

WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION POLICY

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1. Scope and purpose

GEA is an internationally active company that has to comply with a wide range of social, political and legal conditions in Germany and abroad. Even supposedly minor violations of the law by employees can have a considerable impact on the company's reputation and cause it great damage. In addition, legal violations can have serious personal consequences for the employees involved. For this reason, GEA gives the highest priority to compliance with all applicable laws and the guidelines issued by GEA in this regard.

The prevention and detection of GEA-related offenses and criminal acts, being committed or planned by employees of GEA or by (contractual) partners or their (contractual) partners is a high priority for GEA. Behind this background, the protection of Whistleblowers is a particularly important concern for GEA. For this reason, GEA has established a Whistleblower System and created the present Policy for the protection of Whistleblowers.

This Policy applies to all companies and employees of GEA Group worldwide, when persons providing respective information use the GEA Whistleblower System. This includes GEA Group AG as well as all companies affiliated with GEA Group AG under company law (hereinafter "GEA"), unless local laws provide otherwise. It provides a binding framework for the processing of Whistleblower reports and the protection of Whistleblowers. It also outlines the processing procedure within GEA.

2. Whistleblowers

Persons who report GEA-related violations of law of which they become aware in a professional context, or GEA policy violations through the GEA Whistleblower System (Whistleblower Reports)¹ act as Whistleblowers and are subject to this Policy.

3. GEA Whistleblower System

Two reporting channels are available in the GEA Whistleblower System:

Whistleblowers can submit Whistleblower Reports (section 4) in writing (GEA Whistleblower Tool) and verbally (GEA Whistleblower Hotline) via specially protected reporting channels (GEA Whistleblower System).

The person providing the information is also given the opportunity to meet in person or digitally if requested.

3.1. GEA Whistleblower Tool

Whistleblowers can submit reports online via the GEA Whistleblower Tool, either anonymously or by stating their identity. A mailbox can be set up in both cases, which enables (anonymous) contact between the Processor (section 4.1.1) and the Whistleblower. The system is operated by the external provider EQS and is protected from third-party access by special technical precautions. It can be accessed via the GEA intranet as well as via the internet.²

¹A list of reportable violations can be found in section 7.

² [GEA Whistleblower System \(sharepoint.com\)](#); [Compliance \(gea.com\)](#).

3.2. GEA Whistleblower Hotline (Ombudsperson)

Whistleblowers can submit reports anonymously or by revealing their identity, when they call GEA's Whistleblower Hotline at

+49 30 235987050

The Whistleblower Hotline is operated by the external independent law firm Orth Kluth Rechtsanwälte (Ombudsperson) in English and German language. It can be reached from Monday to Friday between 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Central European Time (CET).

4. Protection of Whistleblowers

Whistleblowers are protected by this Policy, unless one of the following exceptions applies:

1. The information provided is already in the public domain in its entirety, relates to national security, or essential state security interests or public contracts as defined in Art. 346 TFEU.
2. The whistleblower intentionally or grossly negligently reported inaccurate information about violations.
3. By reporting, the person providing the information violates:
 - Secrecy or confidentiality obligation to protect classified information,
 - Secrecy of judicial deliberations,
 - Confidentiality obligations of attorneys or notaries,
 - Confidentiality obligations of health care professionals³,
 - Confidentiality obligations of persons participating in the professional activities of the aforementioned professional secrecy holders.

Disclosure of trade secrets⁴ is permissible and the Whistleblower is covered by the protections of the Policy, to the extent that the Whistleblower:

- had reasonable grounds to believe that disclosure of the contents of the information was necessary to detect a violation; and
- at the time of reporting had reasonable grounds to believe that the information she/he reported was accurate and within the scope of this Policy.

4.1. Confidentiality

Whistleblower Reports are treated strictly confidential:

The identity of the Whistleblower and of the persons named in the report may only be disclosed to the persons responsible for receiving reports or for taking follow-up measures, as well as to the persons assisting them in the performance of these tasks (Authorized Employees), unless an exception pursuant to section 4.2 applies. The same applies to information that can be used to draw conclusions about the identity of the Whistleblower. Authorized Employees are accordingly obliged to keep secret the identity of the Whistleblower as well as the identity of persons who are subject of a report and of other persons named in the report. The same applies to information obtained in the context of Whistleblower Reports from which the identity of the Whistleblower can be inferred directly or indirectly. Disclosure of the identity of one of the persons named to anyone outside the circle of Authorized Employees shall only take place under the conditions specified in Section 4.2.

³ With the exception of veterinarians, insofar as violations of covered laws for the protection of commercially kept farm animals are concerned.

⁴ Trade secrets in this sense mean those pursuant to Section 2 No. 1 of the Act on the Protection of Trade Secrets.

All email communications related to a Whistleblower Report must be marked "confidential"⁵.

4.1.1. Processors and Authorized Employees

In each group function responsible for processing Whistleblower Reports, at least two employees are designated who are authorized to process reports falling within their specialist area (Processors). They inform themselves about the content of the guidelines and receive trainings. Changes to the responsible Processors in the respective corporate function must be reported immediately to Compliance and Principle Legal Matters.

4.1.1.1. Assignment of Whistleblower Reports

Processors of the relevant group function are informed of incoming reports by email. The assignment for further processing within the group function is made exclusively among the Processors – an assignment to other employees of the group function is not permitted. The relevant distribution process is the responsibility of the respective group function. It must be ensured within the group function that, in the event of absence due to vacation or illness, substitute arrangements are in place to ensure timely processing of the reports (section 5).

4.1.1.2. Duty to inform Authorized Employees

The involvement of Authorized Employees (Section 4.1) in the processing of Whistleblower Reports is based on the "need-to-know principle": Information about the persons named in the report and the Whistleblower herself or himself may only be disclosed to the extent necessary for the further processing of the report or for taking follow-up measures.

Authorized Employees are required to comply with the provisions of this Policy. When involving other Authorized Employees, Processors must ensure that the current version of the handout on the processing of Whistleblower Reports is forwarded and must obtain confirmation of receipt. Every Authorized Employee is obligated to disclose any conflict of interest immediately when becoming involved in case processing.

4.2. Exceptions to confidentiality requirement

If, in an individual case, there is a legal obligation or a court or official order to disclose the identity of the Whistleblower to the authorities or courts, the Whistleblower will be informed of this by the Processor before her or his identity is disclosed, provided that this would not jeopardize the official investigation or court proceedings. At the same time, the Whistleblower shall be informed of the reasons for the disclosure. The Processor shall document the process comprehensively and retain the official/court documents unless data protection regulations conflict with this (Section 8).

Information about the identity of the Whistleblower may also be disclosed with the written consent of the Whistleblower, if and to the extent that this is necessary for taking follow-up measures. Consent must be in writing for each individual disclosure of information.

Information on the identity of persons who are subject of a report and of other persons named in the report may be disclosed to the relevant competent authority only in the following cases:

- if the data subject has given his or her consent in this regard,
- insofar as this is necessary within the scope of internal investigations,
- insofar as this is necessary for the taking of follow-up measures,
- in criminal proceedings at the request of the prosecuting authority or

⁵ [Information Classification and Handling Policy regarding Confidentiality EN.pdf \(sharepoint.com\)](#).

- on the basis of a court decision or on the basis of an order in an administrative procedure subsequent to a notification.

4.3. Ban on retaliation

Whistleblowers are protected by GEA. Retaliations against Whistleblowers because of a Whistleblower Report are prohibited in any form. No Whistleblower must fear negative consequences in a professional context, if the report was made to the best of her or his knowledge and belief. This is the case when the Whistleblower:

- (1) had reasonable grounds to believe that the information reported was true, and
- (2) the information reported concerns infringements falling within the scope of this Policy or there were reasonable grounds to believe that this was the case.

GEA similarly protects persons who assist the Whistleblower in making the report, if the requirements (1) and (2) are met by the assisting person. This protection also applies to third parties, natural or legal persons, who are connected with the Whistleblower, if the requirements (1) and (2) are met by both the Whistleblower and the third party.

The protection against retaliations includes any disadvantages in the professional context resulting from the report, in particular:

- Suspension,
- Termination,
- Denial of a promotion,
- Change of work location,
- Change in working hours,
- Discrimination, etc.

5. Processing procedure

Upon receipt of a Whistleblower Report, the processor shall take the following actions:

- (if possible) Acknowledgement of receipt of the report to the Whistleblower within seven days (section 5.1),
- Checking whether the report falls within the scope of this Policy (section 5.2),
- (if possible) Contacting the Whistleblower (section 5.4),
- Verification of the validity of the report received (section 5.2),
- If necessary, request further information from the Whistleblower, and
- Take appropriate follow-up action(s) (Clause 5.3).

5.1. Acknowledgement of receipt

If the Whistleblower has provided contact details (EQS mailbox, contact details), the Processor will send the Whistleblower a brief confirmation that her or his information has been received and is being processed (confirmation of receipt) immediately, but no later than seven days after receipt of the information. The message must be accompanied by the GEA Data Protection Notice.

Acknowledgement of receipt is not required, if the Whistleblower provides her or his Whistleblower Report by telephone or in a face-to-face or digital meeting.

5.2. Relevance and plausibility check

After receipt of the report, the Processor checks the report received for its legal relevance and plausibility and whether it falls within the scope of this Policy.

- If the relevance and plausibility check – if necessary, after requesting further information and/or documents – comes to the conclusion that there is no actionable conduct, further investigations are not carried out and the report is closed. The Whistleblower will be informed about the closure of the report.
- If the relevance and plausibility check – if necessary, after requesting further information and/or documents – comes to the conclusion that an actionable infringement could exist, the responsible employee initiates further follow-up measures.

5.3. Follow-up

As follow-up measures, the internal reporting office may in particular:

- 1 Conduct internal investigations at the respective organizational unit and contact affected individuals and work units,
- 2 refer the Whistleblower to other competent authorities (in particular, to an external reporting office),
- 3 close the proceedings for lack of evidence or for other reasons, or
- 4 hand over the proceedings for further investigation to
 - the Investigation Team, which leads the further examination or
 - a competent authority.

All follow-up actions must comply with the regulations, in particular the confidentiality requirements of this Policy.

5.4. Feedback

If the Whistleblower has provided contact details, the Processor will inform the Whistleblower about the status of the procedure (including notification of planned and already taken follow-up measures, including a statement of reasons) after three months and seven days at the latest.

A report shall not be made, if this impairs internal inquiries or investigations or the rights of the persons who are the subject of a report or who are named in the report. The process must be documented in Case Management.

If the Whistleblower has submitted her/his report via the GEA Whistleblower Hotline and has not agreed to her/his contact details being passed on by the Ombudsperson, the Ombudsperson will be informed by the Processor of the progress of further case processing no later than one week before the expiry of the three-month period following receipt of the report by the Ombudsperson, and this information will be passed on to the Whistleblower.

The Whistleblower can also contact the Ombudsperson independently and inquire about the processing status.

5.5. Dealing with secrecy and confidentiality obligations

If a Whistleblower Report contains information that is protected by contractual or statutory confidentiality obligations, the Authorized Employees are obligated to comply with the confidentiality or non-disclosure provisions from the time of receipt of the report in the case of statutory confidentiality obligations, and from the time of knowledge of the confidentiality obligation in the case of contractual confidentiality obligations. Such confidential information may only be used and disclosed to the extent necessary to take follow-up action.

5.6. Documentation

Whistleblower Reports are to be documented in Case Management⁶.

Incoming Whistleblower Reports, as well as audit results, are documented by the Processor in a permanently retrievable manner in compliance with the confidentiality requirement and data protection regulations.

The disclosure of data during official or judicial investigations must also be documented, including the notification to the person providing the information, together with the reasons for the disclosure.

In the case of reports made by telephone or by means of another form of voice transmission, either (1) a permanently retrievable audio recording of the conversation must be made with the consent of the Whistleblower, or (2) a complete transcript of the conversation (verbatim record) or (3) a summary of its content (content record) must be documented by the Processor. The same applies to reports made during a personal meeting. The Whistleblower must be given the opportunity to review and, if necessary, correct the minutes and to confirm them by signing them or by sending them in electronic form.

If message-related information is (temporarily) stored or deposited at a location other than Case Management, this must in any case be done in such a way that:

- (1) the confidentiality requirements according to Sections 4.1 and 4.2 are ensured, and
- (2) a complete deletion of all related data takes place after filing in Case Management.

6. Process description GEA Whistleblower System

6.1. GEA Whistleblower Tool

After a Whistleblower Report has been submitted in the GEA Whistleblower Tool, the Processors of the topic complex selected by the Whistleblower (Section 4.1.1) are informed automatically by email about the receipt of the report. The message receipt information contains the information that a report has been received. It does not contain any personal information about the Whistleblower and the facts reported. Processors can retrieve the message within the Tool, which is protected by special technical precautions.

If a Whistleblower Report is inadvertently assigned to an inappropriate subject area, the Processor immediately refers the report to the person responsible for Compliance and Principle Legal Matters, who then refers the Whistleblower Report to the Processor responsible for processing the report in the relevant corporate function.

6.2. GEA Whistleblower Hotline (Ombudsperson)

All reports received by the Ombudsperson will be transmitted to the following persons in a protected manner:

⁶ Case management is also provided by BKMS and – like the Whistleblower Tool – allows for specially protected data storage.

- (1) in the case of a report directed against or concerning the entire Compliance Department: the Head of Internal Audit or her/his representative designated to receive Whistleblower Reports;
- (2) in the event of a report directed against or involving the Vice President Compliance and Principle Legal Matters or an employee of the Compliance Department: the Senior Vice President Corporate Legal;
- (3) in all other cases, the report will be made to the Vice President Compliance and Principle Legal Matters or her/his designee designated to accept Whistleblower Reports.

In cases (1) and (2), Whistleblower Reports will be processed by the Authorized Employees to receive the report in each case.

In case (3), Whistleblower Reports are forwarded to the Authorized Employees of the respective group function for further processing.

6.3. Personal contact

At the request of the Whistleblower, a personal meeting or a meeting via video and audio transmission with the Processor (Section 4.1) must be made possible at short notice.

7. Responsibilities and allocations

Whistleblower Reports are processed by Processors of a group function depending on their thematic focus. Within GEA, responsibility for processing Whistleblower Reports is structured as follows:

Categories	Responsible group function
Corruption, fraud, embezzlement	Compliance & Principle Legal Matters
Antitrust and Competition Law, State Aid	Compliance & Principle Legal Matters
Export control	Customs & Foreign Trade
Privacy	Data Protection Office
Accounting rules, Corporate income tax	Compliance & Principle Legal Matters
Money laundering, regulations on financial services, -products and markets, terrorist financing	Compliance & Principle Legal Matters
Conflict Minerals	Procurement
Human Rights Violations	Sustainability
Public procurement	Procurement
Product safety and conformity	QHSE
Environmental protection	Sustainability

Radiation protection and nuclear safety	QHSE
Food and feed safety, animal health and welfare, transport safety	QHSE
Consumer protection, public health	QHSE
Occupational safety and health protection measures	QHSE
Sexual and other harassment and discrimination	HR
Safety and business continuity management	Information Security

8. Data protection

The GEA Whistleblower System is operated in accordance with the applicable data protection regulations, in particular the GEA guidelines and information on data protection and the principles contained therein.

8.1. Data protection policy

The data protection information for the GEA Whistleblower System is available on the GEA website as well as on the GEA intranet site regarding the Whistleblower System.⁷

8.1.1. Data protection notices to Whistleblowers

The privacy notice will be sent to the whistleblowers, unless they remain anonymous, by email as part of the initial contact by the Processor within seven days of receipt of the notification.

If a report is made via the Ombudsperson and the whistleblower does not remain anonymous, the Ombudsperson sends the whistleblowers the relevant data protection information by email immediately after the report has been made and obtains the necessary data protection consents.

8.1.2. Data protection notices vis-à-vis defendants, witnesses and third parties

The privacy notices will be sent to any suspects, witnesses and third parties concerned within one month of receipt of the notification, unless this information would seriously jeopardize the processing of the notification. In this case, the data protection notices will only be sent to the respective persons when this risk no longer exists.

8.2. Data access

Access to the data collected and processed in connection with the GEA Whistleblower System is only granted to authorized GEA employees as described in sections 4 and 5 or to authorized employees of the ombudsperson if reports are submitted via the GEA whistleblower hotline. The data will only be passed on to the responsible authorities in the cases described in section 4.2.

⁷ [Microsoft Word - Data Protection Notice Whistleblowing System \(gea.com\)](#).

8.3. Data deletion

The deletion of data collected in connection with the whistleblower system is carried out in accordance with the respective time specifications of the relevant deletion concept.

Date	Review and Revision