

# Save Public Assets Project

PROVIDUS, Latvia

2007

# About the Project

- Conducted by anti-corruption/public policy NGOs and independent researchers
- In 5 new member states (Czech R., Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland)
- In focus: usage of Structural Funds (2004-2006)

# Methodology

- Different methods used in different countries (interviews, data and documentation analysis)
- Questionnaire in 4 countries
- Topics examined:
  - Public awareness on EU Funds
  - General Opinion on SFs
  - Access to information on EU Funds
  - Open competition procedures
  - Central programs
  - Political alliances

# Public Awareness

- Public interest in allocation of European sources is growing
- Growing media coverage, more detailed and more professional information on European development policies – still not satisfactory
- Content of National Development Plans is a more frequent subject of political debates

# General Opinion on Structural Funds

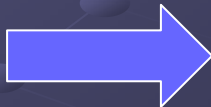
## ● Rather negative:

- Prejudices
- Earlier experience on corruption related to public sources
- Lack of information

## ● SFs generally seen as:

- Complicated
- Non-transparent
- Available for those, having power (political, economical, relation-based)

# Access to Information

- Available information on SFs differs in countries, even among regions in one country
- Real problem: quality of information
- The topic of SFs system remains misty and difficult to understand 
  - Prejudices
  - Privileged situation of the better informed

# Open Competition Procedures I.

- Earlier TI research: institutional system and regulations basically insure checks and balances to avoid corruption
- Same questionnaire queried in 4 countries
- Unexpected outcomes:
  - Sample: half successful, half rejected applicants
  - Majority (over 75% in all cases) found procedure more honest than dishonest
  - Mentioning of concrete corruption cases (bribing) have not appeared (anonymous answers)

# Open Competition Procedures II.

- Most often mentioned problems:
  - Too complicated procedures
  - Bigger, stronger and more experienced organizations have better chances
- Role of consultants: successful applicants significantly use consultancy
  - Winners of complicated procedures?
  - Who can afford it? Equal opportunities?
  - Strong lobby at implementation bodies?

# National/Central Programs

- Separated from the open competition system
- 1/3 of sources are allocated through this procedure
- Selection criteria and decision process are not clear
- Case studies: content is questionable
- Space left for political and economical lobbying

# Political Alliances

- Studied in two countries, different methods: interviews and data analysis
- None of them have proved political interest in enforcement
- No correlation between political power (governmental/oppositional president and assembly of counties) and absorption capacities
- N.B.! Macro data may hide concrete cases

# Conclusions I.

- General experience concerning NGOs' role in such „investigative” research:
  - On ministerial level bureaucrats are often rejective and trustless
  - Lower level bureaucrats might see in NGOs possible alliences to represent shortcomings of the system that they suffer of, too
- A lot of information and data are available, it is the responsibility of the civil sector to investigate, analyse and publicly share

# Conclusions II.

## ● NGOs possible role in EU Funds monitoring:

- Pressure on responsible institutions to share more information (list of winners, outcome of projects, findings of evaluations, etc.)
- Media relations and media trainings for better quality information on the issue
- Support smaller organizations to have better chances in the open competition process:

# Conclusions III.

- Through consultancy (not for profit)
- Through training
- Through network building
- Play a watch-dog role concerning central programs
  - No chance for open competition?
  - Selected final beneficiary
  - Quality of the project
- Insure whistle-blowing
- Continuously follow and publicly share information related to (possible) corruption
- Conduct research work like this 😊