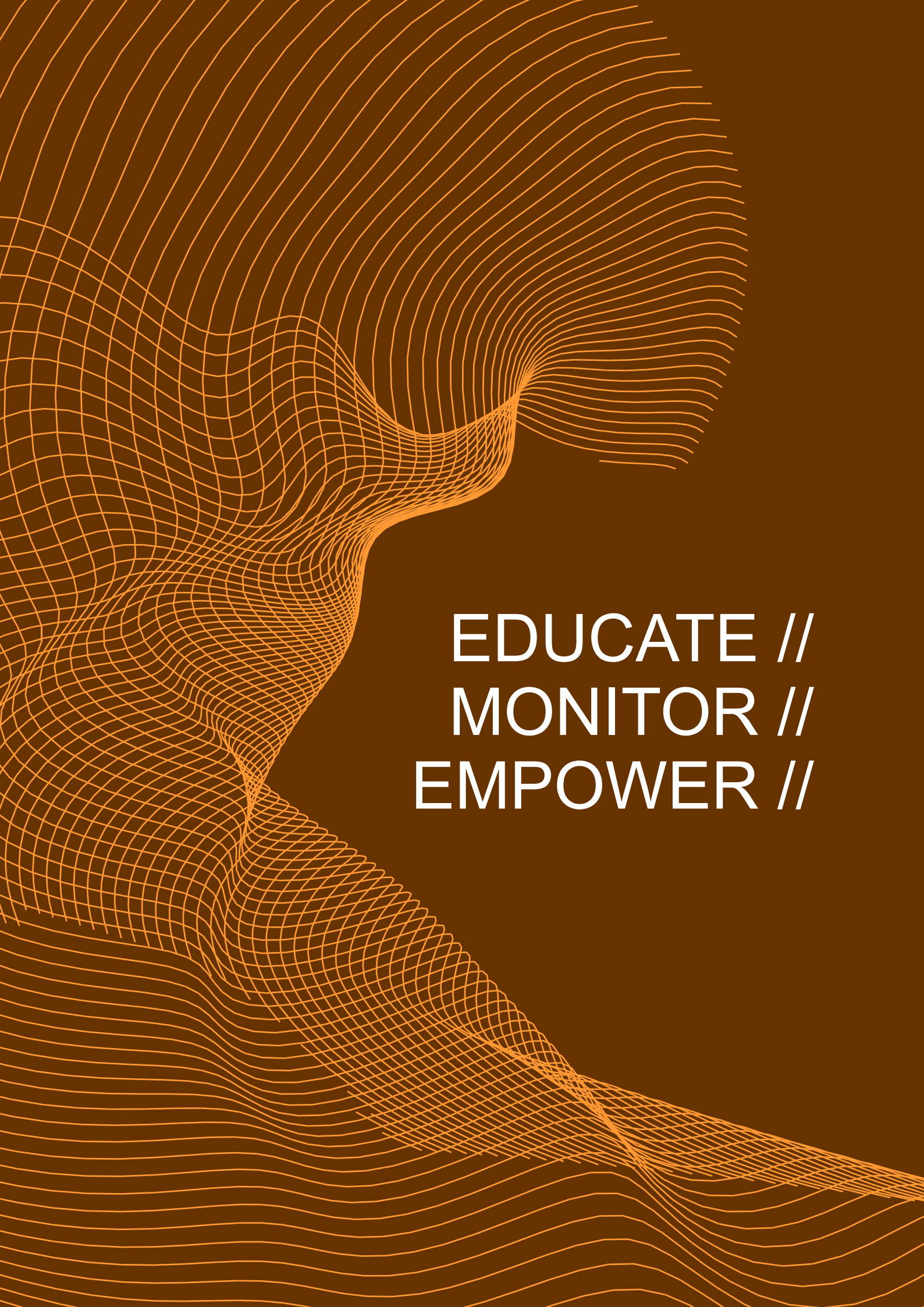




Southeast Europe Coalition on Whistleblower Protection

Newsletter

JULY 2024



EDUCATE //
MONITOR //
EMPOWER //

SEE Coalition Joins GIZ South Africa Whistleblower Training Program

The Southeast Europe Coalition on Whistleblower Protection participated in the German Agency for International Cooperation - GIZ South Africa training in June 2024 where co-coordinators Arjan Dyrmishi and Mark Worth shared valuable experiences from our region as part of a whistleblower protection learning program, designed in partnership with Limina Education Services. The program was designed for public officials including those at South Africa's Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation ("The Hawks"), compliance and audit staff at companies, and independent fraud examiners. The training tapped on the unique vulnerabilities faced by employees who report crime and corruption in their workplace. The training also highlighted comprehensive whistleblower protection mechanisms in Eastern Europe, addressing occupational detriment, physical harm and threats, offensive legal actions, social stigma, loss of income, and psychological impacts.

Trainers explained interviewing techniques, discussed best practices in concluding cases toward limiting the negative impacts on whistleblowers, and conducted role playing exercises to place participants in the shoes of whistleblowers. Participants also gained insights into the institutional architecture of whistleblowing and whistleblower protection in Eastern European countries, which could be adapted and implemented in South Africa. The South African delegation is particularly interested in these models and aims to further investigate their application within their own context.



Transparency

and Artificial Intelligence

Transparency International Greece hosted an event focusing on the applications of artificial intelligence (AI) in the public sector, business, and whistleblowing. The event featured contributions from a diverse range of participants, including AI specialists, legal experts, civil society and transparency advocates.



Dr. Angelos Kaskanis,
Executive Director, Transparency
International Greece

Dr. Maria Oraiozili Koutsoupi,
President Rythmis, Lawyer, AI Legal Expert

Stefanos Loukopoulos,
Co-Founder and Director, Vouliwatch

Androniki Tzomaka, AI Legal Expert

Konstantinos Sakellaris,
Secretary General,
Transparency International Greece

These experts shared insights and conclusions, emphasizing the need for civil society organizations to develop the necessary tools to respond to future AI developments.



“Promoting transparency and assessing algorithmic impact should be central to AI applications, supporting transparent government operations with a human-centered approach.”

-ANDRONIKI TZOMAKA,
AI LEGAL EXPERT

Dr. Angelos Kaskanis, Executive Director, Transparency International Greece: In discussions about transparency and AI, ethical considerations must mirror those in the physical world. AI's potential for personal data leakage, particularly in protecting whistleblowers, is a significant concern. Organizations should use AI to monitor public entities' actions effectively.

Dr. Maria Oraiozili Koutsoufia, President Rythmisis, Lawyer, AI Legal Expert: AI mechanisms should generate reports that describe their methodologies, aligning with the AI Act. Recent issues, such as the ban on ChatGPT in Italy due to personal data leaks and the involvement of AI in intellectual property violations and voter manipulation, highlight the need for stringent oversight.

Stefanos Loukopoulos, Co-Founder and Director, Vouliwatch: AI can enhance public sector transparency tools but also introduces risks of opacity due to algorithmic design. The manipulation of democratic processes and the false objectivity of AI in government use are troubling. Safeguards are necessary to ensure algorithmic transparency from private companies providing AI tools to the public sector.

Androniki Tzomaka, AI Legal Expert: AI can improve organizational efficiency and combat corruption in the public sector. Promoting transparency and assessing algorithmic impact should be central to AI applications, supporting transparent government operations with a human-centered approach.

Konstantinos Sakellaris, Secretary General, Transparency International Greece: It's crucial to determine if AI is being used maliciously or if its development poses risks. AI's operation requires vast amounts of data, raising concerns about personal data misuse and the potential lack of objectivity in the data fed into AI systems.

This event underscores the need for robust ethical standards and transparency mechanisms as AI continues to evolve and integrate into various sectors. It also sparks reflections about whistleblowing practices in the age of AI.

Baby Steps Develops First Whistleblower

Channel for Maternity Wards in Bosnia and

Herzegovina

This groundbreaking initiative is a vital step toward enhancing maternity healthcare in Bosnia and Herzegovina by addressing mistreatment and corruption in maternity hospitals. The new reporting channel provides a secure and anonymous way for medical professionals to report irregularities directly to the Ministry of Health. This system is crucial for fostering transparency and accountability within the healthcare system, ensuring that issues are promptly and effectively addressed. By empowering healthcare workers to speak out without fear of retribution, we hope to uncover and address problems that may have otherwise gone unnoticed.

The importance of this whistleblower channel cannot be overstated, given the high levels of corruption and obstetric violence present in hospitals throughout the country. It promotes a culture of integrity and openness within maternity wards, encouraging health workers to report unethical behavior and systemic issues. This can lead to significant improvements in the quality of care provided to mothers and their newborns. By ensuring that these reports are taken seriously and acted upon, we can begin to dismantle the pervasive culture of mistreatment and corruption that undermines healthcare systems.

Additionally, the whistleblower channel raises awareness among the public and medical community about the importance of reporting mistreatment and corruption,



“Together, we can make a significant difference in improving maternity healthcare in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ensuring that every mother and child receives the care and respect they deserve.”

**BABY STEPS
ASSOCIATION**

fostering a more vigilant and proactive healthcare environment. Informing women and the public about their rights during childbirth, particularly concerning obstetric violence, is a crucial aspect of creating a safer and more respectful environment in maternity wards across the country.

This initiative also serves as a powerful tool for advocating for policy changes and better enforcement of existing regulations, ultimately leading to a more accountable and responsive healthcare system. For more information about this initiative, please visit the dedicated page: [Link: <https://babysteps.ba/whistleblowing/>].

Whistleblowing

NAPOMENA

Ovaj formular je anonimian. Ukoliko želite, možete navesti svoje podatke i time tražiti povratnu informaciju o ovoj prijavi.

PODRŽANO OD

Southeast Europe COALITION on WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

NED NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY SUPPORTING FREEDOM AROUND THE WORLD

CSDG Center for the Study of Democracy and Governance

Prijavlivanje nepravilnosti Kroz prijavu do zaštite i integriteta Prijava Kontakt

Prijavlivanje nepravilnosti

Zahvaljujemo Vam se na izdvojenom vremenu i želji za unaprijeđenjem našeg zdravstvenog sistema.

Vaša hrabrost u prijavljivanju nepravilnosti ključna je za osiguranje sigurnosti pacijenata i integriteta medicinske profesije.

Za razliku od mnogih struka, zdravstvo je područje gdje je „whistleblowing“ posebno bitan zbog neophodnosti poštivanja svih propisa i pravila. Svako odstupanje od tih pravila ne samo da može dovesti do loše radne atmosfere, već direktno može ugroziti pacijente ili u najgorem slučaju dovesti do smrtnih ishoda.

Profesionalni etički kodeks zahtijeva da osobe koje rade u zdravstvu stavljaju pacijente na prvo mjesto. Ako postoji bilo što što bi moglo ugroziti pacijente postoji obveza da se poduzme nešto u vezi s tim. *Whistleblowing* odnosno prijavljivanje od strane zaposlenika je zapravo rani signal koji omogućuje ispravljanje grešaka prije nego što uzrokuju ozbiljne posljedice.

Greške koje bi u drugim područjima mogle biti "male", mogu imati velike posljedice u zdravstvu. Pacijenti mogu biti ugroženi zbog liječničkih grešaka, zbog čega je posebno važno da se greške u zdravstvu pravilno prijavljuju.

Vaša prijava će biti prosljeđena nadležnom ministarstvu zdravstva.

CROA's Anti-Corruption Initiative

in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Center for the Development of Youth Activism (CROA) in Bosnia and Herzegovina has recently launched an anti-corruption initiative aimed at preventing corruption in education and raising public awareness. This initiative, spanning the past few months, has included a variety of engaging activities such as recording a podcast, hosting discussions with young people, and creating educational infographics.

The centerpiece of the initiative was a podcast featuring Enita Nakaš, a professor at Sarajevo University who is also involved in international cooperation at the university. In this episode, Professor Nakaš discussed the anti-corruption mechanisms and strategies implemented at Sarajevo University, offering valuable advice to students on how they can contribute to preventing corruption within their educational environment.

Additionally, CROA hosted informal coffee sessions where youngsters shared their firsthand experiences with corruption in educational institutions. These discussions provided practical advice for future actions and activities, emphasizing the importance of youth involvement in addressing and combating corruption. To further educate the public, CROA created a series of infographics aimed at informing followers and young readers about their rights and responsibilities in the fight against corruption. These infographics served as a resource for understanding how to actively participate



Picture taken during the podcast with Prof. Nakaš



Picture taken at CROA's coffee session with youth

in anti-corruption efforts, providing clear guidance and crucial information.

CROA's initiative underscores the importance of transparency and youth engagement in creating a corruption-free educational environment, encouraging proactive steps towards a more accountable society.



Infographic on combating corruption in education, produced by CROA

Monitoring of Media Coverage

on Whistleblowing in Bulgaria

Media Development Center has been monitoring the media coverage of whistleblowing in Bulgaria for the past few years. The latest analysis revealed that the media coverage was most visible in September and October 2023 when the Parliament adopted changes to the Whistleblowing Law. During this period, the information reached a wide audience through various national media outlets. The monitoring, covering the period from September 2023 to May 2024, revealed that the coverage can be categorized into five main segments:

1. **Specialized Coverage:** Mainly on law offices' web pages with 18 publications.
2. **Public Institutions:** Four publications.
3. **General and Specialized Media:** 26 publications.
4. **Workshops and Public Debates Announced:** Three announcements.
5. **Corporate Websites:** 19 publications.



Detailed Analysis:

1. **Specialized Law Offices Web Pages:** The law changes garnered significant attention among specialized audiences and the general public. Numerous specialized sites and prominent law offices published articles explaining the changes and their implications.
2. **Public Institutions:** Relevant information was disseminated through the official channels of public institutions.
3. **General Media:** The changes in the law were widely covered by national and regional media, including TV, radio, and online platforms. These publications attracted a high readership and informed the public about the legislative updates.
4. **Workshops and Public Debates Announced:** A couple of workshops and public debates were announced, focusing on the implications of the new law and providing a platform for discussion.
5. **Corporate Websites:** Many companies established channels and rules related to whistleblowing, which were announced on their corporate websites.

This comprehensive media monitoring indicates a broad dissemination of information about the Whistleblowing Law, ensuring that the public is well-informed about their rights and the opportunities provided by the Directive.



North Macedonia takes a Step Forward in Protecting Whistleblowers

Transparency International Macedonia, as part of the Platform of Civil Society Organizations in the fight against corruption participated in the working group tasked with preparing a Draft Law on Whistleblower Protection for the Ministry of Justice. TI Macedonia contributed with knowledge and expertise to improving the legal framework for whistleblower protection.

TI Macedonia participated in 15 meetings and two public debates, providing recommendations and proposing solutions to improve the legal framework for whistleblower protection. Years of work and advocacy for whistleblowers, their rights, and their importance in society by TI Macedonia were highlighted and proposals were made specifically to align with the new EU Directive 2019/1937 on whistleblower protection.

Their goal was to put in place the best European practices in the law to improve the status of whistleblowers in our society, provide them with greater protection from retaliatory actions, and encourage institutions to actively promote whistleblower protection.

The infographic is set against a yellow background and contains several text boxes, icons, and a photograph. At the top left, a blue oval contains the text 'Participation in a working group for amending the Law on Whistleblower Protection'. Below this are icons of a yellow whistle and a yellow scale of justice. To the right, a blue-bordered box states: 'Through its research in this area, TI-Macedonia detected key observations regarding the Law and the obligations arising from it:'. Below this is a photograph of a wooden gavel on a dark surface. At the bottom left, a blue-bordered box reads: 'Transparency International Macedonia, as a member of the Platform of Civil Organizations in the fight against corruption, was part of the working group for amending the Law on Whistleblower Protection, led by the Ministry of Justice'. Below this is the TI Macedonia logo and a yellow hand icon pointing right. At the bottom right, a blue box lists three bullet points: '• Better education and training for individuals nominated to be authorized to act on reports from whistleblowers in public sector institutions', '• Deeper inter-institutional cooperation and coordination', and '• Compliance with the new EU Directive 2019/1937'.

Participation in a working group for amending the Law on Whistleblower Protection

Through its research in this area, TI-Macedonia detected key observations regarding the Law and the obligations arising from it:

Transparency International Macedonia, as a member of the Platform of Civil Organizations in the fight against corruption, was part of the working group for amending the Law on Whistleblower Protection, led by the Ministry of Justice

- Better education and training for individuals nominated to be authorized to act on reports from whistleblowers in public sector institutions
- Deeper inter-institutional cooperation and coordination
- Compliance with the new EU Directive 2019/1937

 **TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL**
MACEDONIA