



**Corruption  
Prevention  
and Combating  
Bureau**

**2002 - 2007**



The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau is known throughout Latvia and far beyond the country's borders, particularly in terms of its abbreviated name - the KNAB. The Bureau is now celebrating its fifth anniversary.

The law on the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau, which set up our office and defined its duties, took effect on May 1, 2002. The true life of the agency, however, began only on October 10, 2002, when Parliament approved Guntis Rutkis as the first director of the KNAB. It is on October 10, therefore, that we celebrate our birthday.

Five years. Not a lot of time, and yet we have accomplished a great deal. The KNAB now has 141 employees. These are young, educated, energetic people with invaluable experience in combating and preventing corruption.

As we observe our fifth anniversary, I would like to thank all of my colleagues at the KNAB for their honest and responsible work. I thank you all, because without your daily hard work, the effective work of the bureau would never have been possible. I thank those who monitor the activities of public officials and the financing of political organisations, who analyse corruption and draft new legal acts, and who represent the Bureau before all levels of courts. I thank those whose work is discussed by the public at large, focusing attention on the criminal investigations which the Bureau conducts. More than 50 cases have already been heard by courts of first instance at least. I also thank those who have helped to educate and inform the public, as well as those who contribute to the strengthening of the KNAB's international links.

The work of the KNAB team has been much praised by colleagues in Latvia and abroad. Many countries are very interested in the work of the Bureau, and that is true both of those which are undergoing transition and those in which democratic traditions are well-established. There have been cases in which our experience has been put to use elsewhere in the world.

It may seem that five years is just the beginning, but in the fight against corruption, in which nearly every case leads to enormous publicity and also opposition, each year is worth at least three years.

The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau is very firmly on its feet. It is independent and strict in its approach. The Bureau is prepared to develop further, to march forward, to achieve greater maturity, and to wait for our next major anniversaries with pride in what we have accomplished.

From the bottom of my heart, I greet all KNAB employees on the fifth anniversary of our agency's establishment. I wish you durability, patience, never-ending energy, and the eternal conviction which is stated in our mission statement: **"We take action against corruption for the good of society and the national interest with the full force of law and public support, in order to achieve integrity in the exercise of power vested in officials of State".**

Dear reader!

You are holding a report from the Latvian Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) which is being issued in commemoration of the Bureau's fifth anniversary. The KNAB's first five years have been full with hard work. As we observe our anniversary, we are pleased to take a look back at this time through our own eyes and through those of others. We're offering you a bit of the past and a bit of the present - a few facts, a couple of thoughts. In our anniversary issue, we have sought evaluations and greetings from people who have stood alongside the KNAB as it has taken its first secure steps - people whose everyday work has, in one or another way, involved evaluations of our work.



If I am asked to evaluate the establishment and work of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau, I must first of all express my regret about the fact that the independent Latvian state was unable to avoid the need for this specialised investigatory institution. From today's perspective, we can debate whether the office was or was not established in a timely way. We can debate the decisions which public officials might have taken if the Bureau had been established with government support in the early 1990 s. We can think about how law enforcement institutions would have developed in that case. Clearly, there is no single answer to these rhetorical questions. It is now the year 2007, and we are looking back on what has been accomplished in five years.

We absolutely must not denigrate the anti-corruption work which was done in advance of the Bureau's establishment by the Security Police and the National Police. The growth of the KNAB and the development of its level of authority were certainly strengthened by the fact that the Director of the Bureau is appointed by Parliament on the basis of a recommendation from the Cabinet of Ministers. This is a key norm in guaranteeing independent investigations under the circumstances which prevail in Latvia at this time. The number of cases investigated by the Bureau has increased, and many of these cases have attracted active publicity. This makes clear the importance of the issues which the Bureau's employees handle on a daily basis. I would certainly like to emphasise that any court conviction in a timely and complicated criminal case is possible only if operational work and investigatory work are carefully balanced. Practice tells us that the Bureau has had such results, even though its work has not been completely without mistakes - as is the case with any institution that has been established from scratch.

It is very important to note that public trust in the Bureau's work has been developing gradually. People have proven themselves to be prepared to work with the Bureau and to submit information to it. Without this, the fight against corruption would be simply impossible. I believe that those members of the civil society who have an honest approach toward life know what to do if they encounter corruption. The principles of mutual trust may be very fragile, but the everyday work of the KNAB has yielded results nonetheless. Much remains to be done by the Bureau and the public at large, however, if we are to feel a sense of stability in our country. We must foment public intolerance toward corruption, we must make full use of the results of our investigations. Eventually we must come to the point where the public agree that corruption is possible, but preventable, that it is possible to investigate the widest possible range of crimes and to bring those who have committed crimes to justice. We must change the helpless attitude that everyone knows everything, that everyone is prepared to offer viewpoints, but a logical legal result is missing.

I offer these ideas both to evaluate the work which the Bureau has done so far and to present my thoughts about the work that remains to be done. We must never rest on our laurels. Our everyday successes, our many difficulties and the complicated and unusual situations which we face - we must always consider these from the perspective of the intended final result. Our goals must always represent our very highest aims!

During my presidency, I was among those who fully supported the establishment of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau.

I was delighted when the Bureau finally launched its operations. I would like to thank the agency's director, Aleksejs Loskutovs, and all of the other KNAB employees for the efforts and investments which they have made in fighting against this extremely harmful phenomenon of corruption in Latvia.

I congratulate you on your fifth anniversary. I hope that over the next five years, you will bring joy to all of us with truly impressive results!

The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau has proven its role in dealing with anti-corruption issues in Latvia. By its very presence, the Bureau has ensured that issues related to the combating and prevention of corruption have been put on the public agenda. Light has been shed on many types of hidden corruption specifically thanks to the active operations of the KNAB.

I remain convinced that the main mission for the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau is to prevent and combat the sources of corruption. Arresting corrupt individuals - givers and takers of bribes, those who misuse their authority in office for malicious purposes - is an effective and transparent process which will satisfy the public, but that is only one part of the agency's mission. As far as I'm concerned, the most important job is to deal with the causative sources of corruption. Latvia must have a system which keeps individuals from taking decisions that are based on selfish interests alone. This, then, would reduce opportunities for corruption.

At the same time, however, I must praise what the Bureau has done in the fight against corruption, because it has managed to neutralise corrupt bureaucrats at the highest level.

Of key importance is work related to the financing of political parties. I believe that it is necessary to conduct research related to open lobbying by parties, allowing the KNAB to evaluate this process and to determine a procedure for lobbying which is understandable to the public.

I would like to praise the work which Aleksejs Loskutovs has done in ensuring the stability of the KNAB and its activities, and I hope that all employees of the agency will be professional in their approach, successful in pursuing their goals, and both patient and courageous in what they do!





## Baiba Rubess

Founder and former chairwoman (2003 - 2005) Foreign Investors Council  
Executive director, SIA Latvija Statoil

If the image of a country is to promote entrepreneurship, then it absolutely must be ensured that commercial activities in that country will be honest, legal and in line with international practice. Corruption or even weakly noticeable manifestations thereof will create obstacles against economic growth and welfare. It is of key importance that the first step against corruption was taken in the establishment of the KNAB. It was admitted publicly that corruption was an acute problem in Latvia, and the government undertook to eliminate it.

Five years ago, there was much public debate about whether the establishment of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau would be of any use. Views in support of the establishment of the KNAB were expressed by businesspeople, and particularly by the Foreign Investors Council in Latvia. The council argued that the Bureau would have an important role to play in ensuring the rule of law and independent control over corruptive situations. During its first few years of work, the KNAB has survived a storm of diverse and sometimes hostile views, but the need for the Bureau has clearly been confirmed by the results of its work.

The achievements of KNAB have put up a mirror for our society, illustrating the not very healthy attitude which many people have vis-à-vis honesty, justice and respect for their country. Cases solved by the KNAB are an illustration of reality, and we see that much remains to be done in the fight against corruption in Latvia. This, however, is work which we must all do ourselves, working with ourselves and with our fellow human beings.

It is commendable that thanks to individual efforts and the activities of the KNAB, the Bureau has clearly won public trust during its five years of activities. The agency has strengthened itself, its professionalism and its readiness to take risks. The KNAB has ensured balanced activities in both of its areas of activity - the timely fight against corruption, and the need to prevent corruption. There is no question that the development of the Bureau has had an effect on courts and prosecutorial institutions in our country.

I would say that the greatest achievement of the KNAB has been that positive changes have occurred in Latvia. People have become less tolerant of corruption, they are more active and courageous in fighting against it and in solving crimes. The KNAB now has an important ally - the people of Latvia.

I hope that the entire KNAB team will increase its effectiveness even further, finding strength and motivation in five years of excellent experience and in the achievements that have been made so far!

## Valts Kalniņš

Researcher, Center for public policy Proventus  
Chairman, Consulting Council, KNAB

In 2002, there were no targeted efforts to fight against corruption in Latvia, but because the country was rapidly preparing to join the European Union, the system of governance became more modern, and it appeared that the dishonesty of the political elite - at least in its most shameless manifestations - would remain an historical phenomenon from the end of the 20th century. The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau is a child of this dynamic and hopeful time.

I suspect that there was more administrative corruption in 2002 than there is now, but the problem is that the sense of political responsibility has not become stronger. In fact, it may well be lesser now than then. The KNAB obtained a great deal of public trust in an astonishingly quick period of time. Over the course of just a few years, crooked police officers, judges, local government officials and other people in the service of the state have come to understand that the feeling of impunity is no longer justified. Targeted approaches to various aspects of the fight against corruption have sent a powerful signal to the public. Corruption is not a norm. The fight against it is not just a slogan written down on a piece of paper. These are the KNAB's most significant accomplishments.

Alas, the KNAB, the country, and its active and democratic citizens have not been able to force all of Latvia's political forces to treat legal norms with respect, to be honest in their approach to political campaigns, or to take decisions which set a positive example for others. That is one reason why the draft laws prepared by specialists at the Bureau often do not win the support of the political world.

I hope that the employees of the KNAB will uphold, in practice, the idealism which sometimes allows us to believe in Latvia's anti-corruption policies. May you work together in forming one of the strongest cornerstones of Latvia as a country in which the rule of law clearly prevails!



## Inese Voika

Founder and president (1998 - 2004)  
Transparency International Latvia

I can say with full conviction that we would be living in a very different country and society if the KNAB had not existed over the last five years. If the KNAB had less authority, less honesty and less responsibility than that which it and its employees do have, it would also be a different country. The invisible virus of corruption which has infected our country ever since the times of the Soviet Union has been spread tirelessly by the new elite of the political system, and without the KNAB, it could have been so very much more destructive.

During the 1990 s, factors that were favourable for corruption were fully flourishing - the double standards and hypocrisies of the Soviet Union, the idea among those who were in power that they could do anything and everything, the disrespect which was shown toward the law, the fear which subordinates felt in relations with their superiors. This required serious intervention, and the KNAB became the central element therein. One of the cornerstones for the success of the KNAB is that the agency is rooted in the local situation and was established here, in Latvia, and not somewhere else. That is true even if the idea was first proposed by the World Bank and then supported by other foreign partners of Latvia's.

As soon as work began on drafting the relevant law, the local civil society opened up its eyes to make sure that the political elite could not turn the idea of the KNAB into a farce. Independent leaders had to be found - that was another issue which attracted public attention. Over the subsequent five years, media outlets and non-governmental organisations have devoted a great deal of time and effort in defending the very idea of the KNAB.

The main job for the KNAB over the next five years will be to continue to convince people in this country that those who seek to abuse their status in power will be punished, and those who insist on the rule of law can find justice - even and especially if they are unprotected and have no contacts.

Success for the people of Latvia threatens the political elite, because the KNAB oversees many of those issues which relate to the elite's ability to hang on to power - political party finances, the income of public officials, and the possible misdeeds which these officials commit.

I hope that the employees of the KNAB will continue to stand above the political conjuncture, that they will interpret laws in favour of the public interest, that they will defend lawfulness against political pressure. Then the civil society will continue to support and defend you. May other government institutions join you in this position - those without whose participation, the fight against corruption will not be possible at all.

## Stuart Gilman

Director  
Global Anti-Corruption Unit, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

On behalf of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the UN Global Programme against Corruption, I am pleased to congratulate the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) of Latvia upon its 5th anniversary. This is an appropriate time to celebrate the impressive achievements and successes of KNAB in such a short period of time. Its role as Latvia's institution for fighting corruption and ensuring the integrity of public officials is essential to any modern democracy.

Latvia ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in January 2006 and KNAB has since played a critical role in implementation for Latvia. According to Latvian law the core activities of KNAB are divided into two major fields - prevention of corruption and investigation. This represents two of the most important pillars of the UNCAC, and many of KNAB's activities reflect how seriously they take their responsibilities under the Convention.

During KNAB's short five years of existence, it has been produced reports about offences committed by persons in the public service and sanctioned persons who committed illicit acts. In dealing with the complex issues of prevention the bureau produced guidelines for internal anti-corruption action plans and created a manual on conflict of interest. In order to better understand what needed to be done in prevention, KNAB has conducted two surveys. KNAB has also participated in drafting anti-corruption laws and regulations, prepared amendments on political party and election campaign financing, prevention of conflict of interest, standards for lease of state and municipal property, as well as contributing to the Administrative Violations Code of Latvia.

In addition to KNAB's work on prevention and investigation, the agency is also responsible for the education and information of the society. Public awareness is a critical element in prevention in the UNCAC and KNAB has featured prominently addressing anti-corruption matters in the Latvian press. KNAB is further responsible for education of the public in the areas of respect of law and ethics. The positive result of making society more aware of corruption shows when KNAB received more than 1000 complaints in 2005. This, plus the additional efforts in informing the public about the harm of corruption and how to deal with it, will become an increasingly important part of the bureau's work.

Finally, the KNAB, as required by the UNCAC, has been a positive contributor to the international dialogue on how to fight corruption sharing many of its approaches and practices in a variety of international forums.

The achievements of KNAB during the five years of work show that political will, a trained and dedicated staff, and effective resources can be used to combat corruption. It is something all Latvians should be proud of. However, we of the United Nations also see it as a model and a testament that countries can be effective in the fight against corruption.

I congratulate KNAB and the people of Latvia and look forward to your new successes and many years of fruitful cooperation.





## Wolfgang Rau

Executive director

Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO)

The establishment and achievements of the Bureau for Preventing and Combating Corruption (KNAB) can be easily traced throughout GRECO's evaluation and compliance reports regarding Latvia. Already in GRECO's First Evaluation Round Report of 2002 the stage was set for the creation of KNAB, when GRECO remarked that the efforts of a range of public institutions contributing to the fight against corruption in Latvia were fragmented. In September 2004, when GRECO assessed Latvia's compliance with the recommendations it had issued two years earlier, a new body had indeed been created - KNAB - and it had clearly taken off with a flying start. The report on Latvia's compliance with GRECO's recommendations refers frequently to KNAB which is credited for its role in developing preventive anti-corruption strategies, increasing public awareness - in collaboration with the media and civil society - of the dangers of corruption, informing the public about measures adopted to fight corruption, and in general for improving the co-ordination and efficiency of the Latvian approach towards the prevention of corruption.

As regards preventive policies, I have often noted with satisfaction that the views of KNAB fall very much in line with those of GRECO. For example, in the Second Round Evaluation Report, GRECO observed that professionals such as doctors (who carry out significant tasks within the public sector in Latvia) should also be subject to regulations against improper - possibly corrupt - conduct; this observation was echoed in KNAB's most recent press statement of June 2007 according to which recognising patients' unofficial payments to doctors as legal was creating very favourable conditions for corruption.

Now in 2007, we can look back on 5 years of close observation of the corruption prevention activities of KNAB - and of Latvia in general - as GRECO embarks on a new evaluation round. In this Third Evaluation Round it will again be able to examine close up the activities of KNAB. A central theme of GRECO's Third Evaluation Round is transparency of party funding which corresponds with one of the core tasks of KNAB. In its control of the financial activities of political parties, its sanctioning power, its role in making information on the finances of political parties publicly available and the expertise it has acquired on this topic over the last 5 years, KNAB may very well become a model for other countries.

To conclude, on the occasion of KNAB's 5th anniversary, I would like to congratulate all those involved with the Bureau's activities. I hope the promising work KNAB has already carried out in Latvia will be continued in the years to come and will provide others, inside and outside Latvia, with an example to follow.



## The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau: From Idea to Institution

- Until the law on Prevention of Corruption took effect on October 25, 1995, individual anti-corruption norms were found in 13 different laws approved by the Supreme Council and the Saeima. The anti-corruption law, for the first time in Latvia's history, defined the concept of corruption and assigned the task of implementing the law to the State Revenue Service. The law basically spoke to asset declarations for public officials, as well as limitations on officials holding more than one job.
- The Corruption Prevention Council began work in 1997. Its job was to draft a unified anti-corruption policy in Latvia and to ensure its implementation.
- The government approved the first anti-corruption programme in 1998. The document listed specific targets for law enforcement, national and local government institutions.
- In 1999, the Corruption Prevention Council considered the establishment of an independent institution to prevent and combat corruption. The government set up a working group tasked with preparing a report on what would need to be done to establish such an institution. The Secretariat of the Corruption Prevention Council was also established.
- 2000 can, to a certain extent, be seen as a turning point in anti-corruption policy. On August 8, 2002, the Cabinet of Ministers approved a conceptual document on anti-corruption efforts, expressing clear support for the establishment of a new institution to combat and prevent corruption.
- Based on an order of the Prime Minister, a working group was established on October 2, 2002, to draft laws and regulations for the institutional anti-corruption system in Latvia. The working group was headed up by Aldis Lieljuksis, who at that time was deputy commander of the police institution which dealt with money laundering. Active members included Inese Svikša (Director of the Secretariat of the Corruption Prevention Council), Rūdolfs Kalniņš (Senior Specialist at the Secretariat), Anda Krastiņa (Director of the Corruption Prevention Control Division of the State Revenue Service), Jurijs Galejs (prosecutor for the Department to Protect Personal and National Rights at the Prosecutor-General's Office), Gatis Gudermanis (Chief of Division of the Economic Police Board), Valdis Salmiņš (senator from the Department of Criminal Cases of the Supreme Court Senate), and Ilze Gredzena (legal expert for the PHARE-financed project "Anti-Corruption Training, Legislation and Information").
- Three working groups established by the government worked very actively in 2001 to draft laws on the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau and on ways in which conflicts of interest could be prevented in the work of public officials. A draft law on

initial property declarations by natural persons was drafted, and work was done on introducing the principle of legal presumption. There was work to improve norms related to political party financing, and thought was given to the possibility of introducing direct government financing for political parties.

- The draft law on the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau was submitted to Parliament on February 8, 2002, and it took effect on May 1 of the same year.
- The summer of 2002 was spent in a search for the first director of the KNAB. The Prime Minister announced the first search on May 21. The process attracted vast public attention. Eight people applied in the first round, and the commission gave top marks to Visvaldis Puķītis and Raimonds Mūrnieks. The government rejected both candidates. A second round was launched, and this time there were 17 applicants. The commission recommended Didzis Šmitiņš and Aldis Lieljuksis, but once again the Cabinet of Ministers demurred. The third competition attracted 18 applications. Jānis Jonāss received the highest number of points. The Cabinet of Ministers said yes. Parliament said no. The government then recommended that Guntis Rutkis - the man who had received the second highest number of points after Jonāss - be appointed director of the KNAB.
- On October 10, 2002, Parliament approved Rutkis as the first director of the KNAB, and that date is seen as the true birthday of the agency. After March 31, 2003, Rutkis' Deputy, Rūdolfs Kalniņš took over as Acting Director. On June 12, the job was taken over by Deputy Director Alvis Vilks, and on September 23, he was followed in the post of Acting Director by Jūta Striķe.
- Aleksejs Loskutovs was appointed Director of the KNAB by the Saeima on May 27, 2004.





## Aldis Lieljuksis

Chief, State Police

Chairman, working group to draft the law on the KNAB

After five years of KNAB activities, we see that allegations that were available about corruption in various areas for a long time before the Bureau's establishment have been proven true. Back then public officials usually pretended that there was no such thing as corruption. Research by foreign organisations and non-governmental organisations showed this. No one in government was prepared to defend the need for the KNAB to the bitter end. Then came pressure from the World Bank and the Foreign Investors Council, and that was an important step forward. Work was also done by experts who were working under the auspices of a PHARE project.

As we worked on the KNAB law, there was much debate about the Bureau's subordination. This required a compromise. Had we insisted that the Bureau must be one of those institutions which are granted autonomy by the Constitution, Parliament might well have rejected the law altogether. There were also extensive debates about the extent to which the KNAB would engage in investigations. All of Latvia's law-enforcement agencies protested against the awarding of investigatory capacities to the KNAB, because they felt that the agency should work only to prevent corruption.

The working group felt that the KNAB should have regional structures so that the activities of public officials could be monitored from the top to the bottom. I continue to believe that the Bureau must be close to the population. That would help in preventing corruption, because the KNAB would then become an agency where people can seek consultations. The issue of corruption in the local government sector could be monitored more thoroughly.

I have watched the KNAB's work from the sidelines, and I am delighted that the situation in Latvia is improving insofar as preventing and combating corruption is concerned. That's what I believe. It used to be that nothing much could be done because there was no specific evidence of corruption at various levels of governance, but the work of the KNAB has shown that there has been corruption, and there is still corruption. The fact that the Bureau exists allows us to hope for more fundamental activities in many different areas.

I am pleased at the work which the KNAB has done to struggle against corruption. This work has clearly shown that there is corruption at the highest levels of government, too - an issue which no one dared address in the past. It is nice to see that public trust in the KNAB is on the rise. People are increasingly prepared to submit information to the Bureau, and that is of key importance.

There is still a need for thorough and in-depth analysis of laws and other norms so as to eliminate those which facilitate corruption. All of this has to do with the capture of the state, and that is an area in which the analytical work of the KNAB is not all that evident. These are results which we will expect in the future. Perhaps this will change now that lobbying issues are being discussed. There must be maximum transparency if we are truly to believe that corruption is being prevented.

The best aspect of the establishment of the KNAB insofar as ordinary residents are concerned is that there is finally an institution which they can approach with their information, one in which they can place their trust.

As the employees of the Bureau celebrate its fifth anniversary, I wish them good health and the ongoing desire to serve no other master than the law!





### The Status of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau

The KNAB is an institution of public administration which is under the supervision of the Cabinet of Ministers. It pursues functions related to the prevention and combating of corruption, as defined by law, and it monitors regulations concerning political parties and their financing.

#### KNAB functions in preventing corruption and educating the public

In the area of preventing corruption, the KNAB drafted a national strategy to prevent and combat corruption, along with a national programme with the same aims. The Bureau co-ordinates the work of institutions which are part of the process so as to ensure that goals can be achieved. The KNAB drafts methodologies to prevent and combat corruption in state and local government institutions, as well as in the private sector. The agency analyses the practices of government institutions in preventing corruption and in dealing with those instances of corruption which have been discovered. The KNAB also makes proposals on how identified shortcomings can be reversed.

The agency analyses norms and draft norms to prevent any which would facilitate corruption. It also proposes amendments to existing norms and offers its proposals as to new norms which should be approved.

#### KNAB functions in preventing conflicts of interest among public officials

The agency monitors conflicts of interest among public officials. It makes sure that officials observe prohibitions and restrictions that are defined by law. When violations of the law on preventing conflicts of interest among public officials are identified, the KNAB brings the relevant officials to administrative justice. It reviews violations and applies administrative sanctions for those which are within the jurisdiction of the KNAB in accordance with Latvia's Administrative Violations Code.

#### KNAB functions in monitoring political party financing

The KNAB ascertains that political parties and alliances of parties obey the law insofar as financing is concerned. Administrative sanctions are applied to those parties which violate the rules. The agency correlates and analyses information about the financial declarations which are submitted by parties, any violations that are committed in that process, and any violations of the restrictions that are defined by law. No less often than once a year, the KNAB must issue a public report on the violations of political party and financing rules that have been discovered and on steps that have been taken to deal with these violations.

#### KNAB functions in combating corruption

The Bureau conducts investigatory operations to solve crimes among government institutions and to define violations related to political party financing.

### The Five-Year Results of the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau in Numbers and Facts: The Five Top Achievements in Each Area

#### Combating corruption

During its five years of operations, the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau has launched **82** criminal cases and begun 100 criminal proceedings. A total of **115** criminal cases have been forwarded to prosecutors, along with requests to charge **204** individuals with crimes. As of September 1, 2007, more than **50** court rulings had been handed down in these cases.

Facts and numbers cannot reflect the amount of work which the agency does in investigating crimes, however. The cases which are sent to prosecutors are becoming more and more complex as time goes by. Often the KNAB finds that as it investigates one criminal case, it finds evidence of several other crimes or violations.

#### The Top 5 cases investigated by the KNAB

##### The biggest bribe (among those cases which have been heard by the courts)

In April 2005, the KNAB arrested the owner of a pharmaceutical sales company who offered a bribe of **LVL 45,000** to a KNAB official. In all, the businessman offered a bribe of LVL 50,000 to get the Bureau to stop its investigation of the man's business operations - some of which were linked to public officials. The businessman furthermore promised additional payments of **LVL 1,000** a month. A court sentenced him to two years in prison, and he is currently serving his term.

##### The greatest number of accused individuals in a single criminal case

The KNAB has investigated a case involving bribery and the chief of the Road Traffic Police of the Police Headquarters of the City of Rīga, and **12 people** have been charged with crimes. The chief has been charged with repeated acceptance of bribes. Two police employees have been charged with bribery, and another two have been charged with organising bribery and misappropriation of bribes. Seven private individuals were also charged.

##### The largest number of witnesses and episodes in a single criminal case

The director of the Spinal Surgery Centre of the Latvian Hospital for Traumatology and Orthopaedics has been charged with repeated and major cases of fraud, and the first-level court has convicted him of this crime. The court found that 77 episodes identified by the KNAB were true. The defendant had maliciously misused the trust of patients and the fact that a public official's private practice was at the same address as his basic place of employment. This allowed the man to defraud private individuals of a sum of LVL 40,242, which he spent on his own needs. The criminal case involved interviews with nearly **400** individuals. Materials for the case filled up **27** volumes, and the document in which charges against the man were set out was **250** pages long. No fewer than **82** people were given the status of victims in this case





### Fiercest punishment of someone investigated by the KNAB

A prosecutor from the prosecutorial unit which investigates organised crime and other specialised crimes was sentenced to 7 years in prison and confiscation of property after he was found guilty of extorting the sum of USD 50,000, misusing his office, and failing to do what is expected of a public official.

### The case which created the greatest public scandal

In March 2005, the KNAB launched a criminal investigation involving a bribe of EUR 20,000 which had been given in the context of an election to the office of mayor in the town of Jūrmala. The court was asked to hear a case involving **bribery during the taking of a political decision**. The mass media attached the name “Jūrmalagate” to the case, and there was vast publicity about transcripts of phone calls which laid bare the secret way in which political decisions are often taken in Latvia. In March 2007, the former mayor of Jūrmala and a businessman were sentenced to five years in prison and confiscation of property after being found guilty of bribery in a group.

### Preventing conflicts of interest in the activities of public officials

Monitoring the activities of public officials so as to identify cases in which there is a conflict of interest is one of the most extensive areas of work for the KNAB, and the results of these operations are not always publicly visible. This is work which yields massive benefits, however, because the Bureau is gradually eliminating the involvement of personal interest in the work of public officials and in the decisions which they take. During the course of five years, the agency has investigated **1,690** public officials in the context of suspected conflicts of interest. Administrative sanctions have been applied to **383** officials – cash fines totalling **LVL 24,170**. More than **200** officials have been warned not to violate the law any further, this because the deadline for applying administrative sanctions had expired before the sanctions could be applied.

Over the course of five years, **160** officials have been ordered to reimburse the state for losses caused to it by violations of the law. The sum has amounted to more than **LVL 1750,000**.

### The Top 5 instances of conflicts of interest among public officials

- **The greatest number of unlawful additional jobs held.** A public official was found to be holding **8** different positions in state and private stock companies, limited liability companies and the privatisation commission of a city council – all at once. The official was ordered to pay a fine of LVL 130 and to do what was necessary to repair the situation.
- **The highest wages received by unlawful additional employment.** The KNAB found that a parliamentary secretary at a government ministry had received more than **LVL 40,000** in wages from four different state and private companies while violating limitations against such moonlighting.
- **The greatest number of conflict of interest violations committed by a single official.** An official from a local government institution was found in violation of six different norms in the law on preventing conflicts of interest in the activities of public officials. The man had concluded agreements, signed bills and represented the local government in cases in which she had personal financial interests. The official also did contractual work in violation of the ban on moonlighting without the permission of her superiors.

- **Types of officials caught most often.** Over the course of five years, the KNAB has filed administrative charges against more than **200 local government** officials who have violated conflict of interest norms. That is the largest group of punished officials in percentage terms - 68% of all such cases.
- **The most common violation in the area of conflicts of interest.** The KNAB has found that officials are most likely to violate Section 11 of the law on preventing conflicts of interest in the activities of public officials. That is the section which prohibits **decisions serving the personal or financial interests of the official or his or her relatives or business partners**. These violations represent approximately one-half of the violations which the Bureau has identified in this area.

### Political party financing

Work done by the KNAB in the area of political party financing has been praised by domestic and international organisations, mostly because this is a very complex issue that is comparatively new in Latvia. What's more, it is one which demands considerable precision and professionalism. The need to ensure openness, transparency and lawfulness in the financial activities of political parties became part of the process of democracy just about at the same time as the establishment of the KNAB itself.

Over the course of five years, the KNAB has investigated more than **2,300** lists of donors. Political parties have been administratively sanctioned **135** times, and the fines have totalled up to nearly **LVL 76,000**. Donations of **LVL 380,000** to various parties have been declared unlawful. On the basis of violations discovered by the KNAB, the courts have suspended the operations of **14** parties and shut **7** parties down altogether.

During the five years of KNAB operations, Latvia's political parties have received more than **LVL 12 million** in donations. That should make clear the vast amount of work which the Bureau has had to do in monitoring this process.

### An anti-corruption programme and relevant legislative initiatives

The prevention and combating of corruption would not be possible without unified government policies and the involvement of other institutions in the work. Since the establishment of the KNAB, a national strategy and a national anti-corruption programme for 2004. - 2008. have been approved. The most active work in recent years has been aimed at creating internal control systems at state and local government institutions – something that had been given short shrift in the past. Seeking to make sure that the targets of the national programme are met, the KNAB has surveyed state and local government institutions and found that anti-corruption plans have been drafted by 90% of them. More than 80% of institutions have also prepared codes of ethics for their employees.





### The Top 5 initiatives of the KNAB in the legislative arena

- Seeking to reduce the inflow of illegal financing into the treasuries of Latvia's political parties, the KNAB drafted and supported many key amendments to the law on **political party finances**. A draft law on the financing of voter alliances and a draft law on campaigning have also been prepared. These are key laws if the relevant procedures are to be acceptable and unquestionably clear.
- After monitoring the extent to which public officials observe legal regulations concerning conflicts of interest in their operations, the KNAB defined several loopholes in the law and proposed many important amendments to the law. Among them - a more precise definition of those people who are considered public officials.
- In 2005, the KNAB led the way in preparing a conceptual document on monitoring of the income of private individuals. The KNAB took the initiative in seeking improvements in this area. There are still problems in monitoring the income of natural persons in Latvia, and that makes it harder to prevent and combat corruption. Monitoring institutions find it difficult to discover the sources of income for public officials and government institutions in those cases when the origin of the sources cannot be determined or is very old. A draft law on asset declarations by natural persons was prepared in 2006, and it is pending before Parliament.
- After discovering problems with the way in which state and local government properties are leased out, the KNAB proposed specific regulations in this area. A **draft law on leasing state and local government properties** was announced in 2006 to define clear principles in the leasing process and to prevent those incidents in which officials act dishonestly.
- After analysing the way in which legal acts and political decisions are approved in Latvia, the KNAB drafted a new conceptual document on legal regulation of the process of lobbying in Latvia. The draft rules would promote greater transparency in lobbying, as well as the ability of all individuals to affect the way in which decisions are taken.

### Public education

Over the course of five years, the KNAB has pursued links with the public at large by disseminating information about violations and crimes that have been solved, by involving the non-governmental sector in its work, by organising various discussions, and by preparing educational seminars for various target audiences. Over the course of the five years, the Bureau has been mentioned in more than **18,000** articles in the print media. It has released **370** press announcements and organised **60** educational and informational seminars for **2,900** public officials.

### The Top 5 anti-corruption slogans

- Corruption is the Prostitution of the Entrusted Power (the first KNAB social advertising campaign in the spring of 2007)
- Easy Money, Heavy End (the slogan for a children's drawing competition in the autumn of 2006)
- You Can Stop Corruption! (a slogan for International Anti-Corruption Day in 2005)
- Time to Act! (2003, a campaign to popularise the KNAB's information centre)





## The Effectiveness of Anti-Corruption Efforts in Latvia 2002-2007

The moment when the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau was granted the right to pursue its legally defined functions to full effect can be seen as the moment when systematic and targeted anti-corruption policies were first really implemented in Latvia. The national strategy to prevent and combat corruption has seven different pillars, and these are based on the authority that has been assigned to the Bureau. It may seem that five years is a comparatively brief period of time, but there has been development in each of these areas, along with achievements and, yes, perhaps also failures.

### Preventing and combating “capture of the state” (the influence of private individuals on decisions taken by state or local government institutions)

From the very beginning, the KNAB has implemented effective controls over political party financing, finding that a significant amount of money donated to several parties had been contributed illegally. The amount of illegally donated money has totalled more than LVL 380,000 over the course of five years.

Since March 2004, parties have no longer been allowed to receive donations from legal entities, because investigations showed that many such donations in the past may have come from entirely fictitious enterprises. There were also cases in which donations were contributed by individuals whose official income did not appear to be sufficient to make such substantial donations. The law stated that in future, individuals would only be able to make donations from income earned during the preceding three tax years.

Stricter regulations and more effective controls have disciplined parties, and the number of questionable donations has declined substantially.

It is still clear, however, that in the upper reaches of government in this country, there has been a lack of political will to introduce clear and thoroughly defined ways of preventing the ability of third parties to have uncontrolled influence in election campaigns. Officials seem unwilling to create an even playing field for all competing political parties. A KNAB suggestion to define criminal sanctions for parties which receive substantial amounts of illegal financing has been ignored altogether. A draft law on financing alliances of voters was submitted to Parliament in 2005, but consideration has stalled ever since that time.

### Preventing the useless, ineffective or unlawful use of state and local government properties

This is another area in which there were loopholes in the law, and once the KNAB began to discover problems as part of its investigation of **public procurement, handling of state and local government properties and finances** and the handling of **foreign financial resources**, it became clear that norms and control mechanisms would have to be improved. That has been done to a certain extent, but this is an area in which there is still a very substantial risk for corruption. Facts are being discovered which point to the malicious misuse of office and to officials who have enriched themselves at the expense of taxpayers.

Before the KNAB was established, no crime had ever been discovered at any government institution which had to do with illegalities in public procurement. The legislature and the various monitoring institutions, therefore, could pretend that there was no real risk of corruption in this area. The latent nature of this crime has not stopped the KNAB, however, in proving on more than one occasion that corrupt officials have adapted technical specifications to the needs of a single company or have reached unlawful agreement on the divvying up of procurements among several enterprises. These are very difficult cases to investigate, and evidence can be scarce. These are crimes which are conducted behind closed doors, and they are ones which involve the financial interests of both sides in the deal. The fact that the KNAB has successfully solved seven such crimes offers outstanding evidence as to the quality of the agency's work. It is absolutely clear that the government must seek out increasingly effective solutions in supervising the use and misuse of its material resources.

It is quite possible that many officials are avoiding dishonest deals because of these improved controls and the greater risk of being caught. Others, however, are still investing their intellectual potential in looking for legal loopholes that would offer them new opportunities to misuse the national treasury for their own purposes.

### Improving controls over unlawful income and expenditures

After several years of furious lobbying by officials from the KNAB, the government was finally convinced that the **existing system for controlling the income of natural persons** was ineffective in preventing money laundering and the use of money for criminal purposes. In the spring of 2007, Parliament gave first-reading approval to a draft law on the declaration of assets of natural persons and a series of other norms related to this issue.

This will ascertain that there is finally a point of reference from which the income, savings and expenditures of individuals can be evaluated. There will be better and greater opportunities to monitor this situation, which has to do with tax payments and the legality of income. People will no longer be able to hide their income behind the identity of others. No longer will officials be able to “write off” their money and properties in favour of other individuals.

### Improving opportunities to combat corruption

Public interest has always been focused on the solving of crimes so that the guilty can be brought to justice. Legal regulations in Latvia have been in line with international requirements for years now, but rumours of corruption in certain areas of governance were not followed up with investigations and legal proceedings. The active and professional work of KNAB investigators over the course of the last five years has finally allowed the public to learn that corruption is indeed present in the court system and in procurements. People have learned how issues are really settled by dishonest officials in state and local government institutions and in law enforcement institutions, too.

The experience of the KNAB shows that if an official has become involved in corruption, then he or she often finds it impossible to end the relevant relationships, and misuse of office is a process in which such officials are always seeking out new and more refined methods. The risk of getting caught is now so great that officials have become far more cautious, and the most shameless aspects of corruption - extortion and bribery - have become less common.





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The new law On Criminal Procedure took effect on October 1, 2005, and ever since then, legal regulations concerning investigations and evidence have been much different. There are no longer strict deadlines as to the amount of time which passes between the moment when someone is declared a suspect and the moment when charges must be filed. This means that investigatory institutions have been able to go to prosecutors with much more substantial evidence than had been the case before. Of course, this also means that the workload of investigators has increased substantially, as has their responsibility for solving crimes to as complete a degree as possible.

One goal for the KNAB is to eliminate corruption in the provision of public services, focusing particularly on health care and education. The Bureau has worked very hard to convince the government that people in these professions who demand or accept illegal payments should face administrative or even criminal liability. A partial solution was achieved when criminal sanctions were introduced for the illegal demand or acceptance of benefits, but administrative sanctions were not instituted for the taking of unlawful cash payments. The bottom line is that patients in Latvia still cannot be sure that they will receive proper treatment and care if they do not pay the doctor under the table in a process which has become known in Latvia as "gratuities".

The latent nature of this type of corruption is the main problem in discovering it, and the KNAB has proposed the establishment of a system which would protect and encourage whistle-blowers in this area. This would require greater legal protections for people who use ethical, moral or personal principles in providing information about unlawful activities within their own organisations - problems which are not discovered within the organisation itself, either because there is a lack of supervision, or because high-ranking management at the relevant institution are in on the deal.

### **Expanding the legal awareness of public officials and members of the public**

Now that information about effective KNAB investigations has hit the front pages of newspapers, and public officials are increasingly being brought to justice after they violate the law, there has been much greater interest among state and local government institutions in education that will help employees to learn about anti-corruption principles.

The main target audience for KNAB educational efforts over the past five years has been made up of public officials. There are more than 70,000 officials in Latvia, and it is important to ensure that those who work in public institutions are aware of requirements concerning conflicts of interest and corruption. The KNAB has worked with the Latvian School of Public Administration to put together seminars for nearly 3,000 managers, personnel specialists, attorneys, supervisory officials and other officials from a variety of institutions. The main subjects of discussion are ways in which conflicts of interest can be prevented, the professional ethics of public officials, the way in which the risk of corruption can be evaluated, the way in which anti-corruption programmes can be implemented, corruption and its various forms of manifestation, as well as research and statistics in this area.

The first steps have been taken in expanding the level of legal knowledge among the people of Latvia. This has been done through social advertising and public education campaigns. Early in 2007, a KNAB campaign called "Corruption is the Prostitution of the Entrusted Power!" attracted much attention.

### **Internal anti-corruption systems**

It is the job of any institution to make sure that corruption is not part of its work. The national programme to prevent and combat corruption says that each state and local government institution must have an established procedure for identifying the risks of corruption and for taking steps to deal with any corruption that is discovered. Many state and local government institutions have begun to work on these plans, but the fact is that in many cases the process is seen as nothing more than a formality. On the other hand, managers are increasingly understanding their responsibility for anti-corruption efforts as a component of good governance, and that is a good thing.



## International Evaluations of the Effectiveness of Preventing Corruption

Latvia's achievements in preventing and combating corruption are regularly assessed by GRECO (Group of States Against Corruption) of the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Global Anti-Corruption Unit of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Since Latvia joined the European Union, there has been increased interest in other countries to learn from the KNAB. Over the course of the last five years, representatives of the Bureau have talked with colleagues from more than 15 other countries, including Moldova, FYR Macedonia, Lithuania, Romania, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Albania and Ukraine to inform them about KNAB activities.

The non-governmental Freedom House organisation reported in its 2007 annual report that the fight against corruption was the only area among all those that are surveyed by the organisation in which there have been rapid improvements over the last three years. In 2005, Latvia received a ranking of 3.50 in the Freedom House anti-corruption report, but in 2007, the ranking was up to 3.00 - a greater improvement than was posted in any other area. In 2003, Freedom House wrote that "corruption is a serious problem in Latvia." Four years later, there was this statement: "While all signs indicate relatively limited corruption in middle and lower levels of the administration, there are ongoing rumours of backroom deals involving top state administrators, politicians, and oligarchs. KNAB is becoming more sophisticated and has accelerated its investigations of "big fish." The KNAB has become one of the most trusted organizations in Latvia, and people are increasingly willing to inform officials about observed corrupt activities."

In its report on the quality of governance in the world, the World Bank has noted that Latvia has done very well in fighting against corruption. In 1996, Latvia's achievements in this area were rated at a level of 28.2 points, while in 2006, the number had leaped to 68.4 points. The five years of KNAB operations coincide with the period of time during which the World Bank has identified constant improvements in the fight against corruption in Latvia. Indeed, Latvia is ahead of Italy and Greece, and it is among those countries in which businesspeople declare that "unofficial" payments to public officials are becoming less common.

The KNAB has done work to combat and prevent corruption and to educate the public about corruption-related issues. Latvia's residents have considerably changed their views about corruption. The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index increased from 4.2 to 4.7 points between 2005 and 2006 - the largest improvement since 1999.





## The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau: People

Working for the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau - a matter of honour, but also a matter of severe examination of oneself and one's abilities. If you work for the KNAB, then know this: Your life will be put under the microscope. Some people will admire you. Some will denounce you. And you will be pleased to find anyone who understands you.

Back when the KNAB was established, no one really knew what to expect of this institution and the extensive authority that had been given to it. There were lots of people in Latvia who thought that corrupt officials would be caught in great numbers and right away, but it was entirely up to the Bureau's personnel to determine whether the KNAB would be catching minnows or sharks. The results that have been achieved in this brief but so dynamic period of time show us what the team has done. These are people who are very diverse, but they all have the same goal of serving the law as honestly and selflessly as they possibly can.

When the KNAB was established five years ago, many of those who work for the Bureau now may have been quite unaware that they would end up working for it. Some were still students, young people looking for promising and interesting work. Perhaps 10 of our colleagues were working for the State Revenue Service, some worked for other government institutions, still others wore police uniforms. Perhaps some of our colleagues were simply tired of a boring job, while some could not stop thinking about their destiny in service to their country.

Over the course of five years, the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau has put together a team of **141** people. Eight of them have worked for the Bureau since the first few weeks. The average KNAB employee is 35 years old. 119 colleagues have a higher education, 40 have a master's degree, and one holds a doctorate. The agency employs 81 women and 60 men.

Celebration in advance of the Summer Solstice and charity work during the Christmas season - these have become inviolable traditions for the KNAB. In 2003, employees contributed money to buy more than 70 table games for the young patients of the Children's Clinical Hospital. In 2005, a paediatric social care centre called "Kalkūni" received television sets, a DVD player, a baby carriage for twins, new household equipment, books and pencils from the KNAB. In 2006, the children of the "Veģi" social care centre received seven bicycles, kitchen equipment, a CD player and blocks for children to play with.

Over the course of the last five years, everyone has been able to see and read what politicians, journalists, officials caught with their hand in the cookie jar, and lots of others think about the KNAB. On our fifth anniversary, we can tell you about what our colleagues think about their work, their results and their challenges in the future.

### What do employees think about the first five years of KNAB operations?

Here are some of the words which colleagues have used to answer this question: Exciting, unpredictable, stormy, productive, difficult, progressive, promising, with results, fruitful and energetic. Many feel that the beginning was difficult, but a great deal has been achieved nonetheless - excellent results, accomplishments and successes. Public trust and support have been earned and received.

Five years are not a long time for an institution, but employees say that each year seems to have been more intensive. It must be admitted that the KNAB is still seeking full stability. This has been a period during which we have just warmed up for major tasks. Much remains to be learned. Our agency is in the crossfire of society, politicians and the media, but we cannot say that these five years have been "years of war" or a "fight for survival". KNAB employees are also aware of the fact that the real tests are still ahead of them, because the enemy is starting to learn more about us, too.

### What kind of a person makes a good KNAB employee?

Here employees most often referred to honesty and a sense of honour, but they also spoke of competence, professionalism, a high sense of the rule of law, and a sense of responsibility. Work at the KNAB cannot be done without courage, dedication, selflessness and purposefulness. A KNAB employee must be fair, objective, patriotic and well-balanced. If the colleague also has a sense of adventure, a good sense of humour, optimism, enthusiasm, kindness, a helpful nature and a sense of collegiality - well, that employee will be much respected among his or her colleagues.

### What can the KNAB do over the next five years that would be of note?

Employees say that the most important challenge for the KNAB in future is to prevent political corruption and the capture of the state. The Bureau must continue to eliminate corruption at the highest levels of the power structure. A few really big fish have to be caught, and politicians must be convinced as much as possible that they really should remember such concepts as ethics and the need to avoid conflicts of interest.

KNAB employees very much appreciate the trust and support of society, and they feel that they must keep working so that the level of support does not deteriorate. It must grow, and the KNAB must continue to work in a way which makes it clear that its employees are honest and competent people who use their experience and continue to improve themselves so that they might become the world's most highly recognised warriors against corruption - people who can teach others, people who keep learning themselves.

Another issue for the future - moving from three separate buildings to one building more suitable to the specifics of the KNAB's work. That has been so very necessary. And yes - we're still thinking about establishing regional structures for our agency.







Five years for an institution? That's enough time to start taking a look at what has been accomplished, how the institution has done its work. We can ask whether the people even need the KNAB. The Bureau was set up only after lots of debate, only after noisy scandals in the search for a director. From the very beginning, we have been at the centre of public attention. Mostly, of course, that is because the issues which our agency was set up to handle were and continue to be truly painful. I don't think that we were afraid. We're still not afraid of "noisy cases" which relate to our individual work and that of the KNAB as a whole. I think that this makes the KNAB an entirely new type of government institution in Latvia. We have worked very carefully both because of the extent of corruption in this country and because of expectations of the public, the mass media, and the non-governmental organisations of Latvia and the world. We have always been very frank about problems in society and about our work.

I suppose that it is not good to talk about bad things during an anniversary. We have made a few mistakes which fall into the category "The only one who never makes a mistake is the one who does nothing at all". And yet I believe that our overall direction has been the right one. There have been a few public officials and politicians who have been worried about the work and achievements of the KNAB. I suppose that these are not particularly honest officials, and they allow me to conclude that we have upheld our own honour. Our greatest achievements? Surely we must look at the most widely publicised criminal cases and criminal proceedings, our controls over party finances, our review of conflicts of interest. All of this is so much more than just an inspection of asset declarations.

All of this has allowed the public to believe that it is possible to fight against corruption, even at the highest level of governance. People trust our Bureau. There is a reciprocal link, of course - we have a great deal of work to do. Sometimes we joke amongst ourselves and say that a year at the KNAB is worth two years at any other job. As a representative of the Bureau's management, I wish to thank the employees of the KNAB who have survived the pressure and have presented us with very fine work results, indeed. I believe that this is one of the great successes for the KNAB - bringing together a group of people who care.

So, is now the time for us to rest on our laurels? Of course not. The results of our work have improved in qualitative terms from year to year, but that has been specifically because we have always been prepared to move forward. Yes, we're somewhat spiteful and noisy. Sometimes we face seemingly insurmountable situations, and yet we go forward. That is what I wish for us in future, too. Let us never stop. Let's go forward in our work, our results, our professionalism and our team.



My dear colleagues, the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau is now five years old. This period of time, these five years - they have illustrated our lives. We can be proud that we have worked very hard, that we have fought on behalf of justice and the law. We have worked together, we have done our jobs, and we have lived each day with the understanding that no one else will do the work on our behalf.

We have seen incidents in which justice and the rule of law have simply been raped and pillaged in this country. We have won victories and suffered defeats. We have done a lot, and we have helped each other and the people of Latvia in a very selfless way. We have held our own sense of honour to be more important than the power structures of this country. We have refused to exchange the ideals of the rule of law for money or fame. We have done our work and satisfied our duties without expecting any rewards, medals, cash payments or "gratuities". We are compensated by the fact that we can look into our own heart and into the eyes of our children and say that yes, we did everything that we could to make sure that Latvia is a true democracy in which the rule of law prevails, in which the rights of each and every individual are protected, utterly irrespective of that person's material or social circumstances. When one person's rights are threatened, everyone's rights fall under threat. Nothing can happen without leaving certain footprints, and even though right now we may find it difficult to evaluate the importance of our work, I trust and hope that our achievements will not have been reached in vain, that we will have changed the views of our fellow citizens vis-à-vis corruption, allowing them better to understand the dangers which corruption creates in a democratic society.

I wish only one thing for us all - the understanding that victory in the war against corruption does not come quickly. We need patience, colleagues, we need lots and lots of patience to do our work. May success and courage never abandon us!

"I refuse to yield!  
Stand alongside me, my BUT!  
You have a sail which goes against the wind.  
You cast a bloom into the river, and it flows against the stream.  
Just stand here with me, my BUT!  
I will oppose you."  
Imants Ziedonis

We will always oppose injustice. I know that we will.





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