

Whistleblowing 2023

The first major international conference on whistleblower rights and protection

On 20 June 1972, Bob Woodward of *The Washington Post* met a mysterious figure in a parking garage who told the young journalist, "Just follow the money." Two years and many secret meetings later, US President Richard Nixon was forced from office. "Deep Throat" became the most famous whistleblower in history.

Fifty years after the Watergate scandal, whistleblowing has come out of the shadows and into the spotlight.

Coming this 7-8 November, The Hague will host the first large-scale and truly international gathering of whistleblower rights practitioners, experts and advocates. More than a conference, *Whistleblowing 2023* will mark the birth of the whistleblower protection profession and the international whistleblowing movement.

Over two days, people from around the world will meet in the International City of Peace and Justice to develop successful strategies to handle whistleblower cases. Skills will be nurtured to protect vulnerable witnesses from retaliation, investigate evidence of misconduct, and collaborate to achieve justice and impact. In cooperation with expert facilitators, attendees will explore the opportunities and challenges experienced by whistleblowers in real-life situations.

Set in a relaxed environment conducive for innovation and spontaneity, attendees will craft their own ideas and tactics to use in their own work. Rather than listening to lengthy panel discussions, attendees will engage in practical, inquiry-based exercises to draw out creative solutions ready for use.

Out of these activities and discussions, we will design new campaigns, partnerships and organizations to ensure whistleblower reports are fully investigated and whistleblowers are shielded from reprisals. Through these expanded networks, our new solutions will be shared with caseworkers worldwide.

The conference has been designed specifically to enhance the professional skills of people who interact most directly with whistleblowers:

- lawyers and attorneys
- compliance officers, auditors and human resources staff
- public officials who oversee whistleblower policies and programs
- NGOs and whistleblower caseworkers

Why *Whistleblowing 2023*? Right now, every European Union country is setting up new whistleblower offices and procedures to comply with stronger EU rules. Almost monthly, new systems are being set up in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East. The demand for professional caseworkers, attorneys and compliance officers is growing in size and urgency.

Whistleblower protection has been endorsed by every major international organization, anti-corruption NGO and media organization. Yet, four out of every five victimized whistleblowers lose their retaliation and unfair dismissal cases. Why? Most countries – from Canada to Romania, Lebanon to Zambia, and Australia to Jamaica – pass a whistleblower law but do little or nothing to enforce it. Thousands of crime witnesses are left with no defense against being fired, sued and prosecuted. Meanwhile, corrupt politicians and business figures continue to bribe, steal and cheat with impunity.

The time for this is over. It is time to show whistleblowing in a different light: as a fundamental right that is improving the world.

Inspiration. Professionalization. Solutions. Cooperation. *Whistleblowing 2023*.