

Bribery and Corruption in Poland: A Quick Legal Guide



How bribery and corruption are regulated in Poland?

In Poland, bribery and corruption are regulated primarily by the **Penal Code of 6 June 1997**. The [criminal framework](#) covers offences connected with public functions, business activity, and the protection of economic interests. The most relevant provisions focus on corruption linked to official duties and commercial operations.

Public-sector bribery and abuse of office

The core public-sector offences are **venality (Art. 228)** and **bribery (Art. 229)**.

Venality concerns public officials who accept or agree to accept material or personal benefits in connection with their duties, while **bribery** relates to offering or promising such benefits to influence official decisions.

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These offences are punishable by **six months to eight years' imprisonment**, with higher penalties (up to 20 years) in cases involving unlawful actions or high-value benefits.

Closely related offences include **paid protection (Arts. 230 and 230a)**, where an intermediary exploits actual or alleged influence within public institutions for personal gain, and the **qualified abuse of power (Art. 231 § 2)**, which applies when a public official exceeds their authority or neglects duties to obtain a benefit. Abuse of power carries penalties of **one to ten years' imprisonment**.

All of these offences require **intent**. Benefits may be material or personal, including non-financial advantages.

Commercial bribery and corruption risks

In the commercial context, Polish criminal law targets misconduct that undermines trust in business operations.

Mismanagement (Art. 296 § 2) applies to persons responsible for managing property or business affairs who abuse their powers or fail to fulfil their duties, causing significant damage. Penalties range from **six months to eight years' imprisonment**, although full voluntary repair of damage before proceedings may exclude punishment. Unlike other corruption offences, mismanagement may also give rise to liability when committed **unintentionally**.

Managerial bribery (Art. 296a) concerns managers or persons performing work under contractual relationships who demand or accept benefits in exchange for abusing their authority. Both the giver and the recipient of the bribe face penalties of **three months to five years' imprisonment**.

Other relevant offences include **corruption of creditors (Art. 302 § 2–3)** during bankruptcy proceedings and **disrupting tenders or public procurement (Art. 305)**. Depending on the circumstances, tender-related offences may result in penalties of up to **eight years' imprisonment**.



Investigation and prosecution

Corruption offences in Poland are generally prosecuted **ex officio** by the public prosecutor. An exception applies to tender disruption, which usually requires a complaint from the injured party, unless the tender involves public funds or the State Treasury.

Cases are typically heard by district courts, with more serious matters handled by regional courts. Appeals may ultimately reach the Supreme Court.

Additional sanctions and professional consequences

Courts may impose **professional bans** where an offence involves abuse of position or profession. Public officials convicted of corruption-related crimes may be prohibited from holding public office or working in state-related entities for **one to 15 years**, or longer in cases of recidivism.

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Corporate liability

Although [criminal liability](#) primarily applies to individuals, companies may also be held liable under the **Act on the Liability of Collective Entities (2002)** if an offence benefits the organisation.

Possible sanctions include **fin**es, **forfeiture of assets**, **exclusion from public procurement**, **restrictions on business activity**, and, in severe cases, **dissolution**. Proceedings against corporate entities are initiated by the public prosecutor and may run independently of individual cases.