



**COUNTRY
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The Legal 500 Country Comparative Guides Liechtenstein **BRIBERY & CORRUPTION**

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This country-specific Q&A provides an overview of bribery & corruption laws and regulations applicable in Liechtenstein.

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LIECHTENSTEIN

BRIBERY & CORRUPTION



1. What is the legal framework (legislation/regulations) governing bribery and corruption in your jurisdiction?

The legal regime for combatting bribery and corruption is largely set out in the Liechtenstein Criminal Code. The provisions of the Liechtenstein Criminal Code dealing with corruption underwent a substantial revision in 2016. The background to the change in law was the intention of the legislature to bring Liechtenstein's legal regime for combatting bribery and corruption fully in line with international standards.

2. Which authorities have jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute bribery in your jurisdiction?

The main authority with powers to investigate and prosecute corruption offences is the Liechtenstein Prosecution Service. According to the Liechtenstein Criminal Procedure Code, the Liechtenstein Prosecution Service is, with the assistance of the Liechtenstein National Police, responsible for investigating all punishable acts that come to its attention and for prosecuting the suspected perpetrator. Investigation activities are carried out either by an investigative judge or with the assistance of the Liechtenstein National Police.

3. How is 'bribery' (or its equivalent) defined?

Liechtenstein criminal law distinguishes between active and passive bribery, both in the public sector and the private sector. As to the respective definitions, see question no. 4 below.

4. Does the law distinguish between bribery of a public official and bribery of private persons? If so, how is 'public

official' defined? Are there different definitions for bribery of a public official and bribery of a private person?

Yes, according to Liechtenstein criminal law, a distinction is drawn between state-related and commercial (private) bribery, depending on whether a public official is involved.

The Liechtenstein Criminal Code defines a public official as either an office holder or an arbitrator. An office holder is a person who:

- i. exercises legislative, administrative or judicial responsibilities as an organ or employee of the state, a municipal association, a municipality, another person under public law, a foreign state or an international organisation;
- ii. in any other way is authorised to exercise official duties in the execution of laws on behalf of the state, a municipal association, a municipality, another person under public law, a foreign state or an international organisation; or
- iii. acts as an organ or employee of a company of which either domestic or foreign regional authorities (directly or indirectly) own a stake of more than 50% or which is state-operated or controlled (by financial, economic or organisational means).

Active state-related bribery is committed by any person who (a) offers, promises or provides to an office holder or arbitrator a benefit to be granted to such office holder or arbitrator or to a third party in return for any execution or omission of official duties in violation of such duties, or (b) offers, promises or provides to an expert appointed by the court or another authority in relation to particular proceedings a benefit for such expert or a third party in return for the provision of a false finding or false opinion. Passive state-related bribery is committed by (a) any office holder or arbitrator who demands, accepts, or accepts the promise of a

benefit for himself (or herself, whereby references to the male form cover all genders in the following) or a third party in return for any execution or omission of official duties in violation of such duties, or (b) any expert appointed by the court or another authority in relation to particular proceedings who demands, accepts or accepts the promise of a benefit for himself or for a third party in return for providing a false finding or false opinion.

Active bribery in commercial dealings is committed by any person who, in commercial dealings, offers, promises or provides a benefit to an employee or agent of an enterprise for such employee or agent or a third party in return for any execution or omission of a legal act in violation of his duties. Any employee or agent of an enterprise who, in commercial dealings, demands, accepts or accepts the promise of a benefit from another person for himself, or a third party in return for any execution or omission of a legal act in violation of his duties, likewise commits passive bribery.

In addition, the following related offences in the state sector have to be noted:

- a. *Giving and acceptance of benefits*: Any person who offers, promises or provides to an office holder or arbitrator an undue benefit for such office holder, such arbitrator or a third party in return for any execution or omission of official duties in line with such duties commits the offence of giving of benefits. The offence of acceptance of benefits is committed by an office holder or arbitrator who demands a benefit for himself or a third party, accepts, or accepts the promise of an undue benefit in return for any execution or omission of official duties in line with such duties. It is therefore explicitly expressed in the law that it is not acceptable for an office holder or arbitrator to make the performance or omission of an official act dependent on the granting of any benefit.
- b. *Giving and acceptance of benefits for the purpose of influencing*: The offence of giving of benefits for the purpose of influencing is committed by any person who offers, promises or provides to an office holder or arbitrator an undue benefit for such office holder, such arbitrator or a third party in return for any execution or omission of official duties in line with such duties. Likewise, an office holder or arbitrator who demands a benefit for himself or for a third party, accepts, or accepts the promise of an undue benefit and does so with the intent that this has an influence on his capacity as an office

holder commits the offence of acceptance of benefits for the purpose of influencing.

- c. *Prohibited intervention*: Liechtenstein criminal law also sanctions any person who demands, accepts, or accepts the promise of a benefit for himself or for a third party in return for exerting undue influence on the decision-making of an office holder or arbitrator. Prohibited intervention is likewise committed by any person who offers, promises or provides a benefit to another person so that such other person exerts undue influence on the decision-making of an office holder or arbitrator. Exerting such influence is considered undue if it is directed at any execution or omission of official duties in violation of such duties or if it is associated with the offer, promise, or provision of an undue benefit for the office holder or arbitrator or for him to be given to a third party.

Furthermore, under certain circumstances bribery payments or the acceptance of such payments can be punishable as criminal breach of trust, both in the state and the private sector.

5. What are the civil consequences of bribery in your jurisdiction?

With respect to civil law, any conduct relating to corruption and bribery can give rise to consequences such as termination of an employment contract for cause or claims for damages. The Liechtenstein Criminal Code further stipulates that a public official shall be dismissed from office in the case that he is sentenced by a Liechtenstein court with imprisonment of more than one year for one or more intentionally committed offences (i.e., a public official who is, for example, convicted for passive bribery with imprisonment of more than one year is dismissed from office).

Furthermore, any person who has suffered financial damage as a result of a criminal offence can join the respective investigation as a private party in order to seek compensation for the damage suffered.

6. What are the criminal consequences of bribery in your jurisdiction?

In principle, the Liechtenstein Criminal Code provides for both monetary penalties and imprisonment, depending on the type of offence.

The sentence for the commission of both active and

passive state-related bribery is imprisonment of up to three years. The offences are punished with imprisonment of between six months and five years or imprisonment of between one year and 10 years in the event that the acts are committed in relation to benefit values exceeding CHF 5'000.00 or exceeding CHF 75'000.00 respectively.

Active and passive bribery in commercial dealings as well as the offences of (a) granting and acceptance of benefits, (b) granting and acceptance of benefits for the purpose of influencing, and (c) prohibited intervention are sentenced with imprisonment of up to two years. The possible imprisonment increases up to three years or six months to five years if the acts are committed in relation to benefit values exceeding CHF 5'000.00 or exceeding CHF 75'000.00 respectively.

Criminal breach of trust is punishable with imprisonment of up to six months or with a monetary penalty of up to 360 daily rates. If the damage caused exceeds CHF 7'500.00, the offence is punishable with imprisonment of up to three years. If the damage caused exceeds CHF 300'000.00, the possible imprisonment increases to between one year and 10 years.

Furthermore, the Liechtenstein Criminal Code stipulates that the court shall declare as forfeited all assets obtained for or through the commission of a punishable act. Accordingly, proceeds which are related to criminal offences, such as proceeds of corruption or bribery, are subject to forfeiture.

7. Does the law place any restrictions on hospitality, travel and entertainment expenses? Are there specific regulations restricting such expenses for foreign public officials? Are there specific monetary limits?

Liechtenstein criminal law does not contain specific provisions dealing with facilitation payments or providing hospitality to commercial partners or public officials. The terminology used in the criminal law relating to corruption offences is "benefits", including particularly money, physical objects, excessive fees, and other benefits (such as invitations to travel or hunts) but also intangible benefits.

However, certain benefits in relation to the performance or omission of a lawful act are not considered undue, and therefore granting or accepting such benefits is not punishable. According to the law, undue benefits are generally not: (i) those whose acceptance is permitted by the law or that are provided as part of events in

which there is an official or objectively justified interest to attend; (ii) benefits for charitable purposes if the office holder or arbitrator has no decisive influence on their use; or (iii) local or customary courtesies of small value (of up to CHF 150.00).

With regard to benefits provided as part of events, it should be noted that it is not the intention of Liechtenstein criminal law on corruption to automatically charge any person who discharges his or her representational duties in such events. Therefore, the acceptance of benefits such as participation fees or coverage of accommodation and catering fees in the context of such events are not considered undue if an official interest or, in the case of companies, an objectively justified interest to participate in these events exists. However, any additional benefits, such as covering the costs of a stay following such an event, are considered undue.

There are no special regulations concerning foreign public officials in this respect.

8. Are political contributions regulated? If so, please provide details.

Political contributions are regulated by law in Liechtenstein. Political parties are not allowed to accept donations from anonymous donors if the donation in an individual case exceeds CHF 300.00.

In addition, political parties are required to publish their annual financial statements in relation to their income and expenses, thereby meeting the requirement of transparency.

9. Are facilitation payments regulated? If not, what is the general approach to such payments?

In this respect see question no. 7 above.

10. Are there any defences available to the bribery and corruption offences in your jurisdiction?

There is no specific defence against bribery and corruption allegations as such. However, under certain circumstances it can be argued that the benefit was not undue; see question no. 7 above.

Furthermore, there are constellations where someone accused of active bribery might be inclined to plead that the respective payments were not bribes, but the result

of extortion by the recipient of the payments, e.g. by a public official.

Legal entities under certain circumstances can claim the compliance framework defence. In this respect see question no. 11 below.

11. Are compliance programs a mitigating factor to reduce/eliminate liability for bribery offences in your jurisdiction?

Legal entities are generally not obliged under Liechtenstein criminal law to introduce anti-bribery programs. However, it is advisable for legal entities to have compliance measures against bribery in place, i.e. a compliance framework. On the one hand, such programs help to establish that the monitoring obligations on the part of the management level have been adhered to, this way opening up the compliance framework defence; see question no. 10. On the other hand, such programs can further the detection of bribery offences at an early stage. In case of such detection the legal entity can report accordingly to the Prosecution Service, which in turn might prevent a conviction or at least constitute a mitigating factor in case of a conviction.

Additionally, such programs might be beneficial in civil proceedings against a legal entity following an employee's or executive's misconduct to prove that the legal entity did not lack the necessary organisation.

As to the features of such compliance programs, see question no. 13 below.

12. Who may be held liable for bribery? Only individuals, or also corporate entities?

In 2010, the criminal liability of legal entities was introduced to the Liechtenstein Criminal Code. Under Liechtenstein criminal law, legal entities can be held criminally liable for acts that were committed:

- i. unlawfully and culpably by an executive in connection with the business activity of the legal entity within the scope of its purpose; or
- ii. by an employee in connection with the business activity of the legal entity within the scope of its purpose, but only to the extent that a breach of the monitoring obligation on the part of the management level has at least substantially facilitated the commission of the offence (i.e. an organisational fault).

Consequently, the criminal liability of a legal entity is

subject to the commission of an offence that has been committed in the course of business activities within the scope of the legal entity's purpose. Therefore, a functional connection between the offence and the legal entity's activity (i.e., its entire area of activity, including all entity-related activities) is required in order to establish criminal liability. As a result, no corporate criminal liability can be established for offences that have been committed (i) in the exclusive interest of an executive or a subordinate or (ii) against the legal entity itself. It becomes apparent from the aforesaid that a legal entity can be convicted for corruption acts under Liechtenstein criminal law (e.g. an executive commits a bribe in order to secure state contracts for the legal entity).

13. Has the government published any guidance advising how to comply with anti-corruption and bribery laws in your jurisdiction?

Government guidance in the sense of interpretation of the respective criminal bribery provisions is contained in the respective reports and applications of the government to the Liechtenstein parliament in the course of the enactment of the provisions and accompanying governmental documents. However, the Liechtenstein government has not published any specific guidelines for effective compliance programs relating to bribery.

Yet, as Liechtenstein economically is closely associated with Switzerland, guidelines applying to Swiss companies can be taken as model, namely the guidelines from the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), according to which a robust compliance program includes (1) organisational measures (e.g. transparent business processes and responsibilities, dual controls, integrity clauses in contracts, due diligence processes for the selection of local agents), (2) measures relating to staff and management (e.g. awareness training, checklists, escalation and advisory processes), and (3) supervisory measures (e.g. supervision of compliance measures, regular testing, external audits).

Furthermore, compliance programs respectively internal regulations in connection with the Liechtenstein Due Diligence Act, designed to combat money laundering, also further the cause of detecting bribery payments. Of course, the Due Diligence Act does not apply to all companies, but only to companies providing financial services or the like. Yet, given the preeminent position of the financial services sector in Liechtenstein, such programs, which as such are mandatory for companies subject to the Due Diligence Act, cover a wide array of

companies. These programs are also designed to sensitize employees for indicators for corruption in connection with payments, such as unusually high commission payments.

14. Does the law in your jurisdiction provide protection to whistle-blowers?

Liechtenstein does not provide for a specific legal regime on whistle-blowers. Nonetheless, the Liechtenstein National Police and the Financial Market Authority (FMA) have established platforms to ensure whistle-blowing by means of an anonymous and secure reporting process. Specifically, the whistle-blower tool of the Liechtenstein National Police has been introduced in order to (inter alia) combat white-collar crime and corruption.

15. How common are government authority investigations into allegations of bribery? How effective are they in leading to prosecutions of individuals and corporates?

Liechtenstein courts generally record extremely few cases of corruption respectively bribes on a domestic level. In the vast majority of cases, the areas in which the Liechtenstein authorities come into contact with acts of bribery are those in which assets possibly linked to bribes abroad are somehow connected to Liechtenstein (e.g. held on a bank account or by a company incorporated in Liechtenstein). Bribery is a predicate offence to money laundering under Liechtenstein criminal law. Consequently, any suspicion that assets deriving from bribes are held in Liechtenstein most likely lead to investigations based on the suspicion of money laundering in Liechtenstein. Typically, investigations based on the suspicion of corruption respectively bribes are widely reported in the media. If any connection of persons subject to such suspicions with assets held in Liechtenstein comes to the attention of financial authorities, often via suspicious activities reports, it is regularly the case that respective money laundering investigations are initiated in Liechtenstein against the foreign suspects and sometimes also against domestic service providers. However, such money laundering proceedings can take very long and the rate of actual indictments and convictions is low.

16. What are the recent and emerging trends in investigations and enforcement in your jurisdiction? Has the Covid-19

pandemic had any ongoing impact and, if so, what?

As Liechtenstein authorities continue to put a special focus on combatting money laundering, such cases, including in relation to bribery as predicate offence, definitely continue to become even more frequent. Any person who takes assets deriving from bribes can be subject to money laundering charges.

Furthermore, prosecutions due to violations of reporting obligations on the part of the financial intermediary regarding suspicious activities have become more frequent in recent years.

The Covid-19 pandemic hardly has any ongoing impact on investigations and enforcement.

17. Is there a process of judicial review for challenging government authority action and decisions? If so, please describe key features of this process and remedy.

An order of the Princely District Court which applies coercive measures, such as seizure of documents or asset freezing, is in general subject to an appeal with the Princely Court of Appeal. Such appeals may be lodged by the suspected perpetrator as well as the concerned parties (e.g. the information holder where the documents have been seized or the account holder whose assets have been frozen).

An accused can file an objection to the indictment within 14 days upon service with the Court of Appeal. An objection is granted and the indictment rejected e.g. if the facts of the case have not been sufficiently clarified or if there are circumstances that abolish criminal liability (e.g. active repentance) or preclude prosecution (e.g. the prosecution is time-barred).

If a (guilty) verdict is delivered by the District Court, the accused and the Prosecution Service may appeal this decision within 14 days upon service of the written decision. However, an appeal is only admissible if the appellant declares to appeal the decision within four days upon its pronouncement at trial. The decision of the Court of Appeal can be appealed provided that a sentence of more than one year imprisonment has been rendered.

Any final and last instance decision may be appealed by means of a constitutional complaint with the Constitutional Court on the grounds of violation of constitutionally guaranteed rights or of the rights guaranteed by international conventions (in particular

the European Convention on Human Rights).

18. Are there any planned developments or reforms of bribery and anti-corruption laws in your jurisdiction?

Recently, codes of conduct for judges and prosecutors were published, following the recommendation of the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). The Code of Conduct of the Liechtenstein National Administration regarding the prevention of corruption forms an integral part of the Code of Conduct for Prosecutors. In addition, it contains provisions regarding the independence of prosecutors, ethical standards as well as the requirement of participation in regular training.

GRECO further stated that there are virtually no known instances of corruption-related practices involving persons holding the public offices of members of parliament, judges and prosecutors in Liechtenstein. However, the respective report aimed to identify a number of areas where further preventive measures should be applied in order to support the existing framework and to avoid the possibility of any corruption-related misconduct remaining undetected. GRECO thereby outlined the specific challenges Liechtenstein faces due to its small size and close-knit community. These include the tension between the assumption that everyone knows everything about everyone, and the levels of actual transparency expected in democratic societies, especially in respect of those persons entrusted with the aforementioned public offices.

Liechtenstein authorities have been asked to submit a further report on the progress in implementing the mentioned recommendation by 30 June 2023. According to information obtained from the Liechtenstein government, the report has been filed timely, but for the time being will not be published. Yet, eventually further changes to relevant legislation are to be expected.

19. To which international anti-corruption conventions is your country party?

Liechtenstein is a member of numerous international and European conventions on combatting bribery and corruption. Particularly noteworthy is Liechtenstein's membership of GRECO and the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). Within the scope of these conventions, a member state's regulations on anti-bribery and corruption are continuously evaluated by other member states. Liechtenstein received recommendations and implementation proposals for a

revision of the criminal law on corruption, which were successfully implemented by means of the revision of the law in 2016, mentioned in question 1 above. As a consequence, a coherent system for the effective prosecution and sanctioning of corruption was created.

20. Do you have a concept of legal privilege in your jurisdiction which applies to lawyer-led investigations? If so, please provide details on the extent of that protection.

The client attorney privilege provides protection to the extent that privileged communication generally must not be used in criminal investigations. In case of a seizure of documents, the sealing of privileged communication can be applied for and an appeal filed against the seizure order. If the appeal is granted, the privileged communication that has been sealed must be released to the respective attorney or the information holder respectively.

In addition, the attorney's right to refuse to testify also protects employees of the attorney to be interviewed.

The client attorney privilege in general also applies to lawyer-led investigations. However, such lawyer-led investigations in practice are not as common as in some other countries, e.g. the U.S.

21. How much importance does your government place on tackling bribery and corruption? How do you think your jurisdiction's approach to anti-bribery and corruption compares on an international scale?

Liechtenstein proclaims a zero-tolerance policy regarding financial crimes, including bribery and corruption. Authorities have put a special focus and emphasis on meeting international standards in particular by seeking to create a coherent system for the effective prosecution and sanctioning of money laundering and terrorism financing. In many ways, Liechtenstein has been a forerunner when it comes to combatting financial crimes.

22. Generally how serious are organisations in your country about preventing bribery and corruption?

Combatting bribery and corruption has become more

and more important for Liechtenstein companies in recent years. Accordingly, there is increased investment in compliance programs, not least because such programs are an important defence instrument with regard to criminal liability, as outlined in questions no. 10 and 11 above.

23. What are the biggest challenges enforcement agencies/regulators face when investigating and prosecuting cases of bribery and corruption in your jurisdiction?

Law enforcement agencies are often confronted with the complexity of cases as well as cross-border issues, which lead to time and resource consuming investigations and proceedings.

24. What are the biggest challenges businesses face when investigating bribery and corruption issues?

Internal investigations can be a balancing act. On the one hand, it will be the goal of the respective company to fully discover any wrongdoings by employees or managers. The findings then might want or have to be disclosed to the authorities. On the other hand, the company itself can be the target of criminal investigations and as such it might prefer to hold back certain findings. The situation can get really challenging in case managers or even board members are the subject of bribery or money laundering investigations and the company by law is under a gag obligation, meaning the company is prohibited to inform the respective manager or board member about the investigation or share any relevant information. The gag obligation can clash with information rights and executive powers the manager or board member normally has. Such cases do not occur often, but when they do, they can be very difficult for the company.

Also costs can be a big issue. Usually, external experts,

such as lawyers or auditors, will have to be retained. Furthermore, the individuals subject to the investigation will need separate legal representation, the costs of which in many cases will have to be covered by the company.

25. What do you consider will be the most significant corruption-related challenges posed to businesses in your jurisdiction over the next 18 months?

Strengthening the compliance organisations will be one of the key challenges. In this respect training of employees by way of external courses is of particular importance.

Furthermore, the overall economic situation, with disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, supply chain problems and inflation, is challenging. Consequently, compliance and governance issues for many companies might have less priority. All the more will it be crucial that those in charge of compliance further awareness for compliance and combatting bribery.

26. How would you improve the legal framework and process for preventing, investigating and prosecuting cases of bribery and corruption?

Given the recent changes in law, the Liechtenstein legal framework, as far as bribery and corruption is concerned, seems sufficient. Of course, improvements are always possible. Such improvement, e.g. would be strengthening the position of companies and individuals cooperating with authorities. Such cooperation of a company in practice can lead to the termination of the investigation against the company, in particular if it shares findings regarding wrongdoing by employees or managers. Yet, what is missing is the respective enshrinement of the benefits of cooperation in the law itself.

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