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Latvian residents are invited to participate in the anti-fraud movement #FraudOff!

To combine efforts in the fight against the shadow economy, corruption and other fraudulent activities affecting the state budget and the overall welfare of the society, the Latvian State administration implements socially informative campaign also known as the anti-fraud movement – #FraudOff! The long-term goal of the movement is to achieve zero tolerance of the society against the fraud in Latvia.

The idea of the campaign is based on the combinations of efforts of public administration institutions, businessmen, social partners, as well as any member of the society in the fight against fraud. The campaign focuses on the preventive measures, including promotion of public awareness of the shadow economy, fraud and its negative consequences for each individual and the general prosperity of the country. In addition, the campaign focuses on and explains the possibilities to report to the relevant law enforcement institutions if one has suspicions or knows about a specific case of fraud.

"Fraud occurs in our daily life in different ways and has become part of the daily routine or events, which tends to slip by without significant visibility or action. Perhaps, it is because both the State budget and the European Union (EU) budget seem intangible compared to the personal wallet and its content. However, it is also our money, and each of us should take a small part of the responsibility in its protection, voicing aloud – if you are not honest, stop the fraud, it is, #FraudOff!" emphasises Nata Lasmane, Head of the Anti-Fraud Coordination Service (AFCOS) of the Ministry of Finance, Head of the EU Funds Audit Authority of Latvia.

Ilze Cīrule, Director General of the State Revenue Service: *"Fraud, especially in the field of taxation, is very hard-fought, if the society sees it as a self-evident phenomenon. We need everyone to understand that with every product and every service that we receive with no invoice, we rob ourselves, our family and the country in the long-term."*

"Honest attitude and behaviour of the society is the key to success in the fight with the shadow economy and corruption, as well as in raising the level of national prosperity. This is why it is so important to ensure that each individual's attitude towards fraud in all its forms is judgmental because this fight can bring positive changes just by changing the way of thinking", emphasises Pēteris Bauska, Head of the Economic Crime Bureau of the State Police Central Criminal Police Department.

The survey *"Attitude of the residents of Latvia towards unfair actions"*¹ carried out this March has found that the fraud problem in the Latvian society is very urgent. 65.8% of the respondents admitted that, in their view, the State has a high overall level of unfairness. The respondents said that the main problem in Latvia is spread of alcohol and cigarette smuggling – 50.2% and 50.9% of the respondents thinks so, respectively. In turn, 29.6% of the respondents considered sale of counterfeit clothing and footwear as a significant problem in Latvia. These are also the sectors in which the Latvian people have encountered unfair practices most of all over the last three years.

This is the first time when more than 20 public administration institutions and partners have united in a common anti-fraud initiative, so called anti-fraud movement #FraudOff! Among these institutions are– the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Welfare, the State Revenue Service, the State Police, the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau, the Competition Council, the State Border Guard, the Food and Veterinary Service, the Procurement Monitoring Bureau, the Security State Agency, the Patent Office, the Prosecution Office of the Republic of Latvia, the Consumer Rights Protection Centre, the

¹ The study ordered by the Ministry of Finance was carried out by the research centre SKDS in March 2017 by interviewing 1033 respondents across Latvia.

Rural Support Service, the Central Finance and Contracting Agency, the Bank of Latvia, and others as well as the Transparency International Latvia.

The anti-fraud movement brings together organisations that care about the fairness in our country and are ready to join hands to fight for it and to involve the entire society of Latvia in this fight. This is the first year when in accordance with the *National Anti-Fraud Coordination Services (AFCOS) Operational Strategy for Financial Interests Protection 2017–2019*, an initiative has been started by the Latvian law enforcement institutions, combining efforts in the fight against fraud and promoting educating the society.

How to get involved in the movement

All Latvian citizens, businesses and organizations are invited to participate in the anti-fraud movement – through the commitment to act in good faith in everyday life and not to stand aside and report of detected fraudulent actions. Similarly, supporters of the movement are invited to use the campaign brand in everyday communication. On the website of the anti-fraud movement www.fraudoff.eu, it is possible to download the campaign posters, visual materials for websites and social networks, as well as to apply for a special sticker that can be placed on a door of a company, institution or store. Also, the residents are encouraged to use the hashtags #atkrāpies! and #fraudoff! as well as #viltotaiszaķis which stands for #fakechick and is a name of the exhibition of fake goods that is organised in the one of the largest shopping malls.

The organisers emphasise that the movement brand will not serve as a quality mark, but rather will demonstrate the organisation's or person's negative attitude towards fraudulent activities. For traders, it is also an opportunity to show that they sell original, not counterfeit, products.

So far, the movement has involved dozens of companies, brands and organisations, including "Zepter", "Mēness aptieka", "Draugiem.lv", "XS rotālietas", "Geox", the Association of Latvian Commercial Banks, "Liviko", Riga Central Market, and many others and the network is expanding by days.

About #FraudOff!



#FraudOff! is an anti-fraud movement, which brings together the Latvian authorities that fight against fraud in various fields and forms, as well as all Latvian citizens and organisations that strongly advocate against fraud. You can find more information and join the movement on www.fraudoff.eu.

#atkrāpies! ("fraud off!") in a context of the linguistic point of view is a neologism which is formed by replacing the prefix *ne-* with the prefix *at-* which indicates that the action is directed back or aside. The exclamation mark shows that the verb is in the imperative form. The Latvian neologism "atkrāpies" is a call to resist and prevent fraud. It can also be used for calls, for example, *If you are not honest, fraud off!* In English, the name of the movement is #FraudOff!

During next month, all the organisations involved in the movement will spread information, educating the society about the damage of fraud and providing practical tips on how to avoid becoming a victim of fraudsters and not to purchase counterfeit goods. In cooperation with the shopping centre "Riga Plaza", an exhibition was created within the framework of the campaign, which can be attended from 31 March to 2 May to thoroughly familiarize oneself with different types of fraud.

Contacts:

Ministry of Finance

Aleksis Jarockis
Director of
Communications
Department
Tel. +371 67083850
Aleksis.Jarockis@fm.gov.lv

State Revenue Service

Evita Teice-Mamaja
Head of Public Relations Department
Tel. +371 67122668
Evita.Teice-Mamaja@vid.gov.lv

State Police

Sigita Pildava
Head of Public Relations Department
Tel. +371 27891986
Sigita.Pildava@vp.gov.lv