequately resourced, free from undue influence, and able to operate effectively, as a fundamental condition for building trust in whistleblowing frameworks.
- Promote the systematic collection and publication of comparable data on whistleblowing to support evidence-based policymaking.

Regarding anonymous reporting:

- Encourage the requirement for the proper handling of anonymous reports in both internal and external reporting channels, across the public and private sectors, as an essential element of accessible, effective, and trustworthy reporting systems, enabling individuals to report wrongdoing without fear and ensuring appropriate follow-up and protection safeguards.
- Ensure that individuals who later become identifiable continue to benefit from full protection.

Regarding practical implementation and awareness:

- Promote awareness-raising, guidance, and training - particularly for judges, legal professionals, and designated persons responsible for handling reports - to ensure that reporting mechanisms are understood, accessible, and trusted across both professional and wider public communities.
- Encourage a shift from formal compliance toward effective and trustworthy organisational practices that support ethical reporting.

Call upon the European Commission to:

- **Clarify and, where possible, harmonise** key legal concepts and existing definitions (such as, for example the right to choose between internal and external reporting channels, reversal of the burden of proof and a self-standing crime)[1] to ensure the consistent application of Directive (EU) 2019/1937 across the European Union.
- **Provide clarity on Member States' obligations** to ensure the provision of independent information and advice through independent authorities, and outline the key guarantees required to safeguard their institutional and operational independence, including clear mandates, adequate resources, and protection from undue influence,
- **Foster transparency** in reporting channels established by institutions, bodies, offices or agencies of the European Union.
- **Provide guidance on data collection** to ensure the availability of reliable and comparable data enabling effective evaluation of the framework and the identification of shortcomings in legislation and practice.

[1] NEIWA Submission on the Evaluation of Directive (EU) 2019/1937 on the protection of whistleblowers

- **Establish guidelines for Member States** on the transposition of whistleblower protection provisions under the Directive (EU) 2026/1021 on combating corruption, ensuring coherence between anti-corruption frameworks and whistleblower protection systems, whilst ensuring the safeguarding of independance for Whistleblower authorities.