

Workplace Investigations

Contributing Editors

Phil Linnard at Slaughter and May
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23. Should the investigation report be shared in full, or just the findings?

Hong Kong

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The employer is generally not obliged to share the investigation report or the findings with the employee under Hong Kong law, absent any express obligations under the employment contract.

However, according to the PDPO, the content of the investigation report or meeting minutes related to the employee (including any findings and opinions expressed in such documents) are likely to constitute the personal data of the employee under investigation. In that case, the employee may have a right under the PDPO to obtain a copy of such documents by making a statutory data access request after the workplace investigation is completed. The employer's obligation to comply with such request is subject to certain exemptions under Part 8 of the PDPO, which include (among others) an exemption on the provision of personal data held for the prevention, preclusion or remedying of unlawful or seriously improper conduct, and the disclosure of which would be likely to prejudice the said purpose or directly or indirectly identify the person who is the source of the data.^[1] Therefore, where there is a parallel criminal proceeding or investigation that has not been concluded, the employer may reject an employee's data access request on the basis that the requested disclosure may prejudice the prevention and remedy of the unlawful conduct. Further, any information protected by legal privilege is also exempt from disclosure under Part 8 of the PDPO.^[2]

If the requested documents also contain the personal data of any other third parties (such as other co-workers of the employee who have also participated in the investigation), the employer should always redact or erase such data before providing the requested documents to the employee under investigation, unless the relevant third parties have consented to the disclosure of the data.

^[1] PDPO sections 20 and 58(1)(d).

^[2] PDPO sections 20 and 60.

Italy

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There is no general obligation of the employee to share an investigation report with the employee: only if and when disciplinary action is brought against the employee, the latter must be informed precisely of the allegations (but, once again, without being entitled to review the investigation report). In court, employees may ask for an exhibition of documents, including the investigation report, if not already filed by the employer, to use in its defence (but such request is not necessarily automatically granted by the court, as certain requirements must be met).

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Switzerland

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In principle, there is no obligation to disclose the final investigation report. Disclosure obligations may arise based on data protection law vis-à-vis the persons concerned (eg, the accused). Likewise, there is no obligation to disclose other documents, such as the records of interviews. The employee should be fully informed of the final investigation report, if necessary, with certain redactions (see question 22). The right of the employee concerned to information is comprehensive (ie, all investigation files must be disclosed to him).^[1] Regarding publication to other bodies outside of criminal proceedings, the employer is bound by its duty of care (article 328, Swiss Code of Obligations) and must protect the employee as far as is possible and reasonable.^[2]

^[1] Nicolas Facincani/Reto Sutter, *Interne Untersuchungen: Rechte und Pflichten von Arbeitgebern und Angestellten*, in: HR Today, to be found on: <Interne Untersuchungen: Rechte und Pflichten von Arbeitgebern und Angestellten | hrtoday.ch> (last visited on 27 June 2022).

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