



Southeast Europe Coalition on Whistleblower Protection

Newsletter

no. 7 | DECEMBER 2021



“Praise skeptics and individualists in your organization, by celebrating the courageous act of speaking up as serving the firm's best interests and encouraging every employee to think like they alone are responsible for doing what's right, no matter who else might witness wrongdoing or be a part of it, as not to be a prisoner of groupthink.”

Tom Mueller, author of “Crisis of Conscience: Whistleblowing in an Age of Fraud”

COALITION'S ANNUAL MEETING

Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Coalition's own picture, annual meeting 2021.

The Annual Meeting of the Southeast Europe Coalition on Whistleblower Protection brought together members and partners on 19 November 2021 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The organization of the meeting was supported by Regional Anti-Corruption Initiative and was preceded by a training with RAI experts on whistleblowing.

The training focused on 'Whistleblower Disclosure and Protection in Practice: Discussion of Challenges and Solutions' with the objective to deliver practical knowledge and tools relevant to enabling effective whistleblower disclosures and protection. The trainers shared with the participants their experiences on building an organizational culture supportive of and safe to whistleblowers, improving whistleblower disclosure channels, providing legal protection, and deterring retaliation.

Additionally, the trainers covered the lifecycle of a whistleblower case, from report to resolution. This included the assessment of the situation of the whistleblower, i.e. risks and rewards, costs and benefits, employer status, behavior toward the employer following the whistleblowing act, motives for retaliation, etc.

The materials and methodology included, among others, case studies and role play to make it an interactive experience for the participants.

Trainers



[Mark Worth](#) is a whistleblower advocate, investigative journalist, public interest activist, author, and publisher. He is the Executive Director of the European Center for Whistleblower Rights and is the founder of many organizations, campaigns, and publications, among others, co-coordinator of the Southeast Europe Coalition on Whistleblower Protection. Mark is the Co-recipient of the 1994 Investigative Reporters and Editors Award for best magazine article.



[Tom Devine](#) is Government Accountability Project's Legal Director, and has worked at the organization since 1979. Since that time, Tom has formally or informally assisted over 7,000 whistleblowers in defending themselves against retaliation and in making real differences on behalf of the public. He has not lost a case since 2006, and has prevailed in advocacy at numerous U.S. courts of appeals as well as the Supreme Court.



[Thad M. Guyer](#) has represented clients of Government Accountability Project in state and federal trial and appellate courts across the United States and in Europe and Africa. He is the organization's primary litigator in the tribunals of the United Nations and other international organizations. He is currently based in southeast Asia teaching, consulting and providing support to international whistleblowers, but commutes back to the United States to continue a full litigation caseload of clients of Government Accountability Project.

Some key principles about communicating with a whistleblower are:

- clarifying confidentiality from the beginning, from witness rights to their limits;
- clarifying what protection you can provide, and what you cannot prevent;
- proactively shielding witnesses with advance warnings to employer of zero tolerance for retaliation, which will create a presumption of misconduct on associated charges;
- making their protection a visible priority for whistleblowers so they feel the relationship is a two way street, rather than being mere 'evidence objects' who will be abandoned after no longer needed;
- providing a safe environment for interviews and communications;
- engaging in active listening during interview, feeling heard is significant to open up further.

A story of courage and endurance: Whistleblower Wendy Addison

An interesting talk was scheduled via video call with Wendy Addison, whose whistleblower story resulted in a ten yearlong struggle to get the recognition as a brave whistleblower, but most importantly, to survive and provide for herself in a global context that offered very little support to whistleblowers at the time. Wendy Addison was the whistleblower behind the fraud scandal and eventually collapse of LeisureNet Ltd in 2000, the biggest corporate disaster in South African history. Following her report, she was dismissed from work and threatened with life and that of her (back then) 12 year old son. She moved to the UK where she even ended up on the streets with her son and struggled to provide the bare minimum for her little family. However, she eventually became a motivational speaker and an advocate for the added value that whistleblowing brings to our society and culture.

“I was met with a deafening silence from the South African judiciary, the same judiciary who had utilized my willingness to do the right thing to their own benefit.”

-WENDY ADDISON



“I am now in a position to encourage others to find the moral courage to speak out in the face of wrongdoing and to make whistleblowing a part of risk management...”, - Addison said.

She is a member of the Corruption Research Group at Surrey University. Addison also established an organization, SpeakOut SpeakUp, a program which educates on whistleblowing, corruption and anti-bribery.

(Source: <https://www.iol.co.za/news/leisurenet-whistleblower-speaks-out-1460904>)

Investigative journalism in Serbia

During the Coalition's meeting on the last day of the event, participants discussed about their work on whistleblowing and anti-corruption, challenges in the socio-political context, ongoing and future projects, as well as opportunities for collaboration. An extensive presentation in the field of investigative journalism was the story of two former whistleblowers in Serbia (Vladimir Radomirović and Dragana Matović) who had opted for their own media channel after the dismissal from their previous work as journalists and retaliation following their whistleblowing act. The media channel serves also as a reporting platform for whistleblowers. The team includes legal advisors together with field journalists.

Their channel counts around **900** articles, **3200** pieces of legal advice, over **1000** judges and over **200** prosecutors trained, and **111** whistleblowers represented by their team.

“Our mission is to investigate abuses in government, public and private enterprises and other institutions and to advocate for whistleblowers' rights. If you suspect or have evidence that someone in your environment uses public property or their office in order to get money or other benefits, please let us know through [this website](#). Pištaljka will protect your identity.”

About Pištaljka

Some of the cases discussed during the presentation were those of:



- Whistleblower Tomislav Veljković who reported corruption and waste of public funds in the town of Rača;
- Whistleblower Darko Nenadić who reported toxic water in the town of Požarevac;
- Whistleblower Divna Sakradžija who reported head of local administration over falsified CV;
- Whistleblower Borko Josifovski who reported that medical teams were taking bribes from funeral homes;
- Whistleblower Milenko Jovanović who reported manipulation of air pollution data.