



# ICLG

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## Employment & Labour Law 2017

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A practical cross-border insight into employment and labour law

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# Poland

Piotr Kryczek



Weronika Papucewicz



Chajec, Don-Siemion & Zyto Legal Advisors

## 1 Terms and Conditions of Employment

### 1.1 What are the main sources of employment law?

In Poland, the main sources of employment law are international law (e.g. ILO conventions), EU law and national law. Domestically, the main source is the Polish Labour Code and a number of other statutory acts and secondary regulations to the Code regulating in more detail various aspects of employment, such as collective labour agreements and other collective arrangements, and regulations setting out the rights and obligations of the parties of an employment relationship.

### 1.2 What types of worker are protected by employment law? How are different types of worker distinguished?

The Labour Code protects workers employed under employment contracts. Generally, employees are equal, but the Code distinguishes a few types of workers who are protected, e.g. an employee who is pregnant cannot be laid off and cannot work overtime, at night, outside of the permanent workplace or in the shift-time system without her prior consent.

Another group protected against termination are employees who will reach retirement age within four years or trade union activists while performing their functions (the consent for termination of the board of the trade union organisation is required). Moreover, the employer cannot terminate an agreement with an employee who is absent for justified reasons because of a leave or illness. The Labour Code also protects employees on maternity leave and young employees (aged 16 to 18).

It should be noted that some professions (e.g. teachers, mine-workers and others) are subject to specific rules and privileges based on branch-related legislation.

### 1.3 Do contracts of employment have to be in writing? If not, do employees have to be provided with specific information in writing?

Yes, Polish law requires an employment contract to be concluded in writing. If a contract is not concluded in such form, an employer must confirm basic employment terms (such as remuneration, work position, place of work, working time and work commencement date) in writing prior to starting employment, otherwise the employer might be held liable and be forced to pay a fine. The employer must also provide the employee with additional written information about certain general conditions of work such as the length of the working day and week, the frequency and method of remuneration payments,

the length of annual leave, any collective agreements governing the employee's conditions of night-time work, methods of confirming arrival at work and justification of absences from work. Irrespective of the above requirements imposed by law, it is recommended to formalise the principles of employment for evidencing purposes.

### 1.4 Are any terms implied into contracts of employment?

Provisions of employment contracts may not be less advantageous to the employee than provisions of binding laws and the employer's internal labour regulations, in particular work regulations, wage regulations and collective labour agreements.

As with any other contracts in Poland, employment contracts must be performed in good faith.

Other, additional terms arising from the general provisions of the Labour Code may be implied by the parties of the employment contract such as confidentiality and non-compete obligations.

### 1.5 Are any minimum employment terms and conditions set down by law that employers have to observe?

Working time may not exceed eight hours per day and an average of 40 hours per average working week, with certain exceptions such as balanced working time or work in continuous activities. Employees are entitled to a minimum uninterrupted rest period of 11 hours in every 24-hour period and 35 hours per week. Work performed over the working time standards constitutes overtime work and must be paid additionally. The maximum number of overtime hours per year amounts to 150 hours (unless collective labour agreements, internal regulations or individual contracts provide otherwise).

Employees are entitled to 26 working days' paid leave per year (or 20 working days if the total employment and education period is shorter than 10 years).

The remuneration specified in the employment contract may not be lower than the statutory minimum salary (PLN 2,000 in 2017 approx. EUR 450).

As noted above, some professions (e.g. teachers, mine-workers, and others) are subject to specific rules and privileges based on branch-related legislation.

### 1.6 To what extent are terms and conditions of employment agreed through collective bargaining? Does bargaining usually take place at company or industry level?

Terms and conditions set forth in collective bargaining agreements

(CBAs) apply to individual employment contracts. CBAs can be concluded on a company and inter-company level as well as on an industry level.

The level of unionisation in Poland amounts to about 11%. Most trade unions comprise industry workers (miners, shipbuilders, steelmakers, etc.) and public sector workers (teachers, nurses, doctors, etc.).

## 2 Employee Representation and Industrial Relations

### 2.1 What are the rules relating to trade union recognition?

Under the Trade Unions Act, the trade union may be established by at least 10 eligible employees in the company. The employees have to enact a statute and then apply for a registration to the National Court Register. Once the trade union is registered, it becomes a legal person. Trade unions have the right to establish national federations and confederations.

### 2.2 What rights do trade unions have?

Generally, an employer cannot terminate or alter a trade unionist's employment contract with notice without the consent of the trade union. The other rights include:

- the right to negotiate and execute collective bargaining agreements and other agreements;
- the power to agree on internal rules, especially work and pay rules;
- the right to express opinions on legislative proposals, statutes or other normative acts;
- the right to give an opinion on individual employment matters, especially termination of an employment contract; and
- the right to be informed and consulted during group layoffs.

### 2.3 Are there any rules governing a trade union's right to take industrial action?

Industrial action is regulated by the Act on Collective Labour Dispute Resolution. The right to strike is guaranteed by the Polish Constitution, but the right to organise strikes is reserved for trade unions. A strike is the ultimate stage of collective dispute resolution, and must be preceded by mandatory negotiations and mediation and optionally by arbitration.

### 2.4 Are employers required to set up works councils? If so, what are the main rights and responsibilities of such bodies? How are works council representatives chosen/appointed?

The Act on Informing and Consulting Employees (implementing 2002/14/EC Directive) stipulates that employers with 50 or more workers must inform them of their right to set up a works council. The council is elected by all employees and its composition depends on the size of the company (three, five or seven members unless the number is set in an arrangement with the employees).

The employer is obliged to inform the works council about the activities and economic situation of the company, as well as any significant changes in work organisation or employment (for instance planned layoffs). The council is also entitled to present its

non-binding opinions on a number of matters. In July 2016, there were approximately 3,500 work councils in Polish companies.

### 2.5 In what circumstances will a works council have co-determination rights, so that an employer is unable to proceed until it has obtained works council agreement to proposals?

The employer is obliged to provide the works council with information about the activities and economic situation of the company and expected changes in this respect, as well as any actions that could lead to significant changes in work organisation or employment (planned layoffs, changes in work organisation, employment policy, etc.).

Other matters that must be subject to consultation or consent of the council may be agreed with trade unions or other employee representatives.

### 2.6 How do the rights of trade unions and works councils interact?

The rights of works councils overlap with the rights of trade unions, but even then an employer who employs at least 50 workers is obliged to establish a works council. In companies in which there is both a works council and a trade union, the role of the works council is often marginal.

### 2.7 Are employees entitled to representation at board level?

There is no such obligation. The owners of the employing company may, at their discretion, decide that a person appointed by employees will be a member of company's management board or supervisory board. Such situation is not frequent in the private sector.

## 3 Discrimination

### 3.1 Are employees protected against discrimination? If so, on what grounds is discrimination prohibited?

Polish law clearly prohibits any discrimination in employment. Poland has implemented two anti-discrimination directives: 2000/43/EC Racial Equality Directive; and 2000/78/EC Employment Equality. General anti-discriminatory provisions are set forth in several provisions of the Labour Code and in the Antidiscrimination Act which protects against discrimination other than that resulting from employment relations, e.g. discrimination at work performed under civil law contracts.

### 3.2 What types of discrimination are unlawful and in what circumstances?

It is prohibited to discriminate on the grounds of sex, age, disability, race, religion, nationality, political beliefs, trade union membership, ethnic origin, denomination or sexual orientation, as well as employment for definite or indefinite terms, or on a full-time or part-time basis.

Employees must be treated equally in the establishment and termination of employment relationships, terms and conditions of employment, promotion and access to training to develop their professional qualifications.

The Labour Code stipulates that the principle of equal treatment is violated when the employer differentiates the employee's situation on the basis of one or more reasons resulting in, among other things, the refusal to enter into or dissolve a work contract, or disadvantageous remuneration for work or other employment conditions, or deprivation of promotion or other benefits.

### 3.3 Are there any defences to a discrimination claim?

Defence in discrimination cases may not be easy since, in such type of cases, the employer must to prove that they use objective criteria for all employees. This means that an employer must demonstrate that any action connected with employment had justified and legitimate grounds, e.g. an increase of salary was in line with the company's general promotion policy.

Introduction of and compliance with internal rules against discrimination (e.g. a code of conduct) may significantly strengthen an employer's position in such defence.

### 3.4 How do employees enforce their discrimination rights? Can employers settle claims before or after they are initiated?

Victims of discrimination may enforce their rights during and after employment termination, and may lodge a claim for compensation.

Employees who exercise the right to compensation for a breach of equal treatment rules must not be treated unfavourably, in particular it may not cause termination of their employment. Employees are also entitled to notify the National Labour Inspectorate. The Inspectorate may conduct an inspection and may impose a fine on the employer.

When an employee files a claim, settlement ending the dispute is possible both before and after the claim is brought before the labour court until the final judgment is passed.

The employee who accuses the employer of discrimination does not have an obligation to prove this accusation in front of the court. However, he/she still has to substantiate the complaint of unequal treatment and determine which of the criteria of discrimination the employer has applied.

### 3.5 What remedies are available to employees in successful discrimination claims?

A person whose rights regarding anti-discrimination were violated has a right to compensation equal to at least the amount of the statutory minimum wage.

### 3.6 Do "atypical" workers (such as those working part-time, on a fixed-term contract or as a temporary agency worker) have any additional protection?

"Atypical" workers do not have any additional protection, but they cannot be treated worse than other "typical" employees. Disabled employees have additional rights, such as:

- an appropriate workplace with special facilities;
- working hours limited to eight hours per day and 40 hours per week;
- night work and overtime work is forbidden;
- an additional 15-minute break at work;
- additional annual leave (10 days per year); and
- additional rehabilitative leave (up to 21 days per year).

## 4 Maternity and Family Leave Rights

### 4.1 How long does maternity leave last?

The length of maternity leave depends on the number of children born:

- 20 weeks – one child at birth;
- 31 weeks – two children at birth;
- 33 weeks – three children at birth;
- 35 weeks – four children at birth; and
- 37 weeks – five or more children at birth.

Leave of up to six weeks can be used prior to the expected date of childbirth.

### 4.2 What rights, including rights to pay and benefits, does a woman have during maternity leave?

A female employee receives an allowance paid by the Social Insurance Institution (ZUS). The amount of the maternity benefit differs depending on the case; in principle, it is equal to 100% of the ground of benefit assessment basis for the first six or eight weeks (depending on the number of children born) and 60% for the period of parental leave after the above-mentioned periods. However, in certain cases, it may be equal to 80% of the ground of benefit assessment basis. The employee is protected from dismissal during the maternity leave (with some exceptions).

### 4.3 What rights does a woman have upon her return to work from maternity leave?

After the leave, the employee must resume work at the previous position or, if this is impossible, at a position equivalent to the previous position or a position corresponding to her professional qualifications and with remuneration not lower than before the maternity leave.

A female employee is entitled to take unpaid childcare leave or ask for reduced working hours during which she is protected from dismissal. Moreover, a female employee who is breastfeeding is entitled to two additional breaks from work included in her working time, the length of which depends on her working hours and the number of children born.

### 4.4 Do fathers have the right to take paternity leave?

An employee who is a father taking care of a child is entitled to paternity leave of two weeks until the child is 24 months old. The leave can be split into two parts, neither of which can be shorter than one week. Paternity leave is granted upon a written request submitted no later than seven days before the commencement of that leave and the employer is obliged to accept that request.

Additionally, the father may use a part of the mother's maternity leave – the mother employee must use at least 14 weeks of her maternity leave and can waive the right to the remaining portion and grant it to the father employee, at his written request.

### 4.5 Are there any other parental leave rights that employers have to observe?

Immediately after using maternity leave, both parents are entitled to parental leave of up to 32 or 34 weeks (depending on the number

of children born) in aggregate. This leave can be split into no more than four parts, cannot be shorter than eight weeks and can also be taken by both parents at the same time. Parents are able to take 16 of the 32 weeks of parental leave later (by the end of the calendar year in which the child becomes six years old). It is granted upon written request submitted 21 days before the leave starts and the employer is obliged to grant the leave.

Also, an employee employed for at least six months (including prior periods of employment) has the right to unpaid extended upbringing leave to provide personal care to the child. The length of that leave lasts up to 36 months and it can be granted by the end of the calendar year in which the child becomes six. Both parental and upbringing leave can be combined with work for one year.

#### **4.6 Are employees entitled to work flexibly if they have responsibility for caring for dependants?**

Every employee is entitled to take unpaid childcare leave or ask for reduced working hours. If the parental leave is combined with work, the leave is extended in proportion to the time worked – the parent is able to combine work with parental leave for a maximum of 64 or 68 weeks (depending on the number of children born). Additionally, a woman who is breastfeeding is entitled to additional breaks from work included in her working time, the length of which depends on her working time and the number of children born. An employee raising at least one child aged up to 14 is entitled to be granted two paid days or 16 hours off per calendar year.

The employee is entitled to an allowance while taking care of a child aged up to eight years (paid for up to 60 days) and while taking care of other family members (paid for up to 14 days).

## **5 Business Sales**

### **5.1 On a business sale (either a share sale or asset transfer) do employees automatically transfer to the buyer?**

The sale of shares in the company does not affect the employees and they remain employed by the same company.

In the case of transfer of assets (transfer of an organised part or entire enterprise) in the form of a sale or contribution to another company, the new employer (company) becomes party to the existing employment relationships by law. This means that employees are transferred to a new employer automatically.

The criteria of estimating whether the transfer of enterprise (organised part thereof) has been effected have been developed in the jurisdiction of the Tribunal of Justice of the European Union and are adopted by Polish courts. In the *Spijkers* case, the Tribunal set-out several tests that have to be taken into consideration in this respect. The crucial question is whether the buyer continues the seller's activity or starts a new activity of a similar type. Other important aspects include the type of the enterprise, determination whether material tangible components of the enterprise have been transferred (such as buildings and real property), the value of intangible components at the time of the transfer, whether the majority of employees have been taken over by the new employer, if the handling of clients has been transferred upon the transfer, and others. Each case and its circumstances should be reviewed individually.

### **5.2 What employee rights transfer on a business sale? How does a business sale affect collective agreements?**

Within two months from the transfer date, the employee is entitled

to terminate his/her employment contract upon giving seven days' notice (such termination has the same legal effect as termination with notice by the employer).

A collective agreement of the previous employer continues to apply to the transferred employees for one year from the transfer, unless otherwise stated in the separate regulations. The new employer may introduce more favourable conditions for this group of employees.

### **5.3 Are there any information and consultation rights on a business sale? How long does the process typically take and what are the sanctions for failing to inform and consult?**

The information about a planned transfer must be provided to the employees at least 30 days before the planned transfer date and must contain: the date and reasons of the transfer; legal, economic and social implications for the employees; and any measures to be taken regarding the conditions of employment, remuneration and retraining. There is no sanction for a breach of this obligation. However, failure to fulfil the information duty can result in an employer's liability for any damages caused to an employee. The length of the procedure depends on the company size and the conditions of a particular transaction.

### **5.4 Can employees be dismissed in connection with a business sale?**

No, the transfer itself cannot constitute grounds for termination of an employment relationship by an employer.

### **5.5 Are employers free to change terms and conditions of employment in connection with a business sale?**

Generally, employers are not entitled to change independently the terms of employment in connection with a business sale, but the employer and trade union can conclude a relevant agreement in this respect.

## **6 Termination of Employment**

### **6.1 Do employees have to be given notice of termination of their employment? How is the notice period determined?**

Employees must be given a notice of termination, unless the parties conclude a mutual agreement in this respect. In the case of an indefinite term contract, a reason must be offered in writing by the employer that would justify the notice of termination. A contract may be also terminated without notice due to a gross violation by the employee of his/her duties.

The period of notice under indefinite and definite contracts depends on an employee's length of service in a company:

- two weeks – if the length of service is shorter than six months;
- one month – if the length of service is at least six months; and
- three months – if the length of service is at least three years.

In the case of employment for a trial period, the terms of notice are as follows:

- three working days – if the trial period does not exceed two weeks;
- one week – if the trial period exceeds two weeks; and
- two weeks – if the trial period exceeds three months.

### 6.2 Can employers require employees to serve a period of “garden leave” during their notice period when the employee remains employed but does not have to attend for work?

The Polish law does not recognise a “garden leave” period. Under the Labour Code, the employee is obliged to use their remaining leave during the notice period, provided that the employer has granted such leave.

The employer is able to unilaterally release the employee from the obligation to work during the notice period (the employee retains the entitlement to remuneration).

### 6.3 What protection do employees have against dismissal? In what circumstances is an employee treated as being dismissed? Is consent from a third party required before an employer can dismiss?

Employees may appeal against termination with notice to a labour court within seven days of the date of the notice, and may claim that the notice be void, reinstatement to work or compensation. In the case of termination without notice, an employee has 14 days to lodge a claim for reinstatement to work or compensation. The employee may challenge the reasons for termination or other breaches of law (for instance lack of consultation with trade unions).

The employee is treated as dismissed at the end of the notice period. In the case of termination without notice or a disciplinary dismissal, the termination is effective as of the day when the employee received the termination notice.

If there is a trade union representing the employee, it must be notified by the employer in writing about the intention to terminate the employee’s indefinite-term employment contract with notice. The trade union may present its objections with reasons to the employer in writing. Only in the case of employees with special protection against dismissal (trade union board members) is the consent of the trade union required.

### 6.4 Are there any categories of employees who enjoy special protection against dismissal?

The following groups of employees are specially protected:

- pregnant women;
- employees who will reach retirement age in less than four years;
- trade union activists;
- employees on childcare leave, on vacation, maternity leave or unpaid carer’s leave;
- members of the works council;
- so-called social labour inspectors; and
- employees protected for a valid reason, in particular those on sick leave with a doctor’s certificate.

### 6.5 When will an employer be entitled to dismiss for: 1) reasons related to the individual employee; or 2) business related reasons? Are employees entitled to compensation on dismissal and if so how is compensation calculated?

Reasons related to the individual employee may include personal reasons (e.g. long sickness) or reasons related to the employee’s behaviour (e.g. loss of trust). The employer may also terminate the employment contract without notice if the employee is at fault (disciplinary dismissal). In practice, the most common reason for

disciplinary dismissal is a serious breach of basic duties (such as unauthorised absence at work, refusing to carry out a task).

An employment contract may be terminated without notice if there is no fault on the employee’s part but he/she is unable to work due to incapacity to work caused by an illness lasting for some specific period of time.

In practice, business-related reasons may require that the job position of the employee be liquidated due to economic or organisational changes in the company. Justified reasons for dismissal not related to employees include the following:

- where there is causality between the position’s liquidation and the termination (further employment is no longer needed);
- where the liquidated position is identified in a manner that does not give rise to any doubt; and
- where there has been approval of organisational changes by a relevant authority or other entity, if required by law.

### 6.6 Are there any specific procedures that an employer has to follow in relation to individual dismissals?

The employer must meet the following requirements:

- termination must be preceded by informing trade unions (if they exist);
- it must be done in writing;
- it must contain the reasons for termination (in contracts for an indefinite term) and information on how to appeal against termination; and
- after the termination, the employer is obliged to issue and provide the employee with a certificate of employment.

### 6.7 What claims can an employee bring if he or she is dismissed? What are the remedies for a successful claim?

The employee may bring a claim for a court to invalidate the termination, or if the contract of employment has already been terminated, for reinstatement to work or for compensation. The compensation must be awarded at the amount of remuneration due for two weeks up to three months, but in any case it may not be lower than the amount of remuneration for the notice period.

The remedies for a successful claim mostly depend on the ability to prove the reason of termination and observance of the termination procedure. Mistakes made during such procedure significantly increase an employee’s chances of success before the labour court.

### 6.8 Can employers settle claims before or after they are initiated?

An agreement with the employee can be settled both before and during the course of court proceedings until the final judgment is passed.

### 6.9 Does an employer have any additional obligations if it is dismissing a number of employees at the same time?

Group layoffs are regulated by the Act of the Specific Principles of Terminating Labour Relationships for Reasons Not Attributable to the Employees (implementing 98/59/EC Directive). The Act applies to entities that employ at least 20 employees and plan to terminate within 30 days (including a minimum of five terminations by mutual agreements) employment contracts for business reasons of at least:

- 10 employees when the total number of employees is lower than 100;
- 10% of employees when the entity employs at least 100 but less than 300 workers; and
- 30 employees when the entity employs at least 300 workers.

Before the group layoffs, the employer is obliged to:

- consult its decision with trade unions or other employees' representatives;
- provide trade unions with information on reasons for layoffs, number and professions to be laid off, the planned date of layoffs, the criteria of selection for dismissal and the order of layoffs;
- provide the same information to the local Employment Office; and
- award dismissed employees a severance pay which amounts to:
  - one month's remuneration, if the employee was employed for less than two years;
  - two months' remuneration, if the employee was employed from two to eight years; and
  - three months' remuneration, if the employee was employed for more than eight years.

The employer must settle with the trade unions an agreement regarding the terms of layoffs or – if there is no trade union or when the agreement is not possible – the employer must itself regulate the layoffs.

#### 6.10 How do employees enforce their rights in relation to mass dismissals and what are the consequences if an employer fails to comply with its obligations?

If the employer fails to fulfil its obligations, it can lead a court to invalidate the termination, or alternatively award compensation or reinstate the employee to work. The employee can also claim for rightful severance pay.

## 7 Protecting Business Interests Following Termination

### 7.1 What types of restrictive covenants are recognised?

There are a few restrictive covenants after termination:

- post-contractual non-compete clause;
- confidentiality clause; and
- non-solicitation clause.

### 7.2 When are restrictive covenants enforceable and for what period?

The parties may set, in a separate agreement, a non-compete obligation which will be binding after termination of the employment contract. Such an agreement must be in writing, must stipulate the period of the non-compete clause and the compensation for compliance. There are no restrictions as to the duration of such covenants. The confidentiality clause and non-solicitation clause may be a part of such agreement.

### 7.3 Do employees have to be provided with financial compensation in return for covenants?

In the case of a post-contractual non-compete obligation, the former

employee is entitled to receive, for the entire period of the covenant, compensation which must not be lower than 25% of his/her recent remuneration during the non-compete period. The compensation may be paid in monthly instalments.

### 7.4 How are restrictive covenants enforced?

The former employee is liable for a breach of the non-competition clause under the Labour Code. An employer who does not perform its obligations, i.e. stops paying compensation, may be sued by the employee before a labour court.

In the case of a breach of the non-competition clause, the Suppression of Unfair Competition Act will apply. The Act defines actions which may be considered acts of unfair competition and regulates the rules for liability for such acts. In accordance with the Act, any act such as: *“transfer, disclosure or use of third party information which is confidential or receipt of such information from an unauthorised person, if it threatens or violates the interests of the entrepreneur”* is considered an act of unfair competition.

## 8 Data Protection and Employee Privacy

### 8.1 How do employee data protection rights affect the employment relationship? Can an employer transfer employee data freely to other countries?

The employer is a personal data controller of the personal data of its employees and is obliged to protect such data. The employer cannot share such data with any third party without an express consent of the employee (with some exceptions, such as a court's order). The personal data protection rules also apply to candidates and former employees.

Under the Polish Labour Code, an employer may require an applicant to provide certain information only. Additionally, an employer may require an employee to provide additional information if necessary to exercise special rights to which an employee is entitled under labour law. The Labour Code vests the employer with the right to require additional personal information only if the applicant/employee is obligated to provide such information directly under other regulations.

Generally, employee data transfers to a “third country” (outside the European Economic Area) are only allowed if the country of destination ensures an adequate level of protection (at least the same as that applied in Poland). No express legal definition of an “adequate level of protection” exists; it is to be assessed by a data controller on an individual basis.

Personal data may be transferred to a third country that does not ensure at least the same level of data protection as Poland if: (i) the employee has given his or her written consent; (ii) the transfer is necessary to perform a contract between the employee and the employer or takes place in response to the employee's request; (iii) the transfer is necessary to perform a contract concluded in the interest of the employee between the employer and a third party; (iv) the transfer is necessary or required by reasons of public interest or for the establishment of legal claims; (v) the transfer is necessary in order to protect the vital interests of the employee; or (vi) the transfer relates to data which is publicly available. Alternatively, the transfer of personal data to such a third country may be permitted with prior approval of the Inspector General for Personal Data Protection, provided that the employer ensures adequate safeguards (e.g. standard contractual clauses) with respect to the protection of privacy, rights, and freedoms of the employee.

In accordance with the EU regulation which will become effective from May 2018, legislation regarding data protection will be modified; for example, the candidate will have a right to demand the employer to remove his/her personal data from the system or the employer will have more information obligations towards employees.

### 8.2 Do employees have a right to obtain copies of any personal information that is held by their employer?

Employees are entitled to manage and update their data. To do so, they must provide a written request to the employer. The employer must answer in writing within 30 days and inform the employees about their rights and collected data, but does not have to make it available.

### 8.3 Are employers entitled to carry out pre-employment checks on prospective employees (such as criminal record checks)?

The employer may only require a candidate to provide the data set out in the Labour Code and other statutes. The employer cannot process any other personal information which it deems necessary for its purposes even with the consent of the employee/applicant. According to the rulings of the Polish courts, as well as the doctrinal views, such consent may not be given freely as there is an imbalance of power between the employer and the applicant/employee.

In Poland, the possibility of examining the criminal record of a candidate for employment only exists for professions and positions specifically set out in multiple separate statutes (e.g. judges, doctors, university teachers). The data in question are not included in the relevant catalogue in the Labour Code; therefore, employers are forbidden from processing this information.

### 8.4 Are employers entitled to monitor an employee's emails, telephone calls or use of an employer's computer system?

There is no specific regulation in Poland that concerns the monitoring of employees at work; however, the general rules on data protection apply. Monitoring is generally allowed but it must be reasonable, proportional to its aims and must not violate the dignity or privacy of employees. In practice, the best way to legally monitor employees at work is to inform them about the possible monitoring. According to the Labour Code, employees are obliged to perform specific work for the employer and under the employer's direction at a place and time specified by the employer. Consequently, the employer is entitled to check if employees use the company's email, telephones and computers to perform work and not for private use.

### 8.5 Can an employer control an employee's use of social media in or outside the workplace?

No codes and regulations concerning Internet use in the workplace exist in Poland. Under Polish general legal conditions, it is necessary to refer back to general principles when regulating social media, such as: (i) privacy protection; (ii) the right of the employer to direct employees' labour; and (iii) the protection of trade secrets.

In practice, Polish employers draft internal legal procedures which are binding on their employees (the Social Media Policies). A Polish SMP must contain:

- a statement of purpose motivating the introduction of the policy;
- a list of actions and behaviours on social media that the employer prohibits; and
- a list of possible disciplinary measures that may be applied when the SMP is violated.

Employees must remember their duty to take care of the best interests of the company and keep confidential any information where disclosure of such could cause damage to the employer. Publishing some information about the company via social media may therefore be recognised as a breach of duties.

## 9 Court Practice and Procedure

### 9.1 Which courts or tribunals have jurisdiction to hear employment-related complaints and what is their composition?

In Poland, labour courts are competent for all legal proceedings between employers and employees.

Claims arising out of employment relationships are decided by labour courts that constitute separate organisational units of district courts; and labour and social insurance courts that constitute separate organisational units of regional courts.

### 9.2 What procedure applies to employment-related complaints? Is conciliation mandatory before a complaint can proceed? Does an employee have to pay a fee to submit a claim?

Civil procedure applies to employment-related complaints. Conciliation before both the labour court and the civil court is not mandatory. A settlement ending a dispute between the employer and employee is possible at each stage of proceedings before the labour court. If a conciliatory commission exists in the workplace of the employee, before submitting a claim to a court, the employee may request such conciliatory commission to initiate mediation.

Employees do not have to pay a fee for submitting claims to a labour court unless the value of the case exceeds PLN 50,000 – a fee of 5% of the value of the dispute will then apply.

### 9.3 How long do employment-related complaints typically take to be decided?

On average, first instance, decisions take between six months to two years to be decided, depending on the court.

### 9.4 Is it possible to appeal against a first instance decision and if so how long do such appeals usually take?

It is always possible to appeal against a first instance decision. Appeal courts rule on such appeals (depending of the region of Poland) in about six months to one year.



**Piotr Kryczek**

Chajec, Don-Siemion & Zyto Legal Advisors  
Zajęcza 15 St.  
00-351 Warsaw  
Poland

Tel: +48 22 492 40 00  
Email: [piotr.kryczek@cdz.com.pl](mailto:piotr.kryczek@cdz.com.pl)  
URL: [www.cdz.com.pl](http://www.cdz.com.pl)

Piotr Kryczek – Attorney-at-law, Partner, Head of the Employment Law Department of Chajec, Don-Siemion & Żyto Legal Advisors.

Piotr specialises in employment, competition, intellectual and industrial property law with a particular focus on trademark issues. His clients include international and large domestic corporations, and leading companies from the SSC/BPO and IT industries. He represents clients in proceedings before civil and commercial courts of all instances.

Piotr advises on restructuring and employment reduction procedures, employment-related matters during M&A transactions, the introduction of internal regulations, non-competition contracts, the processing of personal data of employees and share option plans for employees.

Piotr worked for the Polish Antimonopoly Office (now UOKiK), and later as a board member and Chief Legal Counsel of CANAL+Polska (now nc+), the first pay television in Poland.

He cooperates with the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and is actively involved in *pro bono* activities for a number of foundations and private individuals.

Piotr is recommended by *The Legal 500 EMEA 2016* in the field of employment law.

**Weronika Papucewicz**

Chajec, Don-Siemion & Zyto Legal Advisors  
Zajęcza 15 St.  
00-351 Warsaw  
Poland

Tel: +48 22 492 40 00  
Email: [weronika.papucewicz@cdz.com.pl](mailto:weronika.papucewicz@cdz.com.pl)  
URL: [www.cdz.com.pl](http://www.cdz.com.pl)

Weronika Papucewicz – Lawyer, Associate in the Employment Law Department of Chajec, Don-Siemion & Żyto Legal Advisors.

Weronika specialises in individual and collective labour relations, anti-discrimination law, personal data protection, and labour law-related litigation. Weronika supports international entrants to the Polish market in employment law matters, such as hiring employees and drafting the required documentation. She mainly advises clients from the BPO/SSC sectors on labour law, including employment termination, introduction of new internal regulations, non-competition contracts and processing of employee personal data.

She graduated from the Warsaw University's Faculty of Law and Administration and the American Law School of the Center for American Law Studies. She is also a Ph.D. graduate in law sciences from the Institute of Legal Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Weronika is an author of numerous press publications related to individual and collective labour law and has been a speaker during conferences on employee participation, the operation of trade unions in companies and collective disputes.

In 2014, Weronika was named a Rising Star in the ranking of the nationwide law newspaper *Dziennik Gazeta Prawna*.



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59 Tanner Street, London SE1 3PL, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 20 7367 0720 / Fax: +44 20 7407 5255  
Email: [info@glgroup.co.uk](mailto:info@glgroup.co.uk)

[www.iclg.co.uk](http://www.iclg.co.uk)