



MINISTRY OF FINANCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA
COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Cooperation of Latvian institutions in the fight against fraud in the field of the EU funds will be promoted

On Tuesday, 10 January, the Cabinet of Ministers approved the Latvian Anti-Fraud Coordination Service (AFCOS) operational strategy of the Ministry of Finance (MoF). It provides that the public administration institutions involved in the AFCOS network will unitedly fight against fraud in the field of the European Union (EU) funds, thereby increasing efficiency of protection of interests of the EU taxpayers.

"It is important to be aware that all institutions that ensure the protection of financial interests of the EU are like cogwheels, forming together a single mechanism. As the result of successful mutual cooperation, we can promote implementation of a "zero tolerance" principle against any attempts to defraud the funds invested in the Latvian economy," says Nata Lasmane, Head of the MoF AFCOS.

The aim of the AFCOS operational strategy is to define the principal directions for common cooperation, the goals and tasks between the competent authorities in preventing and combating fraud as well as to create a model of cooperation to protect the financial interests of the EU for the purpose of strengthening and establishing a clear procedure for the cooperation between the competent institutions of Latvia and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). The scope of action are set in the strategy to cover all cycles of combating fraud: fraud elimination or prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution or sanctions.

The strategy includes three main objectives of activities, including developing a uniform policy, which provides for joint identification of possible gaps in national laws and regulations to combat criminal proceedings more effectively. Mutual cooperation will be promoted as well by improving the exchange of information between the competent institutions in Latvia and by providing mutual access to databases. The exchange of information will be improved also by bringing the "information just one phone call away" principle into life.

"There were several tasks completed already at the end of last year that will contribute to further effective implementation of the approved strategy. We have received the EC funding for the implementation of the Hercule III programme project, which will provide for a variety of capacity building measures for the employees of the institutions. Also, with the support of the TAIEX Peer-to-Peer instrument proposed by the EC, AFCOS will organise the exchange visit of representatives from the State Police and the Prosecutor General's Office in Bulgaria," reveals Nata Lasmane, Head of the MoF AFCOS.

In order to improve cooperation with OLAF, a cooperation agreement with the European Commission will be signed, thus providing operational support to OLAF investigations. One of the most substantial areas of cooperation are the preventive measures jointly implemented by all institutions, including the provision of training and opportunities to share experiences to investigators as well as promoting more active involvement of the public in combating fraud.

"Criminal cases for criminal offenses related to misuse of the EU funds and foreign financial assistance funds have been identified as particularly topical. This means that prosecutors, in exercising investigatory supervision, criminal persecution and public prosecution, are paying increased attention to criminal cases of this category. The efforts to promote perfection of capacity and knowledge of investigators and prosecutors by organising training and exchange of experience events are prize worthy. Also, in the long-run, single communication will be a national benefit," notes Prosecutor General Ēriks Kalnmeiers.

The national AFCOS Communicators' Network has been developed and has started working this year, bringing together different professionals from institutions in the field of communication in order to explain in the future to the public about the opportunities to report on the fraud of EU funds. Also, in cooperation with other Member States and the EC, this spring the AFCOS Communicators' Network will organise the Fraud Prevention Days in Latvia.

More information about AFCOS and OLAF is available on the MoF website (in Latvian):

http://www.fm.gov.lv/lv/sadalas/es_un_es_budzets/es_finansu_interesu_aizsardziba/hronologija/

More information about the AFCOS operational strategy and action plan is available on the MoF website (in Latvian):

http://www.fm.gov.lv/lv/sadalas/es_un_es_budzets/es_finansu_interesu_aizsardziba/normativie_akti/afcos_dokumenti/