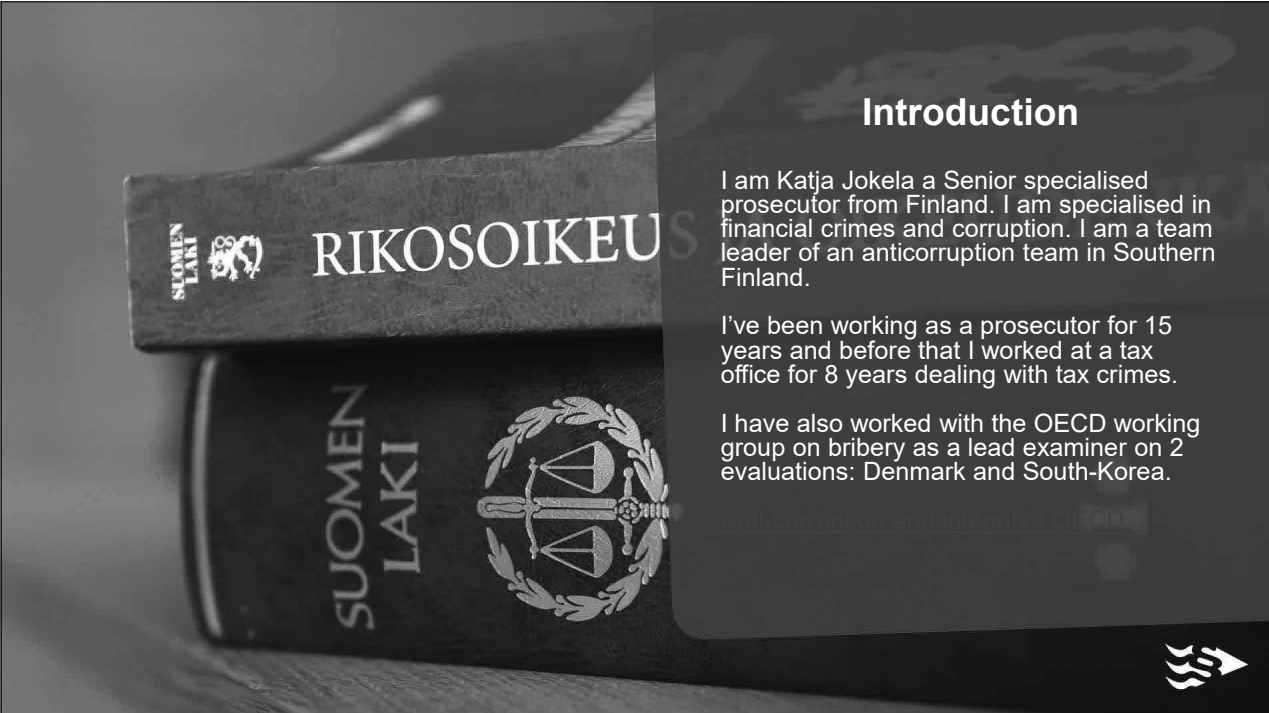




Corruption in Finland
Senior specialised prosecutor
Katja Jokela

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Introduction

I am Katja Jokela a Senior specialised prosecutor from Finland. I am specialised in financial crimes and corruption. I am a team leader of an anticorruption team in Southern Finland.

I've been working as a prosecutor for 15 years and before that I worked at a tax office for 8 years dealing with tax crimes.

I have also worked with the OECD working group on bribery as a lead examiner on 2 evaluations: Denmark and South-Korea.



Is there corruption in Finland?


- Transparency international: Finland is on the 2nd place on the corruption perceptions Index (2024)
- Transparency international research measures “street level” corruption, which we have a little of. Corruption in Finland is more complex: conflict of interest, cartels, bribes, nepotism and favouritism.

High risk sectors:

- * Construction
- * Public procurements and competitive tendering
- * Community planning
- * Political funding and decision making
- * Foreign trade
- * Development co-operation
- * Sports



Main reasons why we have less corruption compared to many other countries

- The whole society is based on **trust**. The government trusts the citizens and they trust the government.
- Officers have to make written decisions which are **openly** justified and any citizen or media can ask to see the decisions. (Decisions can be classified only in certain cases: very sensitive personal information, state security...)
- **Media control**. Free media is important. 
- **Fair salaries** for public officers
- **Independence** of the prosecution and the court



Corruption in Finland

- In Finland we do not have a separate corruption division in the police or in the prosecution office. Corruption cases are handled by regular district prosecutors or specialised prosecutors depending on the case.
- We don't have corruption as a separate crime. Corruption cases can be handled as: giving or taking bribes, fraud, breach of trust... and because of that, it is difficult to get specific statistics of corruption cases.



How do we supervise that the decisions of public officer's are lawful and just?

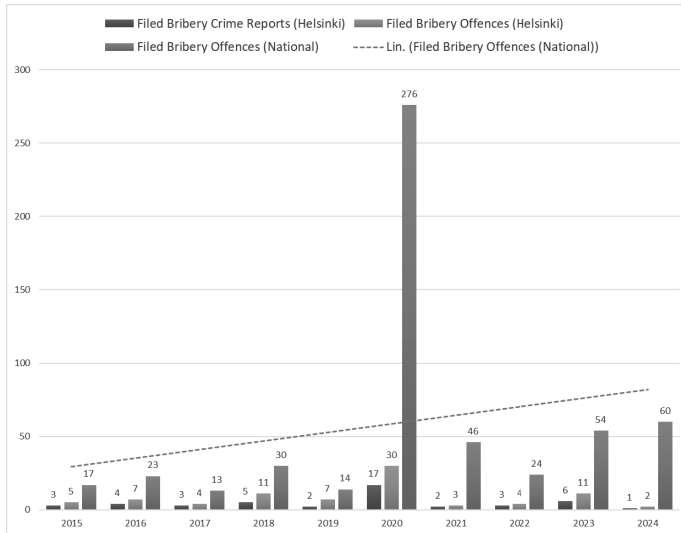
- We have two independent authorities who supervise legality in activities and actions of all public authorities. **Anyone** can file a complain to the Parliamentary Ombudsman or the Chancellor of Justice. They can also investigate matters by they own initiative or review penalty judgements. They serve as the supreme guardian of the law.

These authorities are independent from any political influence! They are independent authorities and are not working under any ministry.

There are, of course, also normal appeal measures for parties in their own cases.



Corruption Investigation Overview (20.8.2024)



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DETECTION OF CORRUPTION CASES

- Detection of corruption cases is very difficult, because parties obviously want to hide these cases.
- The main sources on how the cases come up are:
 - * Police has another investigation ongoing and they discover that there might be also a corruption case
 - * Anonymous report (to police or other authorities)
 - * Internal audit
 - * Tax audit
 - * Media



- Finland is improving on confidential corruption reporting channels: internal and external. The goal is to increase reports and detect corruption and other malpractices more effectively. We have also implemented EU's whistleblower protection directive.

[Whistleblower protection | Anti-corruption.fi](#)

[Centralised external reporting channel – the Office of the Chancellor of Justice | Chancellor of Justice](#)

- We do not yet have experiences about how well these new channels work and if this is helping us more effectively detect corruption.



Finnish investigation in general

- Compared to many other countries, the police has investigative power in Finland. But the police has to work in co-operation with the prosecution office.
- Most important cases are investigated by the police's National Bureau of Investigation. They also monitor the corruption phenomenon in Finland in general.



Police

- Opens the investigation, but has to inform prosecutor about the case. The police has to start an investigation if there is reason to believe that a crime has been done. Every investigation is assigned to a prosecutor.
- Police has the power to apply a judicial warrant (search and seizure) or imprisonment, but they have to inform the prosecutor about it. The decision of seizing and imprisonment are made by the court.
- After the investigation, the case is transferred to the prosecutor.
- Police can close the case only if it is clear that there is no crime, but if the matter needs evaluation of evidence, the decision must be made by the prosecutor.

SYSTEM IS BASED ON CO-OPERATION AND TRUST BETWEEN THE POLICE AND THE PROSECUTOR

Prosecutor

Takes part on the investigation in co-operation with the police.

Can ask for further investigation, when needed. This can be done during the investigation or after that. There is no time limit for this.

In the investigative phase, the prosecutor has power in some international co-operation issues (European arrest warrant and European investigation order, seizure in other European countries)

Decides if the charges are pressed or not



CASE STUDIES

Case Soap

Case Violin

Case Espoo



Case Soap

- Private sector bribery case
- About 80 cases have been in court.
- Bribes 50–30.000 EUR/per person
=360.000 e (1 euro is 1 dollar)
- The company that gave bribes went bankrupt and the administrator started to inspect the bookkeeping and noticed that there were a lot of purchases that didn't seem to belong to the company. The company sold detergents (soap, washing powder etc.) but they had also bought a lot of electronics and travel vouchers.
- Administrator reported the case to the police.

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Case Soap

- The police found out that the company offered electronics (televisions, smart watches...) or travel vouchers to the people that bought from them. These were usually sent to a person's private address, and the buying company did not know that these "presents" were being given. (Bribes)
- The presents were not normal subscriber bonuses. They were more valuable. Presents were given to the individual person who made the orders, not to the company who bought the products.
- The present's value was normally 10-30 % of the order's amount
- Court also considered the reason for these presents (intention).

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Case Soap

- Company's CEO (chief executive officer) was convicted on bribing in business, bookkeeping crime and tax fraud following 2 years and 6 months imprisonment.
- People who took the bribes were convicted on taking a bribe in business.

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Case Violin

- This case was revealed while investigating a human trafficking case.
- In Finland anyone can pick berries in any forest. It does not matter who owns the forest. Many people from Thailand come to Finland to pick these berries. They work for Finnish companies.
- The officer who took bribes, worked in the ministry of employment and the economy. He could influence on how many employees a company can have from Thailand. (There are some quotas for how many people can come to Finland = working visas)

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Case Violin

- The officer asked the CEO of one of the berry companies to buy an expensive violin that his son could use. His son is a good musician and plays the violin. The CEO bought the violin and the officer's son used it. They said that the berry company actually owns the violin, and the son only uses it. At some point the officer wanted to "upgrade" the violin and an even better one was bought. The value of the violin was 5.000 euros, and the upgrade cost 4.900 euros.

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Case Violin

- The officer and the CEO claimed that the berry company only **sponsored** the minor son's hobby, and it had nothing to do with influencing the officer's duties. **The court did not believe this.**
- Bribe can be given also to someone close to the officer.
- The officer was convicted for taking a bribe and breach of duties as an officer to a 1 year suspended sentence .The CEO was convicted to 8 months suspended sentence for giving a bribe. The company was sentenced to pay 50.000 euros as a corporate liability fine.

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Case Espoo

- This case was revealed by an officer who inspected the bills in Espoo city. Although the crime was able to go on for long time before anyone noticed it. The bill inspection process did not work as well as it should have.
- Mr N worked in an Espoo city owned establishment. N made construction deals with Mr X from a construction company. Mr N did not have the authority to do that. He could only make contracts up to 9.000 euros. Espoo city had a list of companies that should have been used. (public procurement process)
- Mr N's duty was to inspect the bills and then send them to his superiors for the final approval.

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Case Espoo

- The construction company overbilled Espoo city and the extra money went to bribes given to Mr N or his wife. Mr N knew that the bills were too high, but he still accepted them and sent them to his superiors to finally approve the bills.
- Mr N ordered different materials and services for his private use and the construction company paid the bills. There were also direct money transfers from the construction company to Mr N and his wife.
- The overbilled amount was 905.345 euros (based on what Mr X admitted).

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Case Espoo

- Mr N was convicted on aggravated taking on bribe and aggravated fraud for 4 years 4 months of imprisonment.
- Mr X was convicted on aggravated giving a bribe and aggravated fraud for 2 years 6 months of imprisonment. The sentence was mitigated because of his co-operation.

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Challenges in corruption cases

- * How to detect the cases?
- * Sometimes it is difficult to get convictions on corruption cases in Finland.
- *OECD report 2017: "The evidentiary threshold required to prove a briber's intent seems unreasonably high, appearing to require direct evidence of the defendant's knowledge of all aspects of the crime."



