

# The Patent Office keeps one million lats in secret Swiss and German bank accounts

Published: 26 Sep 2011

Keywords used: Patent Office   Ministry of Justice   Zigrīds Aumeisters



Even after the austerity budget cut, hidden savings in German and Swiss bank accounts have been revealed in the Patent Office under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice, TV3's "Nekā personīga" reports.

Only the director of the institution knew about more than a million lats, which should have been in the state treasury. After his arrival, the new boss [Bērziņš] revealed that the money is not accessible - it can only be accessed by his predecessor [Aumeisters], who retired last year, writes NRA.lv .

The Patent Office registers various inventions of scientists - for example, medicines created in Latvia, and also approves trademarks for manufacturers. Since 1992, the Patent Office has been headed by Zigrīds Aumeisters. He retired last October. This summer, the Minister of Justice Aigars Štokenbergs appointed Reini Bērziņš as the new director.

Starting working in the Patent Office, Bērziņš reviewed the institution's budget. And accidentally discovered a fact that even senior executives did not know. His predecessor, Zigrīds Aumeisters, had created almost double-entry bookkeeping in the institution. For almost ten years, the World Intellectual Property Organization and the European Patent Organization have transferred money for the maintenance of international trademarks and patents not to the Treasury - the general state budget, but to two German and Swiss bank accounts, the existence of which only Aumeisters knew about. The accounts were opened in Switzerland in 1999 and in Germany in 2005. The amount of the lawsuit accumulated in the secret savings is more than one million lats (CHF 1,382,912 and EUR 614,273)

Reinis Bērziņš, Director of the Patent Office: *"The budget of the Patent Office is approximately 760 thousand. Well, I do not want to give specific figures on the amount of this money, I have also given it to the relevant law enforcement agencies, the DPP and also to the State Police, but it is significant and even higher than our national budget for one financial year."*

Although Bērziņš predecessor retired a year ago and only provides advice to the Ministry of Justice, Aumeisters is still the only person who can access these accounts.

Reinis Bērziņš, Director of the Patent Office: *"I haven't accessed these accounts yet. I can only rely on the information provided by this former employee. He also told me exactly how much money was in the relevant accounts on Monday."*

Bērziņš and also the Ministry of Justice believe that this is an unprecedented violation of the law. It was only in the early 1990s that public authorities kept their money wherever they could. But for a long time now the law has stipulated that all money must be kept in the public treasury. In the case of the Patent Office, side income has been deliberately hidden from the eyes of the state supervisors.

Aigars Štokenbergs: *"This is an absolute violation of the law on financial and budgetary management. All public money should be in the state treasury. Because of what we have found, an application has already been filed with the State Police to initiate criminal proceedings against the former Chairman of the Patent Board."*

The former head of the Patent Board refuses to talk on camera because he is currently suffering from health problems.

Aumeister does not see any wrongdoing in his actions. He hid money in foreign banks because it had to be spent on the Patent Office's operations and also on improvements in information technology. State funding was scarce and would not have been sufficient for the institution. Aumeister says that he did not touch the money for a year after leaving office. He does not find anything strange in the fact that he is still the only person who has access to the secret accounts.

The police and the Prosecutor General's Office have been informed of Aumeister's actions and the State Audit Office has been asked to carry out a full financial audit of the Patent Office. In the coming days, with the help of the Ministry of Justice, German and Swiss banks will be informed that the money is not owed to the former boss, but to the Patent Office. If the banks understand the absurd situation, the money will be transferred to the State budget.

Aigars Štokenbergs: *"I think the Ministry of Finance will be pleasantly surprised when drawing up next year's budget that we have 1.3 million Swiss francs in Switzerland and almost 700,000 euros in Germany."*

**Original report in Latvian at:**

<https://www.nozare.info/patentu-valde-glaba-miljonu-latu-slepenos-kontos-sveices-un-vacijas-bankas/>