Fake opinions? Stop!

* **Do you buy fake opinions? Do you commission other people to write them? You are breaking the law.**
* **The President of UOKiK issued new decisions against two businesses publishing fake opinions on products and services. The amount of fines totalled PLN 85 thous.**
* **Opinions were being issued on popular websites and were intended to enhance the reputation of a product or service.**

**[Warsaw, 30 July 2024]** “We observe the principle of objectivity, which means that our opinions seem as neutral as possible, so that the message they convey does not look like an advertisement,” that is the slogan used by **SeoSem24 – pozycjonowanie stron www, tworzenie stron www, agencja reklamowa – Łukasz Wudyka in Kraków** to advertise its services. On the other hand, **Best-Review Krzysztof Michalski in Leszno** used the following: “Remember that you do not have to wait for users to appreciate your work by posting positive opinions. You can have them even now. All you have to do is use our support (...).” Both businesses were selling opinions on the Internet. The President of UOKiK determined that they have misled consumers and issued decisions against them.

What raises concerns is the issuing of opinions on products and services on various websites, such as Google Maps, Tripadvisor, Dobry Mechanik, Ceneo.pl, Znany Lekarz, Wakacje.pl. The businesses did not use the services and goods offered by their trading partners, but wrote opinions about them nonetheless. They also offered to publish opinions prepared beforehand by their customers. Many consumers who use the opinions of other users before selecting products or services could have been misled, believing that they are dealing with real opinions.

“Reviews published by fined businesses posed as the opinions of actual customers. They were misleading, as they artificially boosted the seller’s reputation or the quality of a product or service. Meanwhile, the reputation and prestige of businesses should be based on true information and be moulded in the conditions of fair market competition. The publishing of fake opinions is to the detriment of both consumers and fair businesses that collect comments about their products in accordance with the law,” said Tomasz Chróstny, President of UOKiK.

The President of UOKiK determined that the two businesses mentioned above violated collective consumer interests and imposed fines on them. **Best–Review Krzysztof Michalski in Leszno is to pay PLN 35,000, whereas SeoSem24 – pozycjonowanie stron www, tworzenie stron www, agencja reklamowa – Łukasz Wudyka in Kraków – PLN 50,618** (and to publish information about the decision on its website and Facebook profile). Both businesses no longer offer the service of publishing fake reviews.The decisions are not final. Businesses may appeal against them before the court.

The President of UOKiK intervened in the matter of businesses publishing fake opinions in the past. Thus far, final decisions were issued against: [Agencja City Damian Trzciński in Poznań](https://archiwum.uokik.gov.pl/aktualnosci.php?news_id=19378), [Opinie.pro in Lubartów and SN Marketing in Kraków](https://archiwum.uokik.gov.pl/news.php?news_id=19144), [J&J Jakub Brożyna in Rzeszów](https://decyzje.uokik.gov.pl/bp/dec_prez.nsf/43104c28a7a1be23c1257eac006d8dd4/613e1deec0b0ab93c12589ff0036a4aa/%24FILE/Decyzja%20nr%20RPZ%202_2023%20z%2027.06.2023%20-%20%28%20J.%20Bro%C5%BCyna%20JJ%29%20-%20ZIK.pdf).

Investigations against Mastermarketing A&K LTD in London and Tomasz Ciuła Project Management in Nowy Sącz are also pending. They may lead to the imposition of a fine in the amount equal up to 10% of revenue generated by the business. The actions taken by UOKiK concern the posting of offers intended to:

* boost reach: add followers, increase the number of likes, views on Instagram (Mastermarketing A&K),
* publish fake opinions on products and services, provide fake followers, sell likes and views in Social Media, generate fake traffic on websites (Tomasz Ciuła Project Management).

An investigation is also pending against Energia dla Przyszłości in Warsaw, a company that deals in photovoltaics and heat pumps. The Consumer Protection Authority is verifying the rules of the competition available for individuals who published a high review for that company in social media.

Businesses need to remember that when they make the option of adding an opinion about products and services available on their website:

* they must verify whether these opinions are published by individuals who purchased their product or used their services;
* it is prohibited to artificially boost reviews and rankings by publishing paid-for opinions;
* it is necessary to post both positive and negative opinions. It is not allowed to remove negative opinions, if someone was actually not satisfied with the product/service.

The Omnibus Directive clarified issues related to consumer opinions. Each business that makes opinions available on its website must provide information on how their authenticity is verified, i.e. how it checks whether an opinion has been published by the person who had actually purchased a product or used a service. It must also provide information on whether it also publishes negative opinions. It is not permitted to suggest that consumer opinions are real if the business did not take specific actions to verify their authenticity beforehand.

**Consumer Support:**

Consumer helpline: 801 440 220 or 222 66 76 76
[Poradydlakonsumentow.pl](https://poradydlakonsumentow.pl/)
[Consumer Ombudsmen](https://uokik.gov.pl/pomoc.php) – in your town or district