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Now is the time for EU-wide whistleblower protection

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Yesterday, the European Commission [published](#) its revised proposal on the Anti-Money Laundering Directive, which includes commitments to greater transparency, by giving public access to [beneficial ownership](#) information. However, public access to beneficial ownership information alone is not enough to prevent money laundering and the flow of illicit assets through complex financial structures. The Commission must also propose EU-wide laws on whistleblower protection.


Part of the package the Commission released yesterday also made reference to the vital role that whistleblowers play in bringing about transparency in the global financial system. The [Panama Papers](#), which have shaken the global financial system and pushed the EU into action on money laundering and [tax transparency](#), were revealed by a [whistleblower](#). Whistleblowers need to be able to come forward to expose wrong-doing and the Commission recognised this yesterday in its communiqué.

The unnecessary sentencing of [Antoine Deltour](#) last week proves that in the current climate whistleblowers face punishment for doing the right thing. If the Commission is serious about protecting people who wish to expose wrong-doing then it cannot delay any longer proposing EU-wide whistleblower protection rules.

This is the first time the Commission has considered, in writing, the possibility of EU-wide whistleblower protection. At an [event in May](#) hosted by the Green Group, the European Commission's Department for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) also mentioned the possibility of the Commission internally discussing a possible EU whistleblower directive, based on the Green's [draft directive](#).

As recently as six months ago this office was told by the Commission that there was “no chance” of the Commission proposing such legislation.

So what has changed? Last week's guilty [verdict](#) for Antoine Deltour in Luxembourg has proved the risks that whistleblowers face when speaking up. The public outcry and campaigning from groups such as Transparency International has been huge. The [European Parliament](#), national politicians and [even Commissioners](#) have lent Deltour and Rafeal Halet their support. Yet, the fact that they were sentenced only goes to show the inadequacies of a lack of Europe-wide whistleblower protection.

We at Transparency International EU have been [actively campaigning](#) to highlight the plight of whistleblowers and the lack of protection across Europe. 

There are several on-going discussions in the European Parliament around whistleblower protection. The [Budgetary Control Committee](#), as well as several other committees, are currently discussing the possibility of drafting their own reports.

Now the European Commission must move quickly. Given the wealth of international best practices and standards (Irish law, Council of Europe, [Transparency International principles](#)) available, the technical task of framing a new Directive should be fairly straightforward. It is time for whistleblower protection across Europe.

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