

## “Preventing and fighting corruption in the public administration in Europe”

### PREVENTING CORRUPTION IN LATVIA

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*Corruption is a truly global and historical phenomenon from which no country in the world escapes. During our independence from 1991, Latvia has made a number of important steps in strengthening its rule of law, public administration and criminal justice system, recognising the importance of setting up and developing enforcement capacity in various areas.*

Latvia has been one of the most active CEE countries in combating corruption, at least but not only on a formal basis. Latvia was the first to seek assistance for anti-corruption policy from the World Bank in 1996, and since then has carried out a number of important reforms designed to improve governance and prevent corruption.

The “Corruption Prevention law” was adopted on 1995. Although the name of this law contains the word “corruption”, the law itself was aimed more at preventing conflicts of interest. It prescribed a series of restrictions on the activities of public officials and regulated the declaration system for the same.

The Corruption Prevention Council (CPC), chaired by Minister of Justice, was established in September 1997. CPC functioned as co-ordinating institution to insure the political leadership for designing and implementing the Corruption Prevention Strategy since 1997 until August 2001.

According to the decision by Cabinet of Ministers of August 2001 CPC and Crime prevention Council were reorganised as Crime and Corruption Prevention Council (CCPC) chaired by Prime Minister. The representatives and observers to the council meetings are also the World Bank and European Commission Delegation in Latvia.

The first Corruption Prevention Programme (CPP) was developed with the assistance of World Bank consultants and adopted on February 1998.

The approach focuses on the three basic principles of **prevention, enforcement and education** (Honkong module).

In this context it is very important to note that the EU PHARE project on “**Anticorruption training, Legislation and Information Program**” has launched its operation in Latvia at the beginning of January 2000 and finished on October 2001 as one of the first of its kind in the Central and Eastern Europe. In the preparation and implementation process of the project the Latvian School of Public Administration (LSPA) plays the significant role. As one of the results of this project the training course “Corruption prevention “still is in the curriculum of LSPA.

In order to ensure an effective, centralised and united fight against corruption, a central, independent institution - *Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (CPCB)* - has been established. The work of the CPCB is threefold: prevention of corruption, combating of corruption and education of the society on anti-corruption measures. Before the establishment of the CPCB there were many agencies dealing with anti-corruption functions and it created a lack of coordination of activities, ineffective use of resources and overlapping of functions among the agencies responsible for the fight against corruption.

The CPCB is an institution of the State Administration under the supervision of the Cabinet of Ministers, what is carried out by the Prime Minister. That ensures independence of the institution what is quite crucial in combating of corruption. The main tasks of the CPCB are as following:

- to assess the compliance of the actions of public officials to the law “On Prevention of Conflict of Interest in Actions of State Officials”;
- to carry out investigation and criminal intelligence actions to discover criminal offences in the area of corruption, as provided in the Criminal Law;
- to charge public officials with administrative liability and impose punishment in cases of administrative violations in the area of corruption;
- **to monitor political parties’ compliance with party financing regulations** and in cases provided by law, charge with administrative liability and impose appropriate punishment;
- to develop methods for the prevention and fighting of corruption in public and private sectors;
- to educate the public and state officials in the areas of the law, ethics and corruption prevention.

The CPCB in close cooperation with all the agencies and institutions involved in the corruption prevention and combating is in charge of implementation of tasks of a *National Programme for Corruption Prevention and Combating in Latvia for 2004-2008*, adopted by the Government in August, 2004. The Programme clearly sets priorities, defines responsible institutions, their tasks and timeframe for the implementation of the strategy thus effectively coordinating the cooperation amongst all the agencies involved.

One of the tasks set in the National Programme is building legal awareness among state officials and other members of the society on issues of corruption what require a number of training and education activities, like education of state officials on issues of prevention of corruption, informing the public about important cases or cases with wide resonance heard at court and connected with corruption, informing the public and mass media about implemented anti-corruption measures and disclosed cases of corruption.

In order to prevent corruption the CPCB educates society and the public officials (in cooperation with LSPA) in the areas of law and ethics, informs the public about the development tendencies of corruption and cases of corruption found. To provide assistance and guidelines on how to introduce measures defined by the *National Programme for Corruption Prevention and Combating for 2004 - 2008* the Bureau organizes discussion rounds and seminars for representatives from various institutions.

In order to ensure the necessary linkage with the society and promote the public confidence in the Bureau’s objectives, creation of the *Public Consultative Council* of the Bureau has taken place. The *Public Consultative Council* includes members from the NGO sector, mass media and private sector. Given that the Council comprises representatives from professional associations and organizations, it is expected that

problems brought up at the Council meetings would help to improve respective area of activity.  
Latvia continues its alignments with anti-corruption instruments of EU.