

The project: “Legitimacy and Accountability for better protection of Whistleblowers_LAW”



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LEGITIMACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR BETTER PROTECTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS - LAW



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Key information about the LAW project

The main goal of the LAW project is to contribute to national and EU efforts to support and protect whistleblowers (WB) and build capacity of national authorities and legal practitioners to ensure adequate legal remedies to protect whistleblowers.

The LAW project will strengthen the application of national framework and Directive (EU) 2019/1937, in line with respect for transparency, good governance, accountability and freedom of expression.

Romania and Bulgaria are among the top 3 countries in EU where the people do not know where to report corruption. An average of 65% of people in Bulgaria and 49% in Romania fear retaliation for reporting corruption. The EU average is 45%. The path of the two countries in terms of legal framework in the field of whistleblowers protection is quite different. Based on these differences, valuable information can be gleaned about how the two countries manage to ensure the protection of whistleblowers after the legislation transposing the EU Directive was approved. The lessons learned can have a transnational dimension, useful for other EU member states, including from the perspective of respecting the right to freedom of expression.

Considering the challenges in Romania and Bulgaria, the project identified a few types of key target groups that will have a major impact in whistleblowers protection on the short and medium term.

The focus will be on CSO's, experts active in the field of WB protection, persons in charge of handling whistleblowers' reports and also students as future experts in the field. It is expected that by events such as training sessions, workshops and seminars the project will support at least 400 persons to improve their knowledge to assure adequate counseling and protection for potential whistleblowers.

To improve general public awareness, at least 3 million people will benefit from better information about their legal rights and reliable channels to report wrongdoing.

The project will contribute to increase whistleblowers protection, as an additional guarantee of respect for freedom of expression and the right to information, as insufficient protection of whistleblowers against reprisals affects the freedom of expression.



Main results expected at the end of the LAW project implementation

At least 180 persons and institutions they work for will have improved knowledge to correctly apply the national legal framework transposing EU Directive 1937/2019.

At least 180 students from Romania and Bulgaria will be expected to participate at thematic seminars regarding whistleblowing protection.

At least 3 million people, including potential whistleblowers will benefit from better information about their legal rights and obligations, including reliable channels to report wrongdoing and in terms of adequate support.

At least 60 civil society representatives from Romania and Bulgaria will have increased capacity and improved knowledge based on thematic workshops in the project

At least 150 experts in the field of whistleblowing will be invited to join an online networking group, in order to create a community of experts in the field of whistleblowers protection.

The communication campaign will also contribute to increased awareness and understanding amongst the general public of the existing reporting channels and procedures to report wrongdoing, as well as of the rights provided under the national framework and under the Directive.



About the LAW project partners

The LAW project is implemented by three partners meaning:

- **two civil society organizations**, both Chapters of Transparency International movement - **Transparency International Romania** and **Transparency International Bulgaria**
- and **one public institution: the National Integrity Agency in Romania**, the responsible authority designated by the Romanian whistleblowers protection law as the main external whistleblowing channel.

Transparency International Romania and Transparency International Bulgaria have extensive experience on whistleblowing theme. Both TI Chapters have been operating ALACs – the Advocacy and Legal Advice Centers that provide free and confidential advice and support to victims and witnesses of corruption, enabling them to defend their rights, seek redress and stand up for justice. Also, both NGOs have experience in promoting and advocating the protection of whistleblowers.

On the other hand, the challenges related to whistleblowing channel and potential whistleblowers protection in Romania and Bulgaria are similar, therefore the cooperation between the two partners can be beneficial for both countries.

The third partner in the project is the National Integrity Agency in Romania, the responsible authority designated by the Romanian whistleblowers protection law as the main external whistleblowing channel. TI-Romania and the National Integrity Agency have a long and very good cooperation experience. They implemented projects in partnership for the promotion of integrity and prevention of conflicts of interests in Romania, on a continuous basis, since 2018.

By working together, civil society and the public sector can strengthen legal frameworks and policies to provide comprehensive protection for whistleblowers.



Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme

Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme aims to protect and promote rights and values as enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights in particular by supporting civil society organisations active at local, regional, national and transnational level.

The CERV programme seeks to support and develop open, rights-based, democratic, equal and inclusive societies based on the rule of law. That includes a vibrant and empowered civil society, encouraging people's democratic, civic and social participation and cultivating the rich diversity of European society, based on our common values, history and memory.

The CERV programme was launched in 2021 and will run for seven years until 2027. It was created along with the 2021-2027 Justice programme under the Justice, Rights and Values Fund.

Civil society organisations active at local, regional, national and transnational level, as well as other stakeholders, can apply to receive CERV funding for initiatives aimed at citizens' engagement, equality for all and the protection and promotion of rights and EU values.

The project “Legitimacy and Accountability for better protection of Whistleblowers_LAW” is co-financed by European Union, through the medium of Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme.