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Ensuring better protection of whistle-blowers in Europe

Motion for a resolution
tabled by the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Whistle-blowers provide huge benefit to our societies by revealing important hidden truths. They can expose corruption, reveal wrongdoing in companies and public bodies, and help stop activities that endanger the public. Yet whistle-blowers often face terrible consequences for their brave and important work, including a loss of their employment, crippling lawsuits, and even prison sentences.

The Parliamentary Assembly has played a leading role in promoting the protection of whistle-blowers across Europe. In Resolution 1729 (2010), Resolution 2060 (2015) and Resolution 2300 (2019), as well as Recommendation 1916 (2010), Recommendation 2073 (2015) and Recommendation 2162 (2019), the Assembly highlighted the vulnerability and importance of whistle-blowers, urged member States to implement comprehensive measures to protect them, and appealed to the Committee of Ministers to adopt international legal standards to assist with this.

Following the work of the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers adopted a recommendation on the protection of whistle-blowers, the EU adopted a Directive, and many member States passed legislation for the purpose of implementing the Directive and relevant Council of Europe standards.

However, it appears that much work still needs to be done. The Assembly's General Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders and Whistle-blowers was informed of many worrying cases of abuse against whistle-blowers. An evaluation report on the impact of the Committee of Ministers' recommendation highlights the uneven protection of whistle-blowers across Council of Europe member States. Reports from civil society claim that almost no EU member State has fully transposed the EU Directive.

The Assembly's last Resolution on whistle-blowers was adopted almost five years ago. Given the reports of continued shortcomings, the Assembly should revisit this subject and analyse the current national frameworks, identify the remaining gaps, and make concrete recommendations for improvements.