



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СЪЮЗ



ЕВРОПЕЙСКИ СОЦИАЛЕН ФОНД



ОПЕРАТИВНА ПРОГРАМА
АДМИНИСТРАТИВЕН КАПАЦИТЕТ



CLUB JOURNALISTS AGAINST CORRUPTION

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OPENING OF A SEMINAR “OLAF – THE EURO FUNDS WATCHDOG”

23 February 2009, the Sofia Palace of Justice, Conference Hall

Reneta Nikolova – Chair of the Board Club-Journalists Against Corruption”

Dear Vice-President,
Dear representatives of the executive, judicial and legislative power,
Dear colleagues,
Thank you for being here.

First of all, I would like to announce the following guests of our seminar: Mr Alessandro Buttice, spokesperson to OLAF, Mr Wolfgang Hetzer, OLAF Anti-corruption adviser, Mrs Elizabeth Sperber, leader of unit “Agriculture” in OLAF, Mr David Jones from the Serious Fraud Office in the United Kingdom, and our colleague Filippo Poletti from the Italian Association of Reporters.

I would like to express my special thanks to them all for being here and to congratulate our guests on the 10th anniversary of OLAF and also to take advantage of the opportunity to thank another person who is not present now but who has always supported us including the realization of the feature to be presented today. We are so proud that he accepted to be an honorary member of our Club and that is Mr Franz- Hermann Bruener, OLAF General Director.

I express my gratitude as well to our partner to the project, the Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Bulgaria in the person of the Chief Prosecutor, Mr Velchev, Mrs Popova and the whole team we are working with.

I would like to thank OPAC, Minister of administration and administrative reform Nikolay Vassilev, Deputy Minister Maria Divizieva and the whole team we are working with.

The feature that will be presented today is the first one made about the European Anti-Fraud Office and we are very pleased that a Bulgarian team has realized it. Its presentation today and after that on the Bulgarian National Television (BNT) is very important and is connected

with the subject of our seminar on the significance, role and possibilities of the audiovisual communication. Nowadays many people in Bulgaria talk and write about OLAF but few are those among journalists and representatives of the institutions who are thoroughly acquainted with the Office. After broadcasting on BNT on Sunday, 1 March, the feature will be presented on the satellite channel TV Bulgaria and in 4 regional clubs in the country. It will be watched by over 2 million people and that is in practice the effect of audiovisual communication.

Viewers will be able to hear different opinions from the prime source and will make conclusions by themselves on what exactly OLAF is and how in the course of 10 years the Office defends the interests of the European and after our accession to the EU of the Bulgarian taxpayers. Furthermore, what the communication model of OLAF is and how it works with the International Federation of Journalists, the media and the public to combat fraud and corruption.

According to an old saying “Not to know is bad, not to wish to know is worse”. Since 2004 Club-Journalists Against Corruption has been working and establishing itself as one of the most serious anti-corruption non-governmental organizations in Bulgaria. Each organization however needs capacity strengthening, training and development. The aim of this project is namely to increase the capacity of our Club through relationship and partnership with the judicial system in learning from the best European practices to more effectively realize our main goal – developing public intolerance of corruption and fraud by means of the EU.

Some exotic and alarming events can be noticed in Bulgaria at present, such as an accused of misuse of European funds wants to establish a foundation in order to give awards for objective journalism. We shall discuss these topics at the seminar. Where is the line which should not be stepped over? What is admissible according to journalist ethics?

It is a fact that Bulgaria has serious problems concerning corruption and fraud in assimilation of EU funds. We are convinced that the scene can be changed only if efforts cooperate between institutions, the media and civil society.

I will conclude with another saying according to which “if you are not part of the solution then you are part of the problem’. It is a matter of choice – we, from the Club-Journalists Against Corruption want to be part of the solution.

Reneta Nikolova

Chair of the Board

Club-Journalists against corruption

European Journalist of the Year 2007