



## CLUB JOURNALISTS AGAINST CORRUPTION

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### PRESS RELEASE

On the 23 and 24 of February 2009 in Sofia under the patronage of the Deputy Prime Minister Meglena Plugchieva was conducted the International Training Seminar: «OLAF-THE EURO FUNDS WATCHDOG. MASTERING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE OLAF (OAFCN) COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK. AUDIOVISUAL COMMUNICATION – A POWERFUL MEANS FOR THE PREVENTION OF CORRUPTION AND FRAUDS WITH THE EUROPEAN FUNDS».

The Seminar was organized by the ‘JOURNALISTS AGAINST CORRUPTION’ CLUB in partnership with the Prosecutor’s Office of the Republic of Bulgaria and with the support of the European Anti-Fraud Office OLAF and conducted within the frames of the “Mastering the experience of the OLAF communications network and the new European models of partnership with the judicial power” Project included in the ‘Administrative Capacity’ Operational Program.

The Seminar was opened by Mrs. Reneta Nikolova – Chair of the ‘JOURNALISTS AGAINST CORRUPTION’ CLUB and Mr. Alessandro Buttice, Spokesman of OLAF in charge of the OAFCN Communications Network.

In the morning agenda of the event, which enjoyed exceptional media interest, took part Mrs. Meglena Plugchieva – Deputy Prime Minister and Chair of the Management of the European Funds, Mrs. Maria Divizieva – Deputy Minister of the State Administration and Administrative Reform, Mrs. Margarita Popova - Spokeswoman of the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Boiko Velikov, Chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission to the 40<sup>th</sup> National Assembly, Mrs. Sabrie Sapunjieva, Deputy Minister of Justice, Mr Stoiko Stoev, member of the Anti-Corruption Commission to the Supreme Judicial Council, Mr Filippo Poletti, Italian Reporteur Association.

The film “OLAF-the European Funds Watchdog” was shown. The film will be shown at 14:00 PM on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2009 on Channel 1 of the BNT.

Great interest was shown to the lectures of the OLAF representatives.

Mr. Alessandro Buttice spoke about the OLAF communications model, the mission of the communications network, the role of the audiovisual communication in the prevention of frauds with European funds and the role of the media in monitoring the work of the institutions and the judicial power. Mr. Wolfgang Hetzer – Advisor of the General Director of OLAF on anti-

corruption issues talked about the fight against corruption – major facts, desired future and strategic considerations. «SAPARD – Problems and Challenges» was the topic presented by Mrs. Elisabeth Sperber, Head of OLAF Unit B-1 Agriculture.

In the program of the Seminar also took part Mr. Filippo Poletti, journalist from the Italian Reporteur Association and Mr David Jones – Head of ‘Communications’ of the Serious Fraud Office, Great Britain and member of OAFCN.

«The Bulgarian Experience in Audiovisual Communications as a Means of Prevention of Corruption and Frauds. Challenges and Ideas. Cooperation between the Media and the Judicial Power» was the topic in which shared their opinion Mrs. Zoya Dimitrova, Spokeswoman of Chair of the SANS, Mr. Nikolai Markov, Head of the Press Unit of the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor’s Office (SCPO), Mrs. Daniela Angelova, Deputy District Attorney and Spokeswoman of the District Prosecutor’s Office of the city of Smolyan, Mrs. Reneta Nikolova, BNT 1 and Chair of the ‘JOURNALISTS AGAINST CORRUPTION’ CLUB, Mrs. Bogdana Lazarova of Darik Radio, ‘JOURNALISTS AGAINST CORRUPTION’ CLUB, Mrs. Iveta Balevska, Head of the Press Center and Public Relations Directorate of the MIA and Mrs. Desislava Terzieva – Director of the “European Coordination and International Cooperation” Directorate of the MSAAR.

«Interaction and Cooperation between the Media and the Judicial Power. The OLAF Experience. Good European and World Models. Analysis and Strategy» - the representatives of the working group, among which Alexander Nalbantov of the Sofia District Prosecutor’s Office and Mrs. Slavka Kamenova, representative of the Supreme Judicial Council and prosecutors, discussed and shared their experience on this topic during the second day of the Seminar.

Mrs. Yohana Razpopova from the International Department of the SCPO and Project expert presented results from the activity of the Project working group consisting of representatives of the Prosecutor’s Office, Ministry of Justice, Supreme Judicial Council and the Anti-Corruption Commission to the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Alessandro Buttice and Mr. Wolfgang Hetzer were acquainted with the analysis drawn by the working group and shared good practices and expert opinion.

Journalists from the ‘JOURNALISTS AGAINST CORRUPTION’ CLUB and spokesmen of the judicial power institutions discussed concepts of a strategy connected with the cooperation between the media and the judicial power.

Here follow some accents in the statements of the OLAF representatives and of the Bulgarian participants in the Seminar:

Mr. ALESSANDRO BUTTICÈ: “Bulgaria must show to the international community that the country is seriously engaged in the fight against corruption. The Bulgarians must understand that fighting corruption is a moral obligation for each one of them. The investigations conducted in Bulgaria must convince the international community that the interests of the European taxpayer are protected.”

”I congratulate you on this excellent initiative to shoot a film about the activity of OLAF and the preventive fight against frauds in Bulgaria,” said European Anti-Fraud Office Spokesman Alessandro Buttice for the BNT. “Corruption and frauds are sometimes connected with mentality and fighting them requires serious cooperation with the non-governmental organizations.”

“Bulgaria is not the cradle of evil” – underlined the Advisor to the OLAF General Director on anti-corruption matters Wolfgang Hetzer.

“Among the shortcomings detected when OLAF started working on cases of embezzlement were established corruption at high levels of power and administration, sponsorship to certain persons in politics on the part of the suspects”, said Elisabeth Sperber.

“The independent judicial system in Bulgaria is regarded as some sort of self-service. There has been detected a lack of cooperation between the different institutions that worked with money of the European funds, rumour is that a payment is made for every filled application, yet the investigations are being detained.” According to Sperber, a major problem in Bulgaria is the refusal to change and the obsolete models of thinking of some people in charge of the assimilation of the European money. There exists a certain network of ‘old boys’ at managerial positions that stands in the way of the young people preventing them to carry out reforms and it wants things to happen in the way they have been happening for years. At present OLAF is investigating 25 Bulgarian cases of embezzlements under SAPARD, announced Mrs. Elisabeth Sperber.

Mrs. Meglena Plugchieva called for the results in the fight against corruption to be stimulated, and the problems to be designated and displayed. “In the recent months Bulgaria carries a heavy black label of a country that has problems with corruption. My request is, in this process, in which there have been made efforts, problems to be discerned from the good results and where they exist to be designated and displayed, yet where there is progress and good results, let these be respected and stimulated.”