

'I spit on it' awareness raising campaign (Man uzspļaut), Latvia

Title of the policy or measure (in English)	'I spit on it' awareness raising campaign (Man uzspļaut)
• Country	Latvia
• Sectors	All
• What groups are targeted by the measure	- Latvian citizens (directly targeted) - Business people (direct targeted) - Politicians and the government (indirect targeted)
• Purpose of measure	Changing attitudes: awareness raising
• Short sentence summarising the measure	The 'I spit on it' awareness raising campaign was the first stage of a wider national scheme (Against the Shadow Economy – for Fair Competition) which aimed to combat the shadow economy, including undeclared work. ⁱ This campaign specifically aimed to raise general awareness of the negative consequences of the shadow economy on social provision.
Background	
• Background context driving the implementation of the measure	The 'I spit on it' awareness raising campaign was introduced in the context of an increase in tax avoidance behaviour in Latvia. A key concern was the prevalence of undeclared work (defined as economic activity conducted outside of a country's official economy) which is driven by dissatisfaction with the tax system and economic restrictions. However, given that tax avoidance forces the government to increase taxes again, this perpetuates the problem. As such, the campaign aimed to demonstrate how detrimental tax avoidance actions can be, and to raise awareness of the negative consequences of undeclared work and the shadow economy more generally.
• When was the measure implemented? (including start date and end date/ongoing)	September 2011 – December 2011
• Names(s) of authorities/bodies/organisations involved	Latvian Employers' Confederation (Latvijas Darba Devēju konfederācija, LDDK)
• Scope of the measure (a pilot project, nationwide, regional wide)	Nationwide
• Type of (policy) measure	Tool If "other", please specify:
• Key objectives of the measure	General objectives: - To combat undeclared work and the shadow economy and to prevent unfair competition Specific objectives: - To reduce the size of the shadow economy in line with the government Shadow Economy Reduction Plan. - To raise awareness of the negative impacts of undeclared work on social provision funded by taxes e.g. social benefits, education, state roads. - To increase awareness about how citizens may unknowingly shape or participate in the underground/informal economy and how this contributes to the overall problem.

Specific measure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of how the measure operates in practice 	<p>The ‘I spit on it’ awareness raising campaign preceded the official launch of the national scheme, <i>Against the Shadow Economy – for Fair Competition</i> (which took place in October 2011). In September 2011, anonymous advertisements displayed on electronic advertisement boards appeared on the streets of Riga and on the main TV channels with the words ‘I spit on it’ in yellow letters on black tape across a white background.ⁱⁱ This helped to generate curiosity and inspire discussions about what the adverts could mean. The white background then transitioned to three pictures (of a child, a pregnant woman and an elderly couple) before showing additional text: ‘Happy childhood?’, ‘Young Families’ and ‘Well provided for old age’, respectively. The idea of gradually revealing these three images was to demonstrate the impact of the shadow economy on social provision, specifically on children’s future, maternity benefits, and pensions.</p> <p>On 10 October 2011, LDDK revealed its ownership of the advertisement and officially launched the awareness raising campaign. It also introduced an online tool – a test to enable respondents to measure the extent of their ‘shadow’ behaviour in shops, markets and when accessing services, transport or employment. This was hosted on www.manaena.lv (a website created for the campaign). Respondents were also advised on how to reduce their own ‘shadow’ behaviour. Following this, on 17 November 2011, LDDK staged a campaign centred on undeclared ‘envelope’ wages; they invited the population to use white envelopes, handed out to citizens in the central square in Riga, for other purposes than paying and receiving undeclared wages (such as for posting a card for someone’s birthday).</p> <p>From 26 October 2011 to 15 November 2011, LDDK also had a discussion phase on the shadow economy by organising round-table discussions with organised business representatives from different sectors. On 16 December 2011 the results of the entire awareness raising scheme were discussed at a conference hosted by the Latvian parliament and the LDDK. This was attended by a range of parliamentary officials and representatives of committees, as well as external stakeholders representing different industrial sectors.¹</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What resources and other relevant organisational aspects are involved? 	<p>LDDK designed and coordinated the delivery of the entire ‘I spit on it’ awareness raising campaign.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the source(s) of funding? 	<p>Co-financed by the 2007-13 programme of European Social Funding (as part of the project, ‘Practical application of normative acts of labour relations and safety at work in sectors and undertakings’).ⁱⁱⁱ</p>
Evaluation and outcome	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the measure achieved its objectives? 	<p>The campaign coincided with the government’s efforts to implement the ‘Action plan for combating shadow economy and ensuring fair competition, 2010–2013’. However, it is difficult to distinguish the impact of this LDDK campaign and each of its measures, on tackling undeclared work (and therefore its impact on its specific objectives).</p> <p>The whole campaign attracted the population's attention and provided opportunities for involvement (such as through the online test that measured</p>

¹ For more information, please see <https://translate.google.co.uk/translate?hl=en&sl=lv&u=http://www.autoasociacija.lv/lv/jaunumi/154-enu-ekonomikas-apkarosana-veltita-konference-lr-saeima&prev=search>

	<p>an individual's 'shadow' behaviour etc.). The advertisement used in the 'I spit on it' awareness raising campaign was widely discussed in popular media and on social networks almost as soon as it appeared. Discussions covered issues such as the reasons for and consequences of evading tax, the quality of public services and the efficiency of state management. The low efficiency of public spending and the low level of public services were often mentioned as reasons for tax evasion, but individuals' own habits were also critically assessed by citizens on social networks.</p> <p>The results of the 'I spit on it' awareness raising campaign were summarised in a conference document into four general strategic directions of activity in combating the shadow economy and six strategic proposals for immediate discussion with parliament during the joint conference on combating undeclared work and ensuring fair competition. A document was signed by the management of LDDK and the speaker of the house in the Latvian parliament (Saeima) on 21 December 2009 promising further cooperation and joint action to combat the shadow economy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment method (including indicators used to measure its impact), and the outputs and outcomes achieved 	<p>From its opening on 10 October 2011 until 7 November 2011, 12 657 individuals completed the online test at www.manaena.lv. This consisted of eleven questions regarding everyday activities that affect the size of the shadow economy, to help measure individual influences on undeclared work in Latvia. The results of this test illustrated that people are ready to take part in improving tax morality, evidenced by the suggestions respondents made to change their behaviours as well as suggesting what the state needs to do in order to achieve this aim.^{iv}</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are lessons learnt and the key conditions for success? 	<p>Lessons learnt and success factors include the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To be successful, national measures employing novel communication techniques require financial support from the state or EU funds as well as stakeholder approval. - Internal LDDK approval for the campaign was difficult as there was disagreement about the usefulness of it. A key condition for success was therefore having a "crisis communication plan" for the campaign in case the public were not interested or did not identify with it; the aim was to explain to the public the motivation behind the campaign. Media companies supported the campaign. - Continuity or follow-up is important - evaluations of campaigns should be organised regularly to measure progress and overall impact over time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of transferability (e.g. other countries/groups/sectors) 	<p>The 'I spit on it' awareness raising campaign is based on a PR model which could be transferred to other countries, groups or sectors – namely, innovative advertising could be used to improve public knowledge about the shadow economy, the importance of tax and what tax money is spent on. However, the main message of the campaign and its effectiveness would be dependent on the target audience in question.</p>
<p>Additional information</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacts 	<p>Ilona Kiukucāne, Deputy Director General, Adviser on Policy Issues Email address: Ilona.kiukucane@lddk.lv Telephone: 00 371 29215469</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sources 	<p>Action plan for combating undeclared employment 2010–2013. Internet: http://www.mk.gov.lv/doc/2005/LMpl_170210.13.doc (in Latvian) and</p>

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/tackling-undeclared-work-in-europe/database/action-plans-to-combat-undeclared-work-latvia>

Action plan for combating shadow economy and ensuring fair competition for 2010–2013. Internet: <http://polsis.mk.gov.lv/LoadAtt/file29107.doc>. (in Latvian)

Implementation of the Action plan for combating shadow economy and ensuring fair competition 2010–2013. Internet:

http://www.fm.gov.lv/files/tausaimnieciba/nuekonomika/Enu_plana_progress_23032012.doc (in Latvian)

- Metadata and key words for online search

Latvia; LDDK; Employers' Confederation of Latvia; I spit on it; Man uzsplaut; awareness raising campaign; advertising campaign; shadow economy; tax avoidance; Labour law and safety at work; online tool; online test; shadow behaviour; manaena.lv; European Social Funding; tax morality

ⁱ The information in this fiche draws on the information available at Karnite, R. (2013), Employers campaign against the shadow economy. Internet: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/tackling-undeclared-work-in-europe/database/employers%2592-campaign-against-the-shadow-economy-latvia>

ⁱⁱ Williams, C., Dzhokova, R., Baric, M., Franic, J., Mishkov, L. (2014), *Assessing the cross-national transferability of policy measures for tackling undeclared work*, GREY Working Paper No. 5. Sheffield University Management School, University of Sheffield available at file:///C:/Users/29551/Downloads/SSRN-id2501688.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Although the campaign was co-financed by the ESF fund, in the end the LDDK covered the expenses of the campaign from their own funding as these were not eligible costs for the project.

^{iv} Source: <https://www.rekurzeme.lv/vietejas-zinas/liepaja/liepajnieki-aktivi-mera-savu-ietekmi-uz-enu-ekonomiku-21195>