

Network of European Integrity and Whistleblowing Authorities (NEIWA)

Rome Declaration

Adopted on 24th of March 2023

NEIWA currently consists of the following members:

Belgium	Federal Ombudsman Flemish Ombudsman German speaking community Ombudsman Ombudsman of the Brussels-Capital Region
Bulgaria	Commission for Anti-Corruption and Illegal Assets Forfeiture
Croatia	Ombudswoman
Czech Republic	Ministry of Justice, Conflict of Interests and Anti-Corruption Department
Denmark	Data Protection Authority
Estonia	Ministry of Justice, Criminal Policy Department
Finland	Ministry of Justice
France	Défenseur des Droits
Germany	Federal Office of Justice of Germany
Greece	National Transparency Authority
Hungary	Commissioner for Fundamental Rights
Iceland	Prime Minister's Office
Ireland	Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission GSOC Protected Disclosure Unit (PDU)
Italy	National Anticorruption Authority (ANAC)
Latvia	State Chancellery, Contact Point of Whistleblowers Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau
Lithuania	General Prosecutor's Office
Montenegro	Agency for Prevention of Corruption
Netherlands	The Dutch Whistleblower Authority
Portugal	Prosecutor's General Office
Romania	Ministry of Justice
Slovakia	Prime Minister's Office (Corruption Prevention Department) Whistleblower Protection Office
Slovenia	Commission for the Prevention of Corruption
Spain	Ministry of Justice Valencian Anti-Fraud Agency (AVAF) Anti-Fraud Office of Catalonia (OAC) Prevention and Fight against Corruption Office of the Balearic Islands Andalusian Office against Fraud and Corruption
Sweden	Swedish Work Environment Authority

The representatives of NEIWA's members gathered in Rome have approved the following Declaration:

The Network of European Integrity and Whistleblowing Authorities (NEIWA), currently representing 34 Authorities, has been established in May 2019 to offer a platform for cooperation and exchange of knowledge and experiences in the area of integrity and whistleblowing.

NEIWA has considerably grown over the last years and strives to gather Public Authorities from EU Member States, EU-candidates and EFTA countries, who have a central and / or pivotal role in the field of whistleblowing (reports, investigation, protection, support, advice, prevention, education and or enforcement), with the EU Directive 2019/1937 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law as the common basis.

In bringing these authorities together, NEIWA aims to coordinate efforts towards the strengthening of the protection of reporting persons, through the exchange of knowledge and practices. The possibility to speak up, to safely report a breach of law or wrongdoing are essential conditions to advance work-related integrity and, by doing so, to protect the public interest. We also strive to uphold and promote recognized international standards for the protection of reporting persons and for integrity in work relations.

At the 8th General Assembly of NEIWA in Rome, the Network approved the inclusion of such goals and objectives in a constitution together with the principles that inspire the structure and workings of the Network. In addition, the Network elected a formal governance that includes the following:

Chair: Laura Valli, Italian Anticorruption Authority

Vice-chair: Zuzanna Dluhošová, Slovakia Whistleblower Protection Office

Board members: Rody Butler, Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission

Joan Ilinares, Valencian Anti-Fraud Agency

Oscar Roca Safont, Anti-Fraud Office of Catalonia

With the establishment of a formal board and the validation of the Constitution, NEIWA takes an important step towards the future.

At the General Assembly in Rome, the members took stock of the current state of implementation of the EU Directive in the different member states and exchanged views on the national legislations approved so far and the processes followed to obtain such legislations. NEIWA members can not only learn from each other and from the different ways of implementation, but also from those experiences in view of the future implementation and putting in practise of the regulation. It means NEIWA will continue to work as a network on different topics, related to whistleblowing and integrity, to enhance our expertise and to share good practices within and outside the network.

NEIWA also ascertained that a number of EU member states have not yet completed the transposition of the EU Directive. NEIWA urges those countries to make haste with the transposition and implementation not only according to the letter but also to the spirit of the Directive.

NEIWA members call upon the legislators and all involved in the implementation process to:

- ensure that all reporting persons can benefit from effective legal, psychological and financial support when reporting;
- establish by law the prohibition of retaliation and ensure sufficient protection to reporting persons from retaliation, either direct or indirect by means of effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties;
- make support and protection of whistleblowers more effective, and
- broaden the scope of the national law in the spirit of the Directive.

To make sure reporting persons receive the protection they need, NEIWA emphasizes the need to have one or more recognizable, centrally positioned authorities within each member state.

Those authorities should protect the confidentiality of their actions, be autonomous, work independently, and have sufficient resources and a well-trained staff to perform their important tasks. Whistleblowing authorities have to be able to make a decisive difference in the protection and support of whistleblowers.

As recently stated by the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case *Halet v. Luxembourg* no. 21884/18 of 14 February 2023, NEIWA emphasizes the importance of the role of whistleblowers and their right to freedom of expression.

NEIWA is determined to give the topic of protecting people who speak up the importance it deserves, in the interest of all of us.

That is why we will continue to join forces with and bring together even more public authorities with a central or pivotal role in the field of whistleblowing, and when needed get ourselves heard and speak with one voice.

Finally, NEIWA, as a network of practitioners and experts in the area of integrity and whistleblowing, stands ready to collaborate as a key interlocutor with European and international public institutions and private organizations.