



**BRIEFING PAPER**  
WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION IN THE EU

# Whistleblower Protection in Lithuania

## Introduction

Despite periodic debates and attempts to improve whistleblower rights since the early 2000s, Lithuania still lacks a comprehensive system to protect whistleblowers from retaliation. Not only do its laws provide few provisions for public or company employees to report crime and corruption, Lithuania has no legal or publicly accepted definition of whistleblowing.

Because of the underrecognition of the issue in Lithuania, assessing any practical protections for employees and citizens who report misconduct is difficult – as is identifying cases of whistleblowing and unfair dismissal. Apart from media and public exposure of international cases, the issue of whistleblowing remains virtually unknown. Only a few cases have been publicly reported.

Political and public awareness has increased in recent years, yet this has not led to substantial momentum for legislative action to strengthen whistleblower rights,

## Laws, Institutions and Procedures

The only legal provision related to whistleblowing is a 2003 resolution that allows financial compensation for citizens who provide information on financial crimes. Under certain circumstances, employees are protected from unfair dismissal, but whistleblowing is not particularly taken into account.

Some government agencies have mechanisms for employees to report wrongdoing, but their effectiveness remains questionable. Lithuania has nearly 100 reporting channels, according to Transparency International, but no mechanisms to protect people who make reports.

Although not directly applicable to all potential cases of whistleblowing, guidelines issued by the Ministry of Interior in 2013 seek to regulate the reporting of certain types of misconduct within the public sector.

There is no designated government agency that tracks cases or provides support to whistleblowers. The Special Investigations Service's Anti-Corruption Agency offers a hotline to report acts of corruption, though it is not tailored for whistleblowers.

It is not known whether labor courts have heard any unfair dismissal cases related to whistleblowing.

## Recent or Ongoing Initiatives and Trends

A draft whistleblower law did not pass Parliament in 2005, neither did the proposed law "On Protection of Persons Reporting Corruption" developed after the 2008 elections. In June 2014 officials from the Justice



Ministry and Special Investigation Service pledged to place whistleblower protection on the Parliament's agenda, but no legislative progress has known to be made. There is a lack of consensus among politicians as to whether new protections are required.

## Whistleblower Cases

Very few cases of whistleblowing have been publicly reported in recent years. This has exacerbated difficulties in assessing the needs of employees or citizens who are considering making a disclosure.

One prominent case stems from 2006. During a public meeting with politicians in Krekenava, resident Dalia Budreviciene stood up and asked when the salaries a large local company would be paid according to official rules. The meat-processing company Krekenavos Agrofirma, which was owned by a political party chairman, had been paying workers off books. This "envelope practice" allowed the company to avoid paying taxes while depriving employees of social security benefits.

Budreviciene was fired and faced criminal defamation charges. She sued the company for unfair dismissal and won a €24,000. She also received a medal of courage from Lithuania's president. Budreviciene later confessed she might not have disclosed the scheme if she knew about the consequences.

## Data and Statistics

Because Lithuania has neither a government agency that tracks whistleblower cases nor a legal definition of whistleblowing, the number of cases filed each year and their outcome is not known.

## Public Perception of Whistleblowing

Despite the lack of a legal framework, public perceptions whistleblowers are generally positive in Lithuania. Among the public, reporting misconduct is seen as brave and proactive, making Lithuania one of the few former Soviet countries where whistleblowers are not commonly branded as snitches or informants.

Two-thirds of people surveyed by Transparency International in 2013 said they believe public officials and civil servants are corrupt. Yet there remains a reluctance by government institutions to develop whistleblower protection systems.

## Capacities and Knowledge Centers

The Lithuania chapter of Transparency International has conducted several public and advocacy campaigns to improve whistleblower rights. Apart from this, there are no other civil society organizations dealing with the issue in particular.

The Special Investigation Service operates an Anti-Corruption Agency, to which reports on corruption and abuse of power by public institutions and employees can be submitted.

Online channels to report corruption are on the rise, but a 2011 study conducted by Transparency International revealed systemic and structural problems with most of them.