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ITCO intergroup pressures the Commission to protect whistleblowers

Wednesday, the intergroup on Integrity, Transparency, Corruption and Organised crime (ITCO), together with corruption watchdog Transparency International, organised an event on whistleblowing. In the European Parliament the protection of whistleblowers is particularly relevant this week, as the Juri Committee adopted its disappointing position on the Trade Secrets Directive, which weakens the protection of whistleblowers.

During the ITCO event, whistleblowers shared their impressive experiences. Luxleaks whistleblower Antoine Deltour, who is being persecuted by Luxembourg for disclosing information on the tax rulings between multinationals and Luxembourg, called for better protection across Europe. Although Deltour served public interest by revealing the tax rulings, charges were nevertheless pressed against him. Co-president of the ITCO intergroup De Jong: "it is inexplicable that someone who has the courage to reveal secret tax dodging is heard as a suspect".

The ITCO intergroup will act on three points. First, the EU institutions need to lead by example. Currently, apart from the European Commission and the European Court of Auditors, the European institutions don't have internal guidelines for whistleblower protection. The European Commission has internal guidelines, which are now too vague and need to be improved. Also in the discharge procedure of all EU institutions, the protection of whistleblowers should be under scrutiny. Secondly, the intergroup together with TI will draft a recommendation for the Commission to consider the regulation on whistleblowers. Benedek Jávor, bureau member of the intergroup, emphasises that "it is important to have minimum standards on the European level; this means that we have to pressure both the Commission, as well as the member states". Thirdly, the intergroup will provide a Call for Action against corruption to the Commission, in preparation of their Corruption Report. De Jong stresses the importance of improved whistleblower protection: "whether it is the field of misuse of EU money or tax dodging, whistleblowers are of crucial importance to prevent corruption and other atrocities."