

THE WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION OFFICE (THE "WPO") is an independent state authority that protects the rights and legitimate interests of whistleblowers. The operation of the Whistleblower Protection Office, as well as the overall design of whistleblowing and whistleblower protection in Slovakia, is regulated by Act No. 54/2019 Coll. on Whistleblower Protection and on Amendments to Certain Acts.

As the competent authority for receiving whistleblowing reports, it receives and verifies whistleblowing reports, which then, in cooperation with the whistleblower, refers to authorities competent to investigate them, such as the Public Prosecutor's Office or administrative authorities.

In the protection agenda, the WPO investigates acts of retaliation against whistleblowers and adopts decisions on whistleblower protection matters. The WPO provides advice and support to whistleblowers.

The WPO also advises employers on designing their internal whistleblowing systems and issues expert opinions and methodological guidance.

In its supervisory role, the WPO monitors the application of the Act and has the power to impose penalties for administrative offences and misdemeanours.

This brief overview provides basic statistics on the WPO operation and the broader societal context of whistleblowing.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

2024 has brought a greater emphasis in the WPO's activities on the operation of whistleblowing in local self-government. The WPO first mapped the design of the internal whistleblowing systems, and the numbers of whistleblowing reports received in cities, municipalities and self-governing regions. Subsequently, it prepared methodological guidance for the chief inspectors designated by law as the persons responsible for internal reporting and, in cooperation with the Association of Chief Inspectors, also conducted two specialised training sessions.

The development of the training agenda has also led to the creation of content for two e-learning courses for staff and a specific course for designated persons. These courses are available on the [WPO's e-learning platform](#).

The WPO has also drafted a new [Whistleblowers' Manual](#). It provides answers to the most common questions that arise in the context of whistleblowing and is intended to serve as a guide to the whistleblowing process from the very first moment when the whistleblower is still deciding whether or not to blow the whistle at all.

As part of its supervisory role of overseeing the application of the Whistleblower Protection Act in practice, the WPO has also focused on developing its inspection activities. In 2024, the WPO initiated 13 inspections and completed 12 of them. The supervisory agenda is also linked to an increase in the number of sanctioning proceedings, with the WPO having initiated 4 fine imposition proceedings last year.

The WPO has also strengthened its agenda of investigating and intervening against acts of retaliation faced by whistleblowers following the submission of a whistleblowing report. A total of 32 whistleblowers approached the WPO in this matter. In 2024, the WPO also suspended the effectiveness of employment-related measures taken against whistleblowers in 8 cases where the employer did not sufficiently prove that such measure (e.g., employment termination) was not in retaliation for the whistleblower's whistleblowing.

DATA SOURCES

The WPO's own data

The data in the Whistleblowing Reports and Protection Measures section originate from the WPO's activities. The information on the number of protection measures granted is based on the notifications of protection granted that a prosecutor or an administrative authority is obliged to send to the WPO. The information regarding criminal complaints and referrals to an administrative authority combines data on criminal complaints and referrals made by the WPO and information on submissions to the competent authorities made by the whistleblowers themselves, with whom the WPO works.

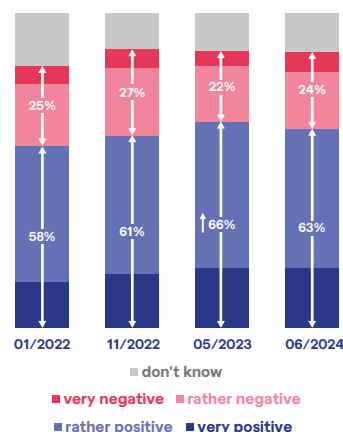
Public opinion poll

One of the WPO's activities includes monitoring of the public opinion on whistleblowing and whistleblower protection. The aim is to raise awareness about whistleblowing in Slovakia and about the whistleblower protection options. The opinion polls are conducted in cooperation with Focus agency in the form of personal interviews with a representative sample of the Slovak population aged 18 and over. Data collected between 19-26 January 2022 on a sample of 1,017, 2-8 November 2022 on a sample of 1,017, 24-31 May 2023 on a sample of 1,012, and 5-12 June 2024 on a sample of 1,025.

WHISTLEBLOWING AND SOCIETY 2024

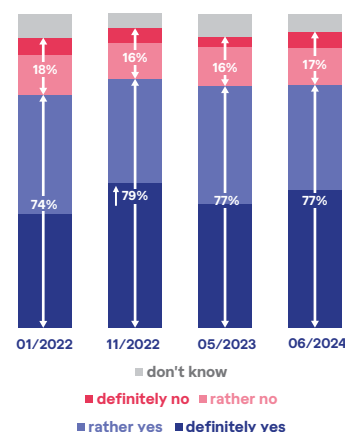
WHISTLEBLOWER PERCEPTION

Imagine if your colleague reported corrupt conduct or fraud committed by another colleague or supervisor. What would be your opinion on this person?

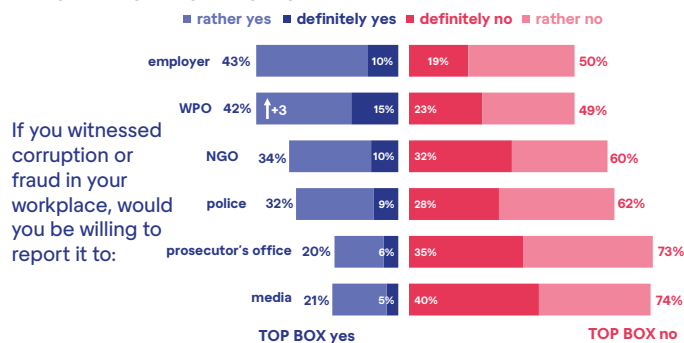


DEMAND FOR WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

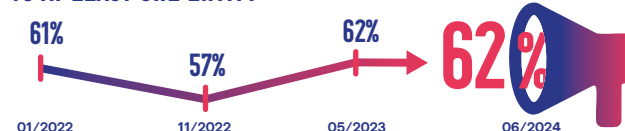
In your opinion, should the state provide legal protection to such people, i.e. whistleblowers of corruption and fraud, through its institutions?



WHERE SLOVAK RESIDENTS WOULD POTENTIALLY FILE WHISTLEBLOWING REPORTS:



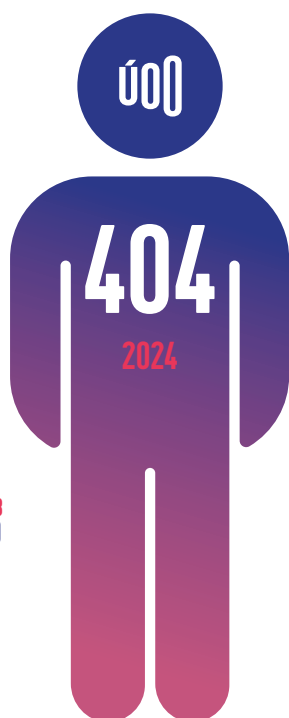
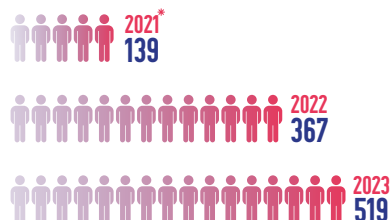
WILLINGNESS TO REPORT CORRUPTION AND FRAUD TO AT LEAST ONE ENTITY



WHISTLEBLOWING REPORTS AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION 2024

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE CONTACTED THE WPO

via the form, the hotline, regular mail and other communication channels.



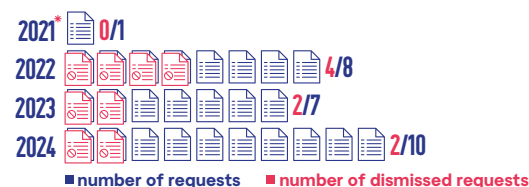
NUMBER OF RECEIVED SUBMISSIONS

received by the WPO as the authority competent to receive external whistleblowing reports (including retaliation complaints).



NUMBER OF REQUESTS FOR CONSENT TO AN EMPLOYER'S EMPLOYMENT-RELATED MEASURE

– that the employer intended to take against a protected whistleblower.



NUMBER OF REQUESTS FOR SUSPENSION OF AN EMPLOYER'S EMPLOYMENT-RELATED MEASURE

Suspensions of adverse employment-related measures taken against whistleblowers in connection with their whistleblowing reports.



NUMBER OF INSPECTIONS

initiated in a given calendar year.



NUMBER OF ACTS OF RETALIATION

– complaints to the WPO in which whistleblowers request assistance when they face retaliation and requests for suspension of an employment-related measure.



NUMBER OF WPO PROCEEDINGS

– related to whistleblower protection, inspection activities, fine imposition, or a misdemeanour, granting of a reward, as well as assisting whistleblowers facing retaliation and assisting whistleblowers in filing whistleblowing reports, and more.

