

History

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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, 2000, 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 prosecutors office 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.

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