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Mass media announcement

Latvia's Positive Developments Slowing Down, Corruption Perception Index Shows

The global anti-corruption movement Transparency International, has today released its annual Corruption Prevention Index (CPI). Latvia's rating has increased by 0.1 point in comparison to last year - from 4.6 to 4.7 points on the 10-point scale. Last year Latvia's rating rose rapidly, by half a point, and that means that positive developments are slowing down. In the global context, a rating of 5 is seen as satisfactory, but hopes that Latvia might overcome this barrier have now been dashed. Over the course of five years, Latvia's rating has risen in total by only one full point, and that must necessarily be seen as a low growth rate. As 51st among 179 countries, Latvia is still among the world's most corrupt countries. In 2005, Latvia was 49th among 163 countries, and all ratings under 5 points are seen as worrisome.

Worse indicators in the European Union were posted only in Greece (4.6), Poland (4.2), Bulgaria (4.1) and Romania (3.7). Lithuania's rating was the same as Latvia's, while Estonia, for the very first time, dropped in the rankings by 0.2 points. Over the course of five years, however, Estonia's rating has risen having a more rapid increase than that posted in Latvia. Still, Estonia has lost its leading position among new EU member states - that position has now been overtaken by Slovenia (6.6). Lithuania's positions have not changed over the last five years - 4.8 points each and every year.

TI Latvia executive chairperson Roberts Putnis: "This index has rapidly reacted to the lack of political will in this country. The last election involved massively illegal campaign finances, and there has, in fact, been stagnation in anti-corruption efforts. The government has not proposed a single substantial anti-corruption initiative. On the contrary, it has done what it can to oppose the public interest of reducing the spread of corruption-related crimes. There were political attempts to interfere in the work of national security institutions. There have been ongoing political attacks against the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau and the Prosecutor-General's Office. The parliamentary anti-corruption commission was shut down entirely. The government refused to help organise a global anti-corruption conference in Latvia. All of this sends a very much incorrect signal to Latvia and to the international public."

TI Latvia recalls that the leap of 0.5 points which Latvia posted on the CPI last year indicated that international experts were believing in Latvia's achievements and progress. Party financing regulations had been brought into order, the Corruption

Prevention and Combating Bureau had been set up, independence for it and the Prosecutor-General's Office had been ensured, and there was a series of other, smaller anti-corruption efforts such as the launch of serious criminal investigations of allegedly corrupt political processes.

For the sixth year in a row, Finland is at the top of the CPI list, with 9.4 points. Denmark has joined it at that level this year, and the two of them are seen as the least corrupt countries in the European Union. Along with New Zealand, they are seen as the most non-corrupt countries in the world. Romania, with 3.7 points, is seen as the most corrupt EU member states. At the global level, the most corrupt countries, according to the index include Somalia (1.4), the restless country that is Myanmar (1.5 points), Iraq and Haiti (1.6), Uzbekistan and Tonga (1.7), and even Latvia's neighbouring countries of Russia and Belarus (2.3 points, 143rd place, as compared to 2.5 and 121st last year for Russia, and 2.1 points, 150th place in 2005 and 2006 for Belarus). These are seen as totally corrupt countries. Nordic neighbours are European and global leaders in the fight against corruption. Sweden (9.3 points, 4th place) and Norway (8.7 points, 9th place) have done very well, indeed.

The CPI

The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) compares the level of corruption in countries based on the perception of the level of corruption as seen by professional groups which are directly involved in areas in which corruption is a risk. It is all but impossible to come up with an objective evaluation of the level of corruption. Corruption is a public, political and criminal phenomenon all at once, and public opinion is of great importance in battling against it so that people might trust their government and their law enforcement institutions. For 12 years now, the CPI has been of key importance in studying corruption in the world, and it is internationally recognised as the most successful attempt to take an objective look at the problem of corruption.

2007 methodology

The CPI is based on qualitative surveys and studies that are conducted by international research, information or policy analysis organisations. Each country's rating is based on data extracted from these studies over the three preceding years. In Latvia, the 2007 rating is based on seven surveys, among which one took place in 2006 and six occurred in 2007 (even though the sources of data in the latter surveys partly came from 2006).

Appendices

1. The CPI in the context of the EU
2. The CPI in the context of the Baltic States and Nordic countries
3. The global CPI