Whistleblower Empowerment & Support Initiative

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CZECH REPUBLIC

Should I Speak Up?

A simple guide for anyone thinking about reporting wrongdoing at work

This guide gives you information. It is not legal advice.

About this guide

You're reading this because something isn't right at work, and you're wondering what to do about it. This guide is here to help you understand your options, in plain language.

A few important things before you start:

- This guide gives you information and points you in the right direction. It cannot act as your lawyer, your therapist, or file a report on your behalf.
- It is not legal advice. If a decision feels legally risky, talk to a qualified professional first.
- Every fact in this guide comes directly from VoiceGuard's research on Czech law. Where something isn't confirmed yet, we say so honestly instead of guessing.

1. Are you protected?

Yes -if you found out about the problem through your work. This covers far more people than just "employees":

You could be...	For example...
An employee	In a private company or the public sector
Self-employed	A freelancer, contractor, or consultant
In management	A manager, board member, or shareholder
A volunteer or trainee	Paid or unpaid
A job applicant	Even if you found out during the interview process

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A former employee	Even if you no longer work there

You're also protected if you help someone else report (a facilitator), or if you're closely connected to the person reporting and could be affected too.

You do NOT need proof

You just need a genuine, honest belief that what you're reporting is true.

Knowingly reporting something false is not protected -but an honest mistake is fine.

2. What can you report?

At EU level, you can report things like:

- public money misused, unsafe products, environmental harm, data-privacy breaches, financial fraud, unfair public contracts, and more

Czech law (Act No. 171/2023 Coll.), in force since 1 August 2023, also covers selected national offences -notably misdemeanours that carry a fine of at least CZK 100,000.

What you can't report through these channels

Purely personal grievances or interpersonal conflicts that don't involve any rule-breaking aren't covered. These need a different route, such as your organisation's HR process.

3. Where and how do you report?

You have three options. You do NOT have to start with the first one -go with whichever feels safest for your situation.

Option	Best if...	Main risk
1. Internal -inside your organisation	you trust it to handle things safely and independently	may be conflicted or ineffective if the wrongdoing involves people at the top
2. External -to the Ministry of Justice	internal reporting feels unsafe, or you'd simply rather not go through your	process can be slower or feel less personal

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	organisation	
3. Public -e.g. to media (last resort)	specific legal conditions are met (see warning below)	you lose legal protection if those conditions aren't met

Not sure which to choose? Work through these questions

1. Is there immediate danger to the public? → If yes, seek urgent advice -public disclosure may be protected. If no, continue.
2. Do you trust your organisation to handle this safely? → Yes: internal reporting may work. No: external reporting may be safer.
3. Is your internal channel compromised (e.g. the person you'd report to is involved)? → If yes, consider external reporting.
4. Have the legal deadlines already passed without action? → If yes, ask about escalating or going public.
5. Does this involve EU funds or crimes against the EU's financial interests? → If yes, OLAF or EPPO (see Section 8) may also be relevant.

⚠ Before you go public

Going to the media only keeps your legal protection in specific situations -for example, if reporting first didn't work, or there's danger to the public.

Talk to a qualified adviser BEFORE doing this. Acting outside these conditions could cost you your protection.

The Czech Republic's national authority

Name	Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic (Ministerstvo spravedlnosti)
What they do	Operates the official external reporting channel; provides guidance, FAQs, methodological materials, and support for both whistleblowers and designated reporting officers
Website	oznamovatel.justice.cz -practical guidance, FAQs, templates and explanatory

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	materials portal.gov.cz -consolidated information on rights, channels, protections and procedures
Language	Czech

Employers with 250 or more employees have had to have an internal reporting channel since 1 August 2023. Employers with 50–249 employees have had to have one since 15 December 2023 -if your employer is smaller than that, they may not be required to have one at all.

Common pitfalls

- An informal conversation with a manager may not count as a formal report, and may leave no record.
- If the person you'd report to is implicated, internal reporting may not be safe.
- If you don't hear back within the legal timeframes, that can be relevant to deciding whether to escalate.
- Reporting in anger or haste, before preparing, can create evidence or confidentiality problems.

EU-level channels: OLAF and EPPO

If your case involves EU funds or crimes against the EU's financial interests, two extra channels may be relevant: OLAF (the European Anti-Fraud Office) at anti-fraud.ec.europa.eu, and EPPO (the European Public Prosecutor's Office) at eppo.europa.eu. These can be used alongside, or instead of, the Czech Republic's national channels. If in doubt, seek advice first.

Before you report: a short checklist

I got this information through my work	☐
I honestly believe it's true	☐
I've checked it fits what I can report (Section 2)	☐
I understand my anonymity options (Section 4)	☐
I haven't accessed or copied anything unlawfully	☐

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I have a simple written timeline of events	☐
I know who I can turn to for support (Section 8)	☐

Protecting yourself online

- Don't use your work email, phone, or computer to prepare your report, unless the official channel requires it.
- Use a personal device and your home or mobile internet -not work Wi-Fi.
- Documents can carry hidden information (author name, timestamps) -keep this in mind.
- Consider encrypted apps like Signal or ProtonMail instead of standard email or text.
- Keep your copies stored somewhere separate from work systems.

Protecting your evidence

Keep a chronological record of events, a record of the report itself (date, channel, reply), and notes of relevant conversations. Only use documents you already have lawful access to through your normal work.

⚠ Important

Before copying, removing, recording or forwarding sensitive material, seek advice first. Acquiring information through a separate criminal offence (like hacking into a system you're not authorised to use) is not protected, even if your intentions are good.

4. Can you stay anonymous?

Confidential	Your name is known but kept private. It won't be shared without your consent, except where the law requires it -and even then, you should be told first.
Anonymous	You don't give your name at all.

Important national rule

Anonymous reports are NOT protected as a rule in the Czech Republic. A report must include your name, surname and date of birth.

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If you report anonymously anyway, you're only protected from retaliation once your identity becomes known.

5. What if something bad happens to you?

It is illegal for your employer to punish you for reporting in good faith. This is called retaliation, and it includes things like:

Suspension, dismissal, or similar measures	☐
Demotion or being passed over for promotion	☐
Change of duties, location, hours, or a cut in pay	☐
Being denied training	☐
A negative performance review or reference	☐
A disciplinary measure, reprimand, or financial penalty	☐
Coercion, intimidation, harassment, or exclusion	☐
Discrimination or unfair treatment	☐
Your contract not being renewed	☐
Damage to your reputation, including online	☐
Blacklisting within your industry or sector	☐
A contract, licence, or permit being cancelled	☐
An unnecessary psychiatric or medical referral	☐

This list isn't complete -retaliation can also be a pattern of smaller things (being excluded, sidelined, or subjected to unexplained new complaints) rather than one big event.

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The law is on your side

If you report and then something bad happens to you, the law assumes it's connected to your report - your employer has to prove otherwise.

The first 48 hours after retaliation

If you notice any of the signs above:

1. Write down exactly what happened -when, where, and who was involved.
2. Preserve relevant records lawfully and securely.
3. Avoid angry written responses or social-media posts.
4. Seek advice quickly from a qualified professional, trusted NGO, trade union, or support pathway.
5. Check national limitation periods and complaint deadlines.
6. Seek psychological or emotional support if you need it (see Section 7).

What NOT to do

Don't resign impulsively -it may affect your legal rights.

Don't sign any settlement agreement without independent legal advice.

Don't delete communications or records, even ones that feel embarrassing -they may be evidence.

Don't confront the person you believe is retaliating, in writing, before getting advice.

Don't post about the situation on social media.

Don't miss deadlines -complaints about retaliation often have to be filed within a short period. Check your national time limits and record them.

Fines of up to CZK 1 million can apply for breaches of the Act. The person responsible for receiving and handling reports at an organisation can be fined up to CZK 100,000 for failing to do so properly.

6. What happens after you report?

Stage	Internal channel	External channel (Ministry of Justice)
Acknowledgment	Within 7 days	Within 7 days, unless exceptions apply

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Feedback	Within a reasonable time, generally not exceeding 3 months	Generally within 3 months, up to 6 months in justified cases

Heard nothing? Here's what to do:

1. Write to whoever you reported to and ask for an update. Keep a copy.
2. If it was an internal report and nothing's happening, consider reporting to the Ministry of Justice's external channel instead.
3. If they aren't responding either, ask a qualified adviser whether you can complain, or whether going public might now be protected.

If things don't go back to normal

Legal remedies can restore your job or compensate you, but sometimes going back isn't realistic -trust may be broken, or the environment may stay difficult. If that happens, specialist NGOs and, where available, career counsellors can help you think through practical next steps: managing employment gaps, planning finances, and finding your way to a new role.

7. Taking care of yourself

Reporting wrongdoing can be stressful, especially if you face a difficult reaction. Feeling anxious or overwhelmed is a completely normal response -it doesn't mean you did anything wrong.

Signs worth paying attention to

Trouble sleeping or constant exhaustion	☐
Low mood, anxiety, irritability, or feeling numb	☐
Thoughts you can't switch off	☐
Trouble concentrating or remembering things	☐
Dreading work or avoiding reminders of it	☐
Headaches, fatigue, or physical tension	☐

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Pulling away from friends and family	☐
Losing confidence or feeling hopeless	☐

If several of these last more than a few weeks, or affect your daily life, it's worth speaking to a qualified professional.

A few things that can help

- Stay connected to people you trust
- Talk to people who understand whistleblowing or workplace retaliation
- Try to keep your normal routine -sleep, meals, movement
- Set boundaries around how much time and energy you give the situation
- Remember: this situation doesn't define your worth
- Reach out for support early, rather than waiting until things feel unbearable

Money worries

Job loss or a long process can strain your finances. If this is a concern, ask early about legal aid, trade union support, and whether an emergency measure (such as blocking a dismissal) is possible in your case.

Your family and people close to you

This can affect the people close to you too -financially and emotionally. Talking openly with people you trust, at a pace that feels right, usually helps. If someone close to you also works at the same organisation, they may be protected too -a qualified adviser can explain how.

In immediate danger or crisis?

Contact emergency services on 112 (the EU-wide emergency number) right away. Don't wait.

8. Where to get help

Who	What they do	Contact
Ministry of Justice -	The Czech Republic's national whistleblower	oznamovatel.justice.cz

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External Reporting Channel	authority	portal.gov.cz/sluzby-vs/informace-o-ochrane-oznamovatelu-S54403
Oživení, z.s.	VoiceGuard's partner in the Czech Republic	oziveni.cz whistleblowingcenter.cz
Transparency International Czech Republic	Civil-society partner	transparency.cz
Emergency	EU-wide emergency number (used in the Czech Republic)	112

If your case involves EU funds or crimes against the EU's financial interests, you can also contact OLAF (anti-fraud.ec.europa.eu) or EPPO (eppo.europa.eu) -see Section 3.

9. Common questions

Do I have to prove the breach before reporting?

No. You need reasonable grounds to believe the information was true and within scope at the time of reporting. Knowingly false reports are not protected.

Must I report internally first?

No. You can choose to go straight to the Ministry of Justice's external channel. Internal reporting is encouraged where it can be handled safely and effectively, but it isn't mandatory.

Can I report anonymously in the Czech Republic?

As a rule, no -you need to give your name, surname and date of birth. If you report anonymously despite this, you're only protected once your identity is revealed. See Section 4.

How quickly should I hear back?

Internal: acknowledgment within 7 days, feedback generally within 3 months. External (Ministry of Justice): similar timeframes, feedback up to 6 months in justified cases.

Can I go to the media?

Only under specific conditions -for example, if reporting first didn't work, or there's imminent public danger. Seek advice first; going public outside these conditions can cost you your protection.

Can I copy documents as evidence?

Only if you can do so lawfully and safely, using information you already have lawful access to. Seek advice before copying anything sensitive.

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Does VoiceGuard provide legal advice or therapy?

No. VoiceGuard provides information, orientation and referral only -not legal representation, therapy, or an official reporting channel.

I reported and heard nothing -what now?

See Section 6 -ask for an update in writing, then consider escalating to the Ministry of Justice.

10. Words explained

Word	What it means
Reporting person	You -someone reporting a problem you learned about through work
Facilitator	Someone who helps you report -their help is also protected
Retaliation	Being punished, in any way, for reporting
Anonymous	Reporting without giving your name
Confidential	Reporting where your name is known but kept private
Ministry of Justice (Ministerstvo spravedlnosti)	The Czech Republic's national whistleblower authority
Competent authority	The official body responsible for handling your report (the Ministry of Justice)
Burden of proof	Who has to prove what -in retaliation cases, it's your employer who has to prove they did nothing wrong

Where this information comes from

- Czech Republic, Act No. 171/2023 Coll. on the Protection of Whistleblowers
- Ministry of Justice, External Reporting Channel -oznamovatel.justice.cz
- Ministry of Justice, official guidance on whistleblower protection -portal.gov.cz/sluzby-vs/informace-o-ochrane-oznamovatelu-S54403
- Oživení, z.s., Whistleblower Protection Guide (2023)
- Oživení, z.s., Whistleblowing Library -whistleblowingcenter.cz/knihovna

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- EU Whistleblower Protection Directive (EU) 2019/1937

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