Practice Name:	Practice category:	✉ Contact:
E-learning anti-fraud and anti-corruption courses	• Training	• Latvian School of Public Administration (in cooperation with TI Latvia – Delna & KNAB - Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau
Country:		• https://www.vas.gov.lv/en/
Latvia		• vas@vas.gov.lv

Fraud risk(s) countered

- Conflict of interests
- Avoidance or manipulation of public procurement procedures
- Fraud schemes (e.g. tax fraud, smuggling)
- Tax evasion
- Bribery and other corruption offences and risks
- Collusion
- Interconnection between shadow economy and corruption

Context and objective(s)

The **Latvian School of Public Administration** (**LSPA**) is the largest training centre for civil servants and public administration employees in Latvia. In line with Cabinet Regulation No. 389 of the Republic of Latvia, the LSPA school started two ESF funded projects within the Operational programme "Growth and Employment". One of the projects, "Professional Development of Human Resources in Public Administration for Preventing Corruption and Reducing Shadow Economy" (ESF Project No.3.4.2.0/15/I/002), aims to educate public sector workers on the prevention of corruption. The project **started** in 2016, is due to end mid-June 2022 and has a budget of **€2,863,077**[1].

The **main objective** is to reduce the shadow economy and corruption. The measure ensures that workers in public administration receive training (incl. e-courses) and an exchange of experiences in special and general competences. Since 2016 more than 130 national and international events (with 7500 participants) have been organised in the framework of the project. The training sessions included a Joint Introductory Module, 8 core Modules (large-scale face-to-face training) and specialised courses[2].

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[1] https://www.vas.gov.lv/en/corruption-prevention-and-reduction-of-shadow-economy
[2] https://www.vas.gov.lv/en/box/images/Par_mums/K%20projekta%20faktu%20lapa_2018_EN.pdf &
https://www.vas.gov.lv/en/box/images/K_Project_target%20groups_ENG_25022020.pdf

Description of the practice

The **online courses** represent a relatively small but a very innovative part of the project. They aim to provide basic knowledge and promote a common understanding of the shadow economy, the prevention of conflict of interests and corruption, and their mitigation aspects through interactive learning, both at an introductory and a more advanced level. Participants are able to use the e-learning platforms at a convenient time and place, using a smartphone, tablet or computer with an Internet connection.

The development of e-courses is a result of consultations with all relevant institutions: public sector institutions, NGOs and social partners. This ensures that the true needs of the target audience are being met in the training. The e-courses are available to the target audience (public institutions, incl. municipalities) online and free of charge. Further e-courses are being made available to approx. **176,000 potential participants** made up of employees and officers of state budget institutions (e.g. all the ministries and subordinated institutions, independent public institutions) and municipalities.

The first e-course implemented in the framework of the project, "Reduction of the Shadow Economy" provides basic knowledge about, and promotes a common understanding of, the shadow economy and its mitigation. The e-course uses interactive learning tools and was made operational in the summer of 2019.

The **second e-course**, "Prevention of Corruption", which is focussed on **anti-corruption, prevention of conflict of interests and professional ethics aspects,** is under development and is planned to be made operational at the end of August, 2020. This e-course consists of 10 online modules, each with relevant subthemes, accounting for 8 academic hours. The **modules are as follows**: "What is corruption?", "Consequences of Corruption", "Institutions for Prevention and Combating Corruption", "Fight against corruption in the public and private sectors", "Conflict of interests", "Values and ethics in public administration", "Corruption risks", "Conditions conducive to corruption and actions in case of bribery" and "Whistleblowing". The 10th module includes exercises for self-testing. Although the course is open for all public administrators, the target audience are those employees/ officials whose professional experience is less than 1 year.

The second e-course was developed in cooperation between the LSPA and Transparency International Latvia (Delna). Experts that represent the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB) and Centre for Public Policy (Providus) also participated in the creation of the content. KNAB representatives continued to consult with the developers throughout the whole process of building the e-course.

Unique features

- The e-courses are designed to be **as interactive as possible**. Only the necessary amounts of text appear in the modules. Accordingly, the e-courses opt for more practical exercises and activities such as pantomime (simulation of real cases, role-play). By using scenario-specific questions and simulations, and by making the courses interactive, allows users to apply their new knowledge realistically and they practice making choices in a risk-free, non-judgmental setting. This type of experience-based learning helps individuals gain useful insights from both their successes and failures – insights that generally lead to better on-the-job decision-making.

- The close cooperation between the three developing partners – **LSPA, Delna & KNAB** – gives credibility to the courses, as well as ensures that the materials are well rounded. Thanks to this partnership, developers are able to devise tools and procedures that better target identified areas of risk. Working together also reduces the duplication of work and helps align strategies for fighting fraud and corruption. It should be noted that the e-course cannot fully replace all the face-to-face in-class training, but it is going to significantly facilitate anti-corruption training of large quantities of trainees (there is a substantive demand for anti-corruption training in the country), and be particularly effective in training less experienced participants.

Outcomes and results

In October 2019 a survey was conducted with the first e-course participants. **63 responses from several public institutions** were received. Almost all the comments from the part of the users were very positive (several positive comments were also received in June 2020). (10 points max):

- Relevance of the course topics and how up-to-date they are: 8,9
- Completeness of the content: 8,3
- Practical application of the course: 8,0

Many respondents emphasised the following positive aspects:

- e-learning is convenient for the user and much less time-consuming than in-person learning,
- completeness of information (e.g. more options to get acquainted with different research data and expert opinions; good quality of data) in the course,
- interactive and user-friendly features, as well as laconic reflection of the information and short summaries after each training module, facilitate better absorption of information,
- self-testing solution is very effective.

Most participants had a positive reaction to the quality and structure of the course and the capacity building opportunities it provides. **Several training participants proposed to transform other face-to-face courses into an e-learning format.**

Key success factors

An important role in this process is played by **the target institution's interest in the management** and **knowledge** of how to implement internal anti-corruption organisational measures. In the field of education, the goal is to promote awareness of the negative consequences of corruption and explain how to prevent and combat corruption. To this end, the knowledge and understanding of public officials on anti-corruption issues should be frequently evaluated and, based on the results, educational activities in such areas as anti-corruption legislation should be carried out.

Key steps that would lead to the success of the practice:

- development and implementation of a **public relations strategy** that will promote the importance of the practice to public institutions and public servants. This is to encourage participation in the course, as it is not mandatory;

- frequent communication to the public about detected cases of corruption and its general trends, as well as the measures being taken to prevent and combat corruption.

Challenges encountered & lessons learned

No significant technical or user-related problems have been reported regarding the first course. All the materials are accessible in one location online. The use of the e-course requires no authorisation (the link to the course location is disseminated to public institutions (incl. municipalities) only).

Lessons learned and adaptions made from the first e-course to the second: continuation of the use of successful solutions included in the first course, e.g. short summaries after sub-topics, self-testing, practical examples, and interactive features. Extension of the use of info-grams, practical recommendations, summaries of findings of conducted research. Termination of the use of the "digital assistant" solution (a human figure explaining how to use the course and clarifying some questions) as some users found it too intrusive. Clarification and assistance are still provided, but in a different way. Following the comments of several participants, a **solution for additional information** was introduced (e.g. if a participant wants to explore an issue in greater detail). Furthermore, transitions from one training subtopic to another, as well as navigation inside the course chapters, has improved. More attention has also been paid to visual attractiveness and intuitive perception of the course.

Potential for the transferability

Similar online courses have been implemented in several platforms. An example is the online course on the "Social consequences of corruption, corruption in business and corruption in public administration" launched by the **Central Anticorruption Bureau of Poland** on a dedicated e-learning internet platform, available both in Polish and English languages (**https://szkolenia-antykorupcyjne.edu.pl/**). The **Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Global Advice Network** also developed a free of charge anti-corruption e-learning course. This interactive course aims at strengthening companies' awareness about the risks of corruption and offers ways to mitigate these risks. Additionally, the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark** developed a number of e-learning courses that are of interest to both internal and external partners and are available free of charge. More specifically, the e-course on **Anti-Corruption** is mandatory for all employees working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (MFA) in Copenhagen and on missions abroad, as well as advisors and consultants employed by the MFA[3].

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[3] https://um.dk/en/about-us/e-learning/anti-corruption/