

# Workplace Investigations

## Contributing Editors

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## 01. What legislation, guidance and/or policies govern a workplace investigation?

### Ireland

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In Ireland, employees have a constitutional right and an implied contractual right to natural justice and fair procedures. If a workplace investigation is not conducted in accordance with these principles, an employee may allege that the investigation is fundamentally flawed. If such an allegation is made then an employee may seek recourse from the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) or potentially the High Court. The WRC is the body in Ireland tasked with dealing with employment law-related claims, including unfair dismissal.

The constitutional rights that employees enjoy were specified in the Supreme Court case of *Re Haughey* in 1971. That case held that where proceedings may harm the reputation of a person, public bodies must afford certain basic protections of constitutional justice to a witness appearing before it. It further stated that article 40.3 of the Irish Constitution is a guarantee to the citizen of basic fairness of procedures. These protections, known as “*Re Haughey rights*” are implied in each contract of employment.

A Code of Practice was introduced in 2000, namely S.I. No. 146/2000 - Industrial Relations Act, 1990 (Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures) (Declaration) Order, 2000 (the Code). The Code set out the procedures for dealing with grievances or disciplinary matters, which must comply with the general principles of natural justice and fair procedures and include:

- that employee grievances are fairly examined and processed;
- that details of any allegations or complaints are put to the employee concerned;
- that the employee concerned is allowed to respond fully to any such allegations or complaints;
- that the employee concerned is given the opportunity to avail of the right to be represented during the procedure; and
- that the employee concerned has the right to a fair and impartial determination of the issues concerned, taking into account any representations made by, or on behalf of, the employee and any other relevant or appropriate evidence, factors or circumstances.

Further Codes of Practice on the prevention and resolution of bullying at work and on dealing with sexual harassment and harassment at work were published in 2021 and 2022, respectively. The provisions of these codes are admissible in evidence before a court, the WRC and the Labour Court.

In addition to the above, the Data Protection Commission published Data Protection in the Workplace: Employer Guidance in April 2023.

All employers should have specific and up-to-date policies dealing with how workplace investigations will be carried out that are suitable for their organisation. These policies may vary, depending on the subject of the investigation and the size and type of employer. However, all should adhere to the principles identified above to ensure that a robust policy is in place and can be utilised.

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## Netherlands

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Dutch employment law does not provide for a timeframe within which an internal investigation must be launched. However, it is important for an employer who suspects abuse or irregularities, to start an internal investigation without delay. In essence, that means that as soon as management, or – depending on the specific circumstances – the person who is authorised to decide on disciplinary sanctions against a certain employee, becomes aware of a potential abuse or irregularity, all measures to initiate an internal investigation should be taken promptly. If this is not done, the employer may lose the opportunity to take certain disciplinary actions.

The legal framework relating to an investigation by an employer into the acts and omissions of an employee are determined by, among other things, section 7:611 of the Dutch Civil Code (DCC) that stipulates good employer practices; Section 7:660 DCC (right to give instructions to the employee); the European Convention on Human Rights; the Dutch Constitution; the General Data Processing Regulation; and, if the employer uses a private investigation agency, the Private Security Organisations and Detective Agencies Act and the Privacy Code of Conduct for Private Investigation Agencies.

The legal basis from which the employer derives the authority to investigate can be based on the employer's right to give instructions (section 7:660 DCC). Pursuant to this section, the employer has – to a certain extent – the right to give instructions to the employee “which are intended to promote good order in the undertaking of the employer”. In many cases, an investigation of a work-related incident will aim to promote good order within the company. As such, the investigation is trying to:

- find the truth;
- sanction the perpetrator; and
- prevent repetition.

Instructing an employee to cooperate with an internal investigation falls within the scope of the right to instruct.

Subsequently, the employer must behave as a good employer during the investigation, pursuant to section 7:611 DCC. This is coloured by the classic principles of careful investigation: the principle of justification, the principle of trust, the principle of proportionality, the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of equality. Furthermore, the principle of hearing both sides of the argument applies and there must be a concrete suspicion of wrongdoing.

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## Philippines

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There are essentially two phases in a workplace investigation: the fact-finding phase and the administrative proceeding.

The fact-finding phase of workplace investigations is usually governed by the internal policies of the employer, save for investigations relating to gender-based sexual harassment in the workplace. Republic Act No. 11313, otherwise known as the Safe Spaces Act, sets the parameters for these kinds of investigations.

Philippine case law recognises the right of an employer to conduct investigations for other acts of misconduct in the workplace in the exercise of its management prerogative. The Supreme Court has held that it is an employer's right to investigate acts of wrongdoing by employees, and employees involved in such investigations cannot simply claim that employers are out to get them.

After the fact-finding aspect of the investigation, if the employer decides it has sufficient grounds to proceed to full-blown administrative proceedings, it needs to comply with the due process requirements outlined under the Philippine Labor Code. These requirements are:

- a first notice, or notice to explain, informing the employee of the charges against him or her;
- an opportunity for the employee to be heard; and
- a final notice on the outcome of the administrative action.

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## Switzerland

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There is no specific legal regulation for internal investigations in Switzerland. The legal framework is derived from general rules such as the employer's duty of care, the employee's duty of loyalty and the employee's data protection rights. Depending on the context of the investigation, additional legal provisions may apply; for instance, additional provisions of the Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection or the Swiss Criminal Code.

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## 02. How is a workplace investigation usually commenced?



## Ireland

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Investigations can start in multiple ways. They usually stem from an employee raising a grievance, a bullying complaint, or a possible protected disclosure. Investigations may also stem from the employer in a disciplinary context, or indeed can be commenced if an external complaint or issue is raised by a third party of the organisation.

The first thing the employer must consider is whether an investigation is necessary. It may be that the issue at hand can be resolved informally or is of such a nature that it cannot be investigated, either through a lack of detail or simply because the subject of the complaint is no longer an employee. Any such decision to investigate or not should be carefully documented.

The next step to determine is the nature of the investigation. It should be clear at the outset whether the investigation is simply a fact-gathering exercise or if the investigator will be tasked with making findings on the evidence. The distinction is significant as a fact-gathering investigation can proceed without prompting the full panoply of rights, but the basic principles of fairness should still be applied. A fact-gathering investigation should determine whether there is or is not, a case to answer. If a disciplinary hearing follows then the rights outlined in question 1 will apply at that stage. If it is a fact-finding investigation, the rights apply from the outset of the process. The employee who is required to respond to the issues (the respondent) should be fully aware of the extent of the investigation. The investigator appointed to do the investigation should be clear about what is expected of them.

If the employer believes an investigation is necessary, it should be acknowledged and started without delay. In particular, according to the Protected Disclosures legislation, a report should be acknowledged within seven days.

An employer should consider and identify the scope of the investigation and establish who will investigate the matter. Terms of reference under which the investigation will be carried out should be established by the employer and shared with the employee raising the issue (the complainant). An employer should not seek agreement on the terms, but invite commentary to ensure that the full scope of the investigation is captured within the terms of reference. Robust terms of reference that lay down the clear parameters of the investigation will assist the investigator and all parties involved in the process.

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## Netherlands

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The workplace investigation can be exercised by an internal (ad hoc) investigation department of the company itself, for example under the direction of the internal audit department or compliance department. This is possible if there is sufficient manpower with the necessary independence, knowledge and experience. Case law, however, shows that courts tend to be more critical of internal investigations than external investigations. For more complex and sensitive investigations, a forensic accountant or lawyer is often involved. The advantage of involving a lawyer is that the investigation and its outcome are covered by privilege. This guarantees the confidentiality of the investigation, also regarding supervisors and investigating authorities. Yet, at the same time, there is increasing debate about the role of lawyers as investigators, given their inherent bias to work in the interests of their client (the employer).

The investigation starts with a plan of approach that must be signed by the contractor. This plan of approach outlines the legal framework of the investigation, such as the scope, the means to be used, how it will deal with data, the use of experts, how the interviews will be conducted, the way of reporting and confidentiality. Furthermore, there must be a protocol for how the investigator conducts the investigation and that applies to all parties involved.

Gathering information can be done in various ways. For example:

- An inventory can be made of the household effects of a company. In the event of theft, an inventory can be an appropriate means of establishing exactly what has been stolen.
- An investigation of the books: this is an investigation of all documents of the company. These are not private documents of employees, but documents of the company itself. For an investigator, an interview can be a good way to gather more information, for example by interviewing witnesses. In practice, there are almost always several interviews with the suspects, the employer and other people involved.
- Open source research, which often involves researching a person's social media, or public documents relevant to the research. In principle, "open sources" refers to all public documents in the world; nowadays, many public documents are digitised.
- A workplace search, which includes everything present in the workplace: diaries, computer files, e-

mails, letters, and even the contents of a wastebasket.

- A digital data investigation: this is a frequently used tool in fraud investigations. Most communication and documents are digital nowadays. It is, therefore, very likely that evidence can be found in digital data. Each of these means of investigation must respect the principles of an internal investigation and comply with the GDPR principles .

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## Philippines

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Workplace investigations are normally commenced either through a complaint filed by other employees in the workplace or by HR or other representatives of management.

Under the Safe Spaces Act, employers are required to commence an investigation and decide on complaints regarding gender-based sexual harassment, within ten days of the complaint being brought to their attention. For other workplace misconduct, management is given wide discretion regarding the means and method by which the workplace investigation may be carried out.

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## Switzerland

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Internal investigations are usually initiated after reports about possible violations of the employer's code of conduct, applicable laws or regulations have been submitted by employees to their superiors, the human resources department or designated internal reporting systems such as hotlines (including whistleblowing hotlines).

For an internal investigation to be initiated, there must be a reasonable suspicion (grounds).<sup>[1]</sup> If no such grounds exist, the employer must ask the informant for further or more specific information. If no grounds for reasonable suspicion exist, the case must be closed. If grounds for reasonable suspicion exist, the appropriate investigative steps can be initiated by a formal investigation request from the company management.<sup>[2]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Claudia Fritsche, *Interne Untersuchungen in der Schweiz: Ein Handbuch für regulierte Finanzinstitute und andere Unternehmen*, Zürich/St. Gallen 2013, p. 21.

<sup>[2]</sup> Klaus Moosmayer, *Compliance, Praxisleitfaden für Unternehmen*, 2. A. München 2015, N 314.

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### **03. Can an employee be suspended during a workplace investigation? Are there any conditions on suspension (eg, pay, duration)?**

## Ireland

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Workplace suspensions in Ireland are a contentious issue and can result in an employer defending injunction proceedings in the High Court before an investigation has started.

In the case of *Governor and Company of the Bank of Ireland v Reilly*, the judge stated: "The suspension of an employee, whether paid or unpaid, is an extremely serious measure which can cause irreparable damage to his or her reputation and standing."

In the 2023 case of *O'Sullivan v HSE*, the Supreme Court held that the Health Service Executive acted fairly and reasonably as an employer in suspending a consultant doctor after he had performed experiments on patients without their consent. This ruling overturned the Court of Appeal's earlier decision that previously found the suspension to be unlawful, as the consultant did not represent an immediate threat to the health of patients.

The Supreme Court considered whether the employer's decision to place the consultant on administrative leave met the test set out in the English case of *Braganza v BP Shipping Limited & Anor*. In that case, the court held that the decisionmaker's discretion would be limited "by concepts of good faith, honesty and genuineness and the need for absence of arbitrariness, capriciousness, perversity and irrationality."

In relying on the principles set out in the *Braganza* case, the Irish courts have reinforced the right of a decision-maker in an employment context to have discretionary power when implementing a suspension and that any decision to do so must be made honestly and in good faith. Employers should obtain legal advice when considering whether to suspend an employee in any circumstance.

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## Netherlands

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Suspension is usually a disciplinary measure. The employer may, for example, suspend an employee if it is necessary that the employee doesn't work during the investigation into their actions or omissions. Suspension has no specific legal basis in Dutch law, but several conditions can be derived from case law or collective labour agreements.

### Overriding interest

The measure may only be taken if the employee's presence at work would cause considerable harm to the employer's business or if, due to other compelling reasons that do not outweigh the employee's interests, the employer cannot reasonably be expected to tolerate the employee's continued presence at work. If there is a well-founded fear that the employee will (among other things) frustrate the investigation into their actions, the employer may proceed to suspend the employee.

### Procedural rules

The principle of acting in line with good employment practice (section 7:611 DCC) plays an essential role in the question of the admissibility of the suspension. The principle of due care leads, among other things, to a duty of investigation for the employer and means the employer must enable the employee to respond adequately to any accusations.

### Contractual arrangements

Many collective agreements or staff handbooks contain regulations on suspension and deactivation. The

regulation may concern the grounds, the duration or the procedure to be followed. The latter includes rules on hearing both sides of the argument, the right to assistance, how the decision must be communicated to the person concerned, and the possibility of “internal appeal” and rehabilitation. Under good employment practice, the employer must proceed swiftly with the investigation and allow the employee to respond to the results. If the employee hinders the investigation in any way, it can be a reason to continue the suspension during the investigation.

#### Pay

In 2003, the Supreme Court ruled that suspension is a cause for non-performance of work that must reasonably be borne by the employer according to section 7:628 DCC. The employee has a right to be paid in nearly all circumstances, with limited exceptions (eg, if the employee is in detention and the employer suspended the employee in response to that).

#### Duration

The duration of the suspension during a workplace investigation is not legally pre-determined. However, the suspension of an employee must be a temporary measure. The relevant collective agreement often stipulates how long the suspension may last.

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## Philippines

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A preventive suspension pending investigation is allowed under the law, provided that the continued employment of the subject of the investigation poses a serious and imminent threat to the life or property of the employer or other employees. Additionally, the period of preventive suspension pending investigation should not last longer than 30 days. However, should the employer wish to extend this period, the employer must pay the employee's wages and other benefits. The employee is under no obligation to reimburse the amount paid to them during the extension if the employer should, later on, decide to dismiss the employee after the completion of the process.

In practice, the notice of preventive suspension is issued simultaneously with the first notice or the notice to explain after the employer has conducted its fact-finding investigation and has reason to believe that the employee must be held accountable for his or her actions.

Since placing an employee under preventive suspension requires the existence of a serious and imminent threat to the life or property of the employer or other employees, some employers opt to place the employee or employees involved on agreed paid leave. This will allow the employer to conduct an unhampered workplace investigation while the investigated employee is still able to receive his or her full salary during this period. The exact period of paid leave may be agreed upon by the employer and the employee, but ideally it should not last for more than thirty days.

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## Switzerland

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It is possible to suspend an employee during a workplace investigation.<sup>[1]</sup> While there are no limits on duration, the employee will remain entitled to full pay during this time.

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## 04. Who should conduct a workplace investigation, are there minimum qualifications or criteria that need to be met?



### Ireland

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An investigator does not have to hold any minimum qualifications. More often than not it is an employee's manager or HR manager who is carrying out the investigation. Crucially, the person carrying out the investigation must not be involved in the complaint, as an argument of bias could be made before the investigation begins. The investigator should also be of suitable seniority to the respondent and have the necessary skills and experience to carry out an investigation. If a recommendation by the investigator is made to progress the matter to a disciplinary process, which may in turn be the subject of the appeal, there should be adequate, neutral personnel within the organisation to deal with each stage. Again if the investigator and the disciplinary decisionmaker are the same person, an argument of bias will be made that will usually lead to a breach of fair procedures and any decision being unsustainable. Frequently, employers outsource the investigation to an external third party as there may simply not be adequate personnel within the organisation to carry out the process. Employers should ensure that within their policies the right to appoint an internal or external investigator is reserved.

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Workplace investigations, if they are to be of value, must be conducted by an expert, professional and independent party. To safeguard the independence of the investigation, it is crucial that neither the contractor nor any other third party can influence how the investigation is to be conducted or how the outcome should be reported. The investigation must be conducted according to the protocol drawn up at the start and the investigator must not be involved in the follow-up to the outcome.

There is an ongoing discussion of whether lawyers can conduct an objective and independent investigation, due to the bias inherent to their profession. On the other hand, investigation bureaus or committees are also not necessarily independent, as they are not regulated and not subject to disciplinary law.

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### Philippines



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Under the Safe Spaces Act, an employer should create an independent internal mechanism or a committee on decorum and investigation to investigate and address complaints of gender-based sexual harassment, which should:

- adequately represent the management, the employees from the supervisory rank, the rank-and-file employees, and the union, if any;
- designate a woman as its head and no less than half of its members should be women;
- be composed of members who are impartial and not connected or related to the alleged perpetrator;
- investigate and decide on the complaints within 10 days or less upon receipt thereof;
- observe due process;
- protect the complainant from retaliation; and
- guarantee confidentiality to the greatest extent possible.

For other types of offences, it is the prerogative of management as to who will conduct the investigation and how it will be conducted, provided the proceedings remain impartial.

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## Switzerland

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The examinations can be carried out internally by designated internal employees, by external specialists, or by a combination thereof. The addition of external advisors is particularly recommended if the allegations are against an employee of a high hierarchical level<sup>[1]</sup>, if the allegations concerned are quite substantive and, in any case, where an increased degree of independence is sought.

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<sup>[1]</sup> David Rosenthal et al., *Praxishandbuch für interne Untersuchungen und eDiscovery*, Release 1.01, Zürich/Bern 2021, p. 18.

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## 05. Can the employee under investigation bring legal action to stop the investigation?



## Ireland

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Arguably yes, but it is the exception rather than the rule and it will depend upon the circumstances of the case. Generally, courts would be slow to intervene in ongoing workplace investigations. However, an employee may seek injunctive relief to prevent an investigation if they can show that the investigation is being conducted in breach of a policy or breach of fair procedures to such an extent that there is no reasonable prospect that the investigation's outcome(s) could be sustainable.

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Usually there is some kind of regulation in place as a result of which the employee is obliged to cooperate with the investigation. Nonetheless, there are examples whereby the employee refuses to cooperate. Especially in workplace investigations it will be hard to be able to conduct an investigation in such a situation.

There are, however, no possibilities for an employee to bring legal action in order or with the result to stop the investigation.

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## Philippines

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There is generally no legal remedy for an employee to stop a workplace investigation as it is the prerogative of management to conduct it. Nevertheless, if the employee alleges violation of any specific law or contractual provision in the conduct of the investigation, the employee may be able to seek judicial relief for violation of the law or contract, and ask for interim relief.

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## Switzerland

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The accused could theoretically request a court to stop the investigation, for instance, by arguing that there is no reason for the investigation and that the investigation infringes the employee's personality rights. However, if the employer can prove that there were grounds for reasonable suspicion and is conducting the investigation properly, it is unlikely that such a request would be successful.

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## **06. Can co-workers be compelled to act as witnesses? What legal protections do employees have when acting as witnesses in an investigation?**

### Ireland

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Yes, but a qualified yes. To deny an employee who is the respondent to the complaint the right to cross-examine the complainant during a workplace investigation may amount to a breach of fair procedures. This

does not mean in practice that a complainant or witness will have to physically or virtually attend a meeting to be subjected to cross-examination. What usually happens, in practice, is that specific questions of the respondent are put to the witness by the investigator for them to respond. On occasion and depending on the circumstances, the witnesses may respond in writing.

Generally, if witnesses do not wish to participate in workplace investigations and they are not the witnesses from whom the complaint originated, there is little that can be done. An employee may not want to be seen as going against a colleague, which impacts the wider issue of staff morale. An employer cannot force them to participate. Also an employee who is the respondent should be careful about seeking to compel witnesses to attend. While the respondent may request support from a colleague to act as a witness, that colleague may view things differently, which can lead to further issues.

In any event, employees cannot be victimised or suffer any adverse treatment for having acted as a witness.

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## Netherlands

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There is no statutory regime for employee witnesses in internal (workplace) investigations and, hence, no specific statutory regime for legal protection. However, as part of the idea that employees have to act in line with good employment practices (section 7:611 DCC), employees, who potentially acquired knowledge in a work-related context on the subject matter of an investigation, are typically required vis-à-vis their employer to participate in such internal investigations. The required degree of cooperation will depend on the type and nature of the investigation and the matter that is being investigated. The principle of “good employment practices” in turn requires the employer to be guided by proportionality and subsidiarity considerations: which information is relevant to the investigation and what is the least burdensome means of collecting such information?

This may also impact the degree to which an employer can involve employee witnesses in an investigation. Increased prudence should be observed, among other things, if the relevant employee witnesses may themselves become implicated in the investigation or when the employer envisages sharing certain investigative findings with regulatory or criminal authorities, for instance as part of cooperation arrangements in an ongoing investigation. In such cases, the relevant employee should at least be allowed to retain legal counsel before continuing interview procedures.

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## Philippines

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Neither the employer nor the employee subject of the investigation can compel co-workers to act as a witness. There is no specific law for whistleblowers or employees who act as witnesses during an investigation. Nevertheless, the employer can have its own whistleblower policy.

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## Switzerland

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Due to the employee's duty of loyalty towards the employer and the employer's right to give instructions to its employees, employees generally must take part in an ongoing investigation and comply with any summons for questioning if the employer demands this (article 321d, Swiss Code of Obligations). If the employees refuse to participate, they generally are in breach of their statutory duties, which may lead to measures such as a termination of employment.

The question of whether employees may refuse to testify if they would have to incriminate themselves is disputed in legal doctrine.<sup>[1]</sup> However, according to legal doctrine, a right to refuse to testify exists if criminal conduct regarding the questioned employee or a relative (article 168 et seq, Swiss Criminal Procedure Code) is involved, and it cannot be ruled out that the investigation documentation may later end up with the prosecuting authorities (ie, where employees have a right to refuse to testify in criminal proceedings, they cannot be forced to incriminate themselves by answering questions in an internal investigation).<sup>[2]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Nicolas Facincani/Reto Sutter, *Interne Untersuchungen: Rechte und Pflichten von Arbeitgebern und Angestellten*, published on [hrtoday.ch](https://hrtoday.ch), last visited on 17 June 2022.

<sup>[2]</sup> Same opinion: Nicolas Facincani/Reto Sutter, *Interne Untersuchungen: Rechte und Pflichten von Arbeitgebern und Angestellten*, published on [hrtoday.ch](https://hrtoday.ch), last visited on 17 June 2022.

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## 07. What data protection or other regulations apply when gathering physical evidence?



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Under the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), personal data must be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject. The Data Protection Commission published *Data Protection in the Workplace: Employer Guidance* in April 2023, which is a useful guide.

Employers should exercise caution when gathering physical evidence that may involve the use of CCTV or other surveillance practices. The Irish Court of Appeal in the case of *Doolin v DPC* examined the use by an employer of CCTV footage for disciplinary purposes and found such use constituted unlawful further processing. The original reason for processing the CCTV footage was to establish who was responsible for terrorist-related graffiti that was carved into a table in the staff tearoom. It subsequently transpired Mr Doolin, who was in no way connected to the graffiti incident, had accessed the tearoom for unauthorised breaks and a workplace investigation followed. The original reason for viewing the CCTV related to security, but further use of the CCTV footage in the disciplinary investigation was not related to the original reason. This case confirms that employers must have clear policies in place in compliance with both GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 specifying the purpose for which CCTV or any other monitoring system is being used. Not only that, but these policies must be communicated to employees specifying the use of such practices.

It is not only data about the investigation that must be processed fairly, but any retention of the data, which can only be further processed with good reason. It is a legitimate business reason to retain data to

deal with any subsequent requests or appeals under various internal or statutory processes, provided employees have been advised of the relevant retention period.

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## Netherlands

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Dutch data protection rules are based on the EU Data Protection Directive. The employer has to notify the Dutch Data Protection Authority when processing personal data as part of an internal investigation. Given that the notification can be accessed publicly, it is recommended that the employer give a sufficiently high-level description of the case. In addition, the description should be sufficiently broad to include the entire investigation, and any future expansions of the scope of the investigation. Often companies make filings for all future internal investigations, without referring to specific matters.

The employer has to notify employees whose personal data is being processed about – among other things – the purposes of the investigation and any other relevant information. According to the Dutch Data Protection Act, this information obligation may only be suspended on restricted grounds, i.e. if the purpose of the investigation is the prevention, detection and prosecution of crimes and postponement is necessary for the interests of the investigation (e.g., because there is a risk of losing evidence, or collusion by individuals coordinating responses before being interviewed)). These exceptions on the duty to inform involved persons must be interpreted very restrictively. As soon as the reason for postponement is no longer applicable (e.g., because the evidence has been secured), the individuals need to be informed.

Dutch data protection law does not require the consent of employees. Consent given by employees, however, also cannot compensate for a lack of legitimate purpose or unnecessary or disproportionate data processing, as the consent given by an employee to its employer is not considered to be voluntary given the inequality of power between them.

Furthermore, internal company policies may contain specific data protection rules.

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## Philippines

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The procedure for gathering physical evidence is governed primarily by company policy. Nevertheless, the Data Privacy Act of the Philippines protects all data subjects from unlawful processing of their personal information without consent.

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## Switzerland

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The Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection applies to the gathering of evidence, in particular such collection must be lawful, transparent, reasonable and in good faith, and data security must be preserved.[\[1\]](#)

It can be derived from the duty to [disclose and hand over benefits received and work produced](#) (article 321b, Swiss Code of Obligations) as they belong to the employer.<sup>[2]</sup> The employer is, therefore, generally entitled to collect and process data connected with the end product of any work completely by an employee and associated with their business. However, it is prohibited by the Swiss Criminal Code to open a sealed document or consignment to gain knowledge of its contents without being authorised to do so (article 179 et seq, Swiss Criminal Code). Anyone who disseminates or makes use of information of which he or she has obtained knowledge by opening a sealed document or mailing not intended for him or her may become criminally liable (article 179 paragraph 1, Swiss Criminal Code).

It is advisable to state in internal regulations that the workplace might be searched as part of an internal investigation and in compliance with all applicable data protection rules if this is necessary as part of the investigation.

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[1] Simona Wantz/Sara Licci, Arbeitsvertragliche Rechte und Pflichten bei internen Untersuchungen, in: Jusletter 18 February 2019, N 52.

[2] Claudia Fritsche, Interne Untersuchungen in der Schweiz, Ein Handbuch für Unternehmen mit besonderem Fokus auf Finanzinstitute, p. 148.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 08. Can the employer search employees' possessions or files as part of an investigation?



### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

The first consideration here is what constitutes "employees' possessions". More often than not, employees will be using employer property and there should be clear policies in place that specify company property.

The difficulty arises if an employee is using personal equipment such as a mobile phone for work purposes. While there may be specific applications dealing with work-related matters that are accessible by the employer remotely, some applications may be device-specific and that is where issues may arise. In such instances, it is not unreasonable to ask the employee to provide such information or consent to a search of their personal property. However, this is the exception rather than the rule and all other legitimate avenues of obtaining such information should be explored first. Further, such requests for information should not be a fishing expedition as an employee has a reasonable expectation of privacy at work, which must be balanced against the rights of the employer to run their business and protect the interests of their organisation.

A search of physical items such as a desk or drawers should only be conducted in exceptional circumstances, even where there is a clear, legitimate justification to search and the employee should be present at the search.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



### Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*

When conducting an internal investigation (which must have a legitimate purpose), the employer must act in accordance with the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity. In line with these principles, the means of collecting and processing personal data during an internal investigation as well as the data that is searched, collected or processed, should be adequate, relevant and not excessive given the purposes for which the data is being collected or subsequently processed. These principles can be complied with by, for example, using specific search terms when searching electronic data, limiting the investigation's scope (subject matter, period, geographic locations) and, in principle, excluding an employee's private data.

The employer is, in principle, allowed to access documents, emails and internet connection history saved on computers that were provided to the employees to perform their duties, provided the requirements of proportionality and subsidiarity are taken into account. In other words, reading the employee's emails or searching electronic devices provided by the employer must serve a legitimate purpose (e.g. tracing suspected irregularities or abuse) and the manner of review or collecting and processing the data contained in such emails should be in accordance with the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity.

The employer can ask the employee to hand over an employee's USB stick for an investigation. Depending on company policies and (individual or collective) employment agreements, an employee is, in principle, not obliged to comply with such a request. A refusal from an employee, when there is a strong indication that this USB stick contains information that is relevant to an investigation into possible irregularities, may be to the disadvantage of an employee, for example in a dismissal case.

The following factors, which derive from the *Bărbulescu* judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, are relevant to the question of whether an employee's e-mail or internet use can be monitored:

- whether the employee has been informed in advance of (the nature of) the possible monitoring of correspondence and other communications by the employer;
- the extent of the monitoring and the seriousness of the intrusion into the employee's privacy;
- whether the employer has put forward legitimate grounds for justifying the monitoring;
- whether a monitoring system using less intrusive methods and measures would have been possible;
- the consequences of the monitoring for the employee; and
- whether the employee has been afforded adequate safeguards, in particular in the case of intrusive forms of monitoring.

These requirements can sometimes create a barrier for employers, as seen in a ruling by the District Court Midden-Nederland (16 December 2021, ECLI:NL:RBMNE:2021:6071) in which the employer had used information obtained from the employee's e-mail as the basis for a request for termination of the employment contract. In the proceedings, the employee argued that his employer did not have the authority to search his e-mail.

According to the District Court, it was unclear whether the employer had complied with the requirements of *Bărbulescu* regarding searching the employee's e-mail. The regulations submitted by the employer only described the processing of data flows within the organisation in general. Therefore, the District Court found that the employer did not have a (sufficient) e-mail and internet protocol and the employee was not properly informed that his employer could monitor him. In addition, according to the District Court, it was unclear what exactly prompted the employer to search the employee's e-mail, as the employer did not provide any insight into the nature and content of the investigation. As a result, the District Court was unable to determine whether the employer had legitimate grounds to search the employee's e-mail. On this basis, the District Court disregarded the (possibly) illegally obtained evidence and ruled against the employer's termination request.

Last updated on 27/11/2023



Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*

at Villaraza & Angangco

Subject to the employees' reasonable expectation of privacy, gathering physical evidence within the premises of the workplace and through company-issued property has been upheld to be legally permissible in pursuit of the employer's right to conduct work-related investigations. The search, however, should be limited to the alleged acts complained of and must not be used as a fishing expedition to find incriminating information about the erring employee.

Last updated on 26/01/2023

## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

The basic rule is that the employer may not search private data during internal investigations.

If there is a strong suspicion of criminal conduct on the part of the employee and a sufficiently strong justification exists, a search of private data may be justified.<sup>[1]</sup> The factual connection with the employment relationship is given, for example, in the case of a criminal act committed during working hours or using workplace infrastructure.<sup>[2]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Claudia Fritsche, *Interne Untersuchungen in der Schweiz: Ein Handbuch für regulierte Finanzinstitute und andere Unternehmen*, Zürich/St. Gallen 2013, p. 168.

<sup>[2]</sup> Claudia Fritsche, *Interne Untersuchungen in der Schweiz: Ein Handbuch für regulierte Finanzinstitute und andere Unternehmen*, Zürich/St. Gallen 2013, p. 168 et seq.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 09. What additional considerations apply when the investigation involves whistleblowing?

### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

Most whistleblowing policies will include a section that provides for an initial assessment of the complaint as to whether it meets the definition of a protected disclosure. This assessment, which ought to be carried out by a designated person who has been appointed to deal with disclosures, is a useful tool as some matters which may be labelled as whistleblowing may fall under the grievance procedure.

Where there are grounds, an investigation will be commenced. Under the Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022, whistleblowers are protected from penalisation for having made a protected disclosure, under the Act.

Penalisation may include; suspension, lay-off or dismissal; demotion, loss of opportunity for promotion or withholding of promotion; transfer of duties, change of location or place of work; reduction in wages or change in working hours; the imposition or administering of any discipline, reprimand or other penalty (including a financial penalty); coercion, intimidation, harassment or ostracism; or discrimination,



disadvantage or unfair treatment.

If an employee (which includes trainees, volunteers, and job applicants) alleges that they have suffered penalisation as a result of making a protected disclosure, they may apply to the Circuit Court for interim relief within 21 days of the date of the last act of penalisation by the employer.

A claim for penalisation may also be brought before the WRC within six months of the alleged act of penalisation. If an employee alleges that they were dismissed for having made a protected disclosure, the potential award that the WRC can make increases from the usual unfair dismissal cap of two years' pay to up to five years' gross pay, based on actual loss.

Where a complaint of whistleblowing is made, employers should ensure that they appoint investigators with the appropriate knowledge and expertise to deal with such a matter and comply with the time limits set by legislation.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

## Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
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The former Act on the House for Whistleblowers already provided for several preconditions that a whistleblowing procedure must meet. For example, internal reporting lines must be laid down, as well as how the internal report is handled, and an obligation of confidentiality and the opportunity to consult an advisor in confidence must be applied. Employers are obliged to share the whistleblowing policy with employees, including information about the employee's legal protection. The employee who reports a suspicion of wrongdoing in good faith may not be disadvantaged in their legal position because of the report (section 17e/ea Act House of Whistleblowers).

The starting point is that an employee must first report internally, unless this cannot reasonably be expected. If the employee does not report internally first, the House for Whistleblowers does not initiate an investigation. The House for Whistleblowers was established on 1 July 2016 and has two main tasks: advising employees on the steps to take and conducting an investigation in response to a report.

The Act on the Protection of Whistleblowers, which entered into force in 2023, introduced several changes, of which the most relevant are:

- Abolition of mandatory internal reporting: the obligation to report internally first is abolished. Direct external reporting is allowed, such as to the House for Whistleblowers or another competent authority. When reporting externally, the reporter retains his protection. However, reporting internally first remains preferable and will be encouraged by the employer as much as possible.
- Expansion of prohibition on detriment: the prohibition on detriment already included prejudicing the legal position of the reporter, such as suspension, dismissal, demotion, withholding of promotion, reduction of salary or change of work location. It now also includes all forms of disadvantage, such as being blacklisted, refusing to give a reference, bullying, intimidation and exclusion.
- Stricter time limit requirements for internal reporting: the reporter must receive an acknowledgement of receipt of the report within seven days and the reporter must receive information from the employer on the assessment of their report within a reasonable period, not exceeding three months.
- Extension of the circle of protected persons: not just employees, but third parties who are in a working relationship with the employer are now also protected, such as freelancers, interns, volunteers, suppliers, shareholders, job applicants and involved family members and colleagues.

Last updated on 27/11/2023

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
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Since there is no specific law that governs whistleblowing, matters that involve whistleblowing will be governed by company policy.

Last updated on 26/01/2023

## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

If an employee complains to his or her superiors about grievances or misconduct in the workplace and is subsequently dismissed, this may constitute an unlawful termination (article 336, Swiss Code of Obligations). However, the prerequisite for this is that the employee behaves in good faith, which is not the case if he or she is (partly) responsible for the grievance.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 10. What confidentiality obligations apply during an investigation?

### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

This will depend on the nature of the investigation but, generally, investigations should be conducted on a confidential basis. All who participate in the investigation should be informed and reminded that confidentiality is a paramount consideration taken very seriously. However, it should be borne in mind that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed by an employer as the respondent in an investigation is entitled to know who has made complaints against them. Furthermore, the respondent is entitled to cross-examine the complainant and any witnesses, although in practice this right is rarely invoked strictly and is facilitated by the investigator, with questions from the respondent being put to the complainant and other witnesses.

On occasion, a breach of confidentiality may warrant disciplinary action, but this will depend on the circumstances. Exceptions to the requirement to keep matters confidential will of course apply where employees seek support and advice from others such as companions, trade union representatives or legal advisors. It may also not be possible to maintain confidentiality where regulators or the authorities are informed of the investigation.

Also, confidentiality may not be maintained if it is in the interests of the employer to communicate the complaint and any subsequent investigation, for example on a health and safety basis.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

### Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

The principle of due care requires employers to act prudently when it comes to sharing the identity of persons involved, such as complainants and implicated persons; and investigative findings, notably when certain employees may be implicated. As a result, such information is usually shared within an employer to designated departments on a need-to-know basis only. Additional safeguards as to the protection of whistleblowers' identities apply since the Whistleblower Directive (see question 9) was implemented in Dutch law. Also, see question 13 for the confidentiality obligations of employees vis-à-vis their employer.

Last updated on 27/11/2023



## Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
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Since the right to investigate ultimately belongs to the employer, it may impose strict confidentiality obligations upon the individuals involved, not only to ensure unhampered investigation proceedings but also and more importantly for the protection of the company and employees involved.

Last updated on 26/01/2023



## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

Besides the employee's duty of performance (article 319, Swiss Code of Obligations), the employment relationship is defined by the employer's duty of care (article 328, Swiss Code of Obligations) and the employee's duty of loyalty (article 321a, Swiss Code of Obligations). Ancillary duties can be derived from the two duties, which are of importance for the confidentiality of an internal investigation.[\[1\]](#)

In principle, the employer must respect and protect the personality (including confidentiality and privacy) and integrity of the employee (article 328 paragraph 1, Swiss Code of Obligations) and take appropriate measures to protect the employee. Because of the danger of pre-judgment or damage to reputation as well as other adverse consequences, the employer must conduct an internal investigation discreetly and objectively. The limits of the duty of care are found in the legitimate self-interest of the employer.[\[2\]](#)

In return for the employer's duty of care, employees must comply with their duty of loyalty and safeguard the employer's legitimate interests. In connection with an internal investigation, employees must therefore keep the conduct of an investigation confidential. Additionally, employees must keep confidential and not disclose to any third party any facts that they have acquired in the course of the employment relationship, and which are neither obvious nor publicly accessible.[\[3\]](#)

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[\[1\]](#) Wolfgang Portmann/Roger Rudolph, BSK OR, Art. 328 N 1 et seq.

[\[2\]](#) Claudia Fritsche, *Interne Untersuchungen in der Schweiz, Ein Handbuch für Unternehmen mit besonderem Fokus auf Finanzinstitute*, p. 202.

[\[3\]](#) David Rosenthal et al., *Praxishandbuch für interne Untersuchungen und eDiscovery*, Release 1.01, Zürich/Bern 2021, p. 133.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 11. What information must the employee under investigation be given about the allegations against them?

### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

Under the fair procedures outlined above, details of the allegations or complaints against the employee should be put to them to enable them to fully respond to the allegations raised. The employee should also be provided with any relevant policies pertaining to the allegations against them, along with all documentary evidence of the allegations and the specific terms of reference that define the scope of the investigation. The employee should also be informed of their right to be represented, see question 15.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

### Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

An implicated person is typically provided with a summary description of the scope of the investigation and, hence, the allegations against such an employee (if any). This is usually done in the interview invite sent to the relevant interviewee, which also provides an opportunity to prepare for an interview and (if relevant) seek legal advice.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

### Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
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During the fact-finding stage of the investigation, the employees under investigation are not generally entitled to information concerning the conduct of the investigation. It is the prerogative of management to involve the employee under investigation during the fact-finding stage. When, however, the employer determines that an administrative disciplinary process must proceed, the employee's right to due process attaches. As such, due process includes the right to be informed of the grounds relied upon by the employer and the opportunity to be heard. The first notice or notice to explain should specifically inform the employee of the charge against him or her.

Last updated on 26/01/2023

### Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*

As a result of the employer's duty of care (article 328, Swiss Code of Obligations), employees under investigation have certain procedural rights. These include, in principle, the right of the accused to be heard. In this context, the accused has the right to be informed at the beginning of the questioning about the subject of the investigation and at least the main allegations and they must be allowed to share their view and provide exculpatory evidence.<sup>[1]</sup> The employer, on the other hand, is not obliged to provide the employee with existing evidence, documents, etc, before the start of the questioning.<sup>[2]</sup>

Covert investigations in which employees are involved in informal or even private conversations to induce them to provide statements are not compatible with the data-processing principles of good faith and the requirement of recognisability, according to article 4 of the Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection.<sup>[3]</sup>

Also, rights to information arise from the Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection. In principle, the right to information (article 8, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection) is linked to a corresponding request for information by the concerned person and the existence of data collection within the meaning of article 3 (lit. g), Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection. Insofar as the documents from the internal investigation recognisably relate to a specific person, there is in principle a right to information concerning these documents. Subject to certain conditions, the right to information may be denied, restricted or postponed by law (article 9 paragraph 1, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection). For example, such documents and reports may also affect the confidentiality and protection interests of third parties, such as other employees. Based on the employer's duty of care (article 328, Swiss Code of Obligations), the employer is required to protect them by taking appropriate measures (eg, by making appropriate redactions before handing out copies of the respective documents (article 9 paragraph 1 (lit. b), Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection)).<sup>[4]</sup> Furthermore, the employer may refuse, restrict or defer the provision of information where the company's interests override the employee's, and not disclose personal data to third parties (article 9 paragraph 4, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection). The right to information is also not subject to the statute of limitations, and individuals may waive their right to information in advance (article 8 paragraph 6, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection). If there are corresponding requests, the employer must generally grant access, or provide a substantiated decision on the restriction of the right of access, within 30 days (article 8 paragraph 5, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection and article 1 paragraph 4, Ordinance to the Federal Act on Data Protection).

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<sup>[1]</sup> Roger Rudolph, *Interne Untersuchungen: Spannungsfelder aus arbeitsrechtlicher Sicht*, SJZ 114/2018, p. 390.

<sup>[2]</sup> Roger Rudolph, *Interne Untersuchungen: Spannungsfelder aus arbeitsrechtlicher Sicht*, SJZ 114/2018, p. 390.

<sup>[3]</sup> Roger Rudolph, *Interne Untersuchungen: Spannungsfelder aus arbeitsrechtlicher Sicht*, SJZ 114/2018, p. 390.

<sup>[4]</sup> Claudia Götz Staehelin, *Unternehmensinterne Untersuchungen*, 2019, p. 37.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 12. Can the identity of the complainant, witnesses or sources of information for the investigation be kept confidential?

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

Failure by an employer to provide the identity of the complainant, witnesses or sources of information seriously impinges upon the employee's right to fair procedure and could result in a flawed investigation.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



## Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
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Such information can usually be kept confidential in an internal investigation, subject to potential disclosure obligations (see question 25). As indicated in question 10, depending on the nature and subject matter of an investigation, the identity of employees involved and investigative findings shall be shared with an employer on a need-to-know basis only. Specific requirements apply to the protection of the identity of whistleblowers since the Whistleblower Directive was implemented into Dutch law.

Last updated on 27/11/2023



## Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
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The identity of the complainant, witnesses and sources of information may be kept confidential under the employer's policies.

Last updated on 26/01/2023



## Switzerland

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As mentioned under Question 10, the employer's duty of care (article 328, Swiss Code of Obligations) also entails the employer's duty to respect and protect the personality (including confidentiality and privacy) and integrity of employees (article 328 paragraph 1, Swiss Code of Obligations) and to take appropriate measures to protect them.

However, in combination with the right to be heard and the right to be informed regarding an investigation, the accused also has the right that incriminating evidence is presented to them throughout the investigation and that they can comment on it. For instance, this right includes disclosure of the persons accusing them and their concrete statements. Anonymisation or redaction of such statements is permissible if the interests of the persons incriminating the accused or the interests of the employer override the accused' interests to be presented with the relevant documents or statements (see question 11; see also article 9 paragraphs 1 and 4, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection). However, a careful assessment of interests is required, and these must be limited to what is necessary. In principle, a person accusing another person must take responsibility for their information and accept criticism from the person implicated by the information provided.[\[1\]](#)

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 13. Can non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) be used to keep the fact and substance of an investigation confidential?



### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

There is no legislation regarding NDAs, but there is a Bill before the legislature proposing to “restrict the use of non-disclosure agreements as they relate to incidents of workplace sexual harassment and discrimination”. It is currently at the report stage. Whether it passes remains to be seen, but there has in recent times been strong criticism of the use of NDAs to cover up matters that ought to be fully investigated and dealt with in an organisation.

Settlement agreements, however they arise, may include confidentiality clauses which may, depending on the terms of the agreement, extend to the fact and substance of an investigation, but as in the UK an employee's right to make a protected disclosure or report a criminal offence cannot be waived by signing an NDA.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



### Netherlands

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Yes, NDAs can be used for this purpose. However, employers in the Netherlands often rely on general confidentiality obligations that the relevant employee already has to adhere to vis-à-vis their employer, for example in the employment agreement or collective labour agreement, if applicable. It is good practice to reiterate the confidential nature of any interview and its contents, and the existence of the investigation as such, to avoid any alleged confusion as to the confidential nature of investigative procedures later on.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



### Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
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The practice of stipulating matters to ensure adherence to confidentiality is not uncommon. As such, NDAs are executed as a means of added protection for both the company and the employees involved.

Last updated on 26/01/2023

## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
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In addition to the above-mentioned statutory confidentiality obligations, separate non-disclosure agreements can be signed. In an internal investigation, the employee should be expressly instructed to maintain confidentiality.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 14. When does privilege attach to investigation materials?

### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

It would be difficult to assert privilege over materials that relate to the investigation itself.

Privilege may arise before the instigation of an investigation where an employer may seek legal advice from their legal advisors over the initial complaint and appropriate next steps. Subject to the relevant tests being met, Legal Advice Privilege arises in respect of a confidential communication that takes place between a professionally qualified lawyer and a client. Who the client is will be of significant importance as they must be capable of giving instructions to their lawyer, on behalf of the employer. Caution should be exercised by employers if advice to "the client" is disseminated further within the business to other members of management. If such a scenario arises, then there is a risk that privilege may be waived and such material could be disclosable under a data subject access request. Litigation privilege arises with respect to confidential communications that take place between a lawyer or a client and a third party for the dominant purpose of preparing for litigation, whether existing or reasonably contemplated.

It is also prudent to consider whether an external investigator should have access to their own independent legal advisor, and the funding arrangements for such advice would have to be considered by the employer.

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### Netherlands

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If an attorney is engaged to provide legal advice or representation in respect of the (subject matter of the) investigation and as such also conducts (part of) the investigation, work products prepared by such an attorney will typically be subject to the legal privilege. Such work products may include, for example, interview minutes, investigation reports, investigation updates, attorney-client correspondence on the investigation, and legal advice rendered in connection with the (subject matter of the) investigation.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

The employer's internal policy can indicate that investigation materials must be kept confidential.

Last updated on 26/01/2023

## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
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As outlined above, all employees generally have the right to know whether and what personal data is being or has been processed about them (article 8 paragraph 1, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection; article 328b, Swiss Code of Obligations).

The employer may refuse, restrict or postpone the disclosure or inspection of internal investigation documents if a legal statute so provides, if such action is necessary because of overriding third-party interests (article 9 paragraph 1, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection) or if the request for information is manifestly unfounded or malicious. Furthermore, a restriction is possible if overriding the self-interests of the responsible company requires such a measure and it also does not disclose the personal data to third parties. The employer or responsible party must justify its decision (article 9 paragraph 5, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection).<sup>[1]</sup>

The scope of the disclosure of information must, therefore, be determined by carefully weighing the interests of all parties involved in the internal investigation.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Claudia M. Fritsche, *Interne Untersuchungen in der Schweiz*, Ein Handbuch für Unternehmen mit besonderem Fokus auf Finanzinstitute, p. 284 et seq.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## **15. Does the employee under investigation have a right to be accompanied or have legal representation during the investigation?**

### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

This depends on the nature of the investigation. If the complaint originates from an employee as a grievance, then the employee would have the right to representation during the investigation. Representation in this context is more akin to the right to be accompanied, as in the UK by either a colleague or trade union representative.

If the investigation is a fact-gathering investigation originating from the employer, then the employee would not have the right to be represented during the investigation. That right would apply only at any subsequent disciplinary hearing.

If the investigation is a fact-finding investigation as part of a disciplinary process originating from the employer, then the employee ought to be given the right to be represented at that investigation stage. Again the right is akin to the right to be accompanied. There was concern from employers that the right had been expanded to legal representation in disciplinary matters with the case of *McKelvey v Irish Rail*. However, the Supreme Court in that case clarified that the right to legal representation in disciplinary processes is only in exceptional circumstances.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



## Netherlands

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All parties involved in the investigation have the right to a fair hearing. How this is embedded in the investigation should be laid down in the protocol drawn up at the start. When the employee, and others involved, receive an invitation for an interview in the context of an investigation, this invitation should include whether or not the employee has the right to bring legal representation to the interview. Given the unequal relationship between employer and employee, this will most likely be the case.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



## Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

Since the fact-finding phase of the investigation is considered to be a preliminary step before the commencement of the administrative disciplinary process, an employee's right to representation does not attach.

However, when the administrative disciplinary process commences, the employee has the right to have legal representation during the investigation. While no law requires the employee to have counsel present during the investigation, the employee has the right, if he or she chooses, to be advised by counsel or have legal representation.

Last updated on 26/01/2023



## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
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In the case of an employee involved in an internal investigation, a distinction must be made as to whether the employee is acting purely as an informant or whether there are conflicting interests between the company and the employee involved. If the employee is acting purely as an informant, the employee has, in principle, no right to be accompanied by their own legal representative.<sup>[1]</sup>

However, if there are conflicting interests between the company and the employee involved, when the employee is accused of any misconduct, the employee must be able to be accompanied by their own legal representative. For example, if the employee's conduct might potentially constitute a criminal offence, the involvement of a legal representative must be permitted.<sup>[2]</sup> Failure to allow an accused person to be accompanied by a legal representative during an internal investigation, even though the facts in question

are relevant to criminal law, raises the question of the admissibility of statements made in a subsequent criminal proceeding. The principles of the Swiss Criminal Procedure Code cannot be undermined by alternatively collecting evidence in civil proceedings and thus circumventing the stricter rules applicable in criminal proceedings.<sup>[3]</sup>

In general, it is advisable to allow the involvement of a legal representative to increase the willingness of the employee involved to cooperate.

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[1] Claudia Götz Staehelin, Unternehmensinterne Untersuchungen, 2019, p. 37.

[2] Simona Wantz/Sara Licci, Arbeitsvertragliche Rechte und Pflichten bei internen Untersuchungen, in: Jusletter 18 February 2019, N 59.

[3] Roger Rudolph, Interne Untersuchungen: Spannungsfelder aus arbeitsrechtlicher Sicht, SJZ 114/2018, p. 392; Niklaus Ruckstuhl, BSK-StPO, Art. 158 StPO N 36.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 16. If there is a works council or trade union, does it have any right to be informed or involved in the investigation?



### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

This will depend on the agreement with the works council or trade union. The employee who is the respondent to the investigation may have views on their trade union being informed, aside from any agreement, which should be taken into account under GDPR provisions.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



### Netherlands

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There is, in principle, no role for the works council in an "isolated or single" internal investigation. When it comes to structural forms of employee monitoring to measure behaviour (such as video surveillance), the proposed decision to implement such a monitoring system in principle requires the prior approval of the works council.

In addition, according to the Act on the Protection of Whistleblowers, an employer who is not obliged to set up a works council needs the consent of more than half of the employees when adopting the internal reporting procedure under the Act, unless the substance of the procedure has already been laid down in a collective bargaining agreement.

Last updated on 27/11/2023

## Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

Except if provided expressly under a collective bargaining agreement, the union does not have the right to be involved in the investigation. Given that the investigation is between the employee and the company, it follows that the union does not have any right to participate in the investigation proceedings.

Last updated on 26/01/2023

## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

In general, works councils and trade unions are not very common in Switzerland and there are no statutory rules that would provide a works council or trade union a right to be informed or involved in an ongoing internal investigation. However, respective obligations might be foreseen in an applicable collective bargaining agreement, internal regulations or similar.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

# 17. What other support can employees involved in the investigation be given?

## Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

If an employee assistance programme is in place, an employee irrespective of their role in the investigation should be directed to the programme and encouraged to avail of the services. Investigations can become protracted and employees should be kept informed as to progress and what is required of them regarding participation. Regular checks of the health and well-being of employees should also be made. Even if such a programme is not in place, occasionally and depending on the issues giving rise to the investigation, it may be appropriate for the employer to cover the cost of counselling to a certain extent.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

## Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

The employer can offer employees to be accompanied by another person, or by legal counsel, especially if the outcomes of the investigation could have consequences for their employment.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

Since the conduct of an investigation is different from the administrative disciplinary process, management is given wide latitude for the exercise of the same.

After the employer determines that there are sufficient grounds to support the conduct of a formal administrative process, employees that are the subject of an administrative hearing should be allowed to present evidence to support his or her statements. Further, the employee may also provide affidavits of his or her co-employees consistent with his or her testimony.

Last updated on 26/01/2023

## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

The employer does not generally need to provide specific support for employees that are subject to an internal investigation. The employer may, however, allow concerned employees to be accompanied by a trusted third party such as family members or friends.<sup>[1]</sup> These third parties will need to sign separate non-disclosure agreements before being involved in the internal investigation.

In addition, a company may appoint a so-called lawyer of confidence who has been approved by the employer and is thus subject to professional secrecy. This lawyer will not be involved in the internal investigation but may look after the concerned employees and give them confidential advice as well as inform them about their rights and obligations arising from the employment relationship.<sup>[2]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Roger Rudolph, *Interne Untersuchungen: Spannungsfelder aus arbeitsrechtlicher Sicht*, SJZ 114/2018, p. 390.

<sup>[2]</sup> David Rosenthal et al., *Praxishandbuch für interne Untersuchungen und eDiscovery*, Release 1.01, Zürich/Bern, 2021, p. 133.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 18. What if unrelated matters are revealed as a result of the investigation?

### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

If an investigator finds other issues that are outside the scope of the terms of reference, these should not be ignored but equally should not be included as part of the investigation, as they are beyond the remit of the investigation that was established at the beginning. An investigator should identify the other matters that may require further action and report these to the employer separately so as not to conflate issues.



## Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

If the investigation yields unrelated matters, the employer will need to decide whether such matters should be followed up in the same or a separate investigation. If such matters include new allegations against an employee that are already involved in the investigation, the employer should, before interviewing (or at the start of such an interview) inform the implicated employees of the relevant new allegations that are the subject of the investigation.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



## Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

If unrelated matters are revealed because of a workplace investigation, the employer may look into the new matter and then determine whether there are sufficient grounds to proceed with an administrative disciplinary process for the new matter.

Last updated on 26/01/2023



## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

There are no regulations in this regard in the Swiss employment law framework. However, in criminal proceedings, the rules regarding accidental findings apply (eg, article 243, Swiss Criminal Procedure Code for searches and examinations or article 278, Swiss Criminal Procedure Code for surveillance of post and telecommunications). In principle, accidental findings are usable, with the caveat of general prohibitions on the use of evidence.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 19. What if the employee under investigation raises a grievance during the investigation?



## Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

If the subject of the grievance relates to the subject of the investigation, the employee should be reassured that all the matters that they wish to raise concerning the matter under investigation will be dealt with in

full as part of the investigation.

If the employee raises a grievance that is unrelated to the matter under investigation, then that can be dealt with concurrently, albeit by a separate investigator.

The initial investigation does not automatically need to be halted upon receipt of a grievance. Frequently, grievances are submitted in the hope that they derail or delay the original investigation. Careful consideration should be given as to the nature of the grievance and the appropriate course of action adopted.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



## Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

There are a lot of possibilities for grievances that employees can raise during an investigation. A grievance, for instance, could be that a certain person is not interviewed, while the employee wanted this person to be interviewed in order to have a thorough investigation. In such a case the investigator needs to assess this grievance.

There is no general rule how to react to a grievance and there is also no general obligation to respond to a grievance. There needs to be a case by case assessment based on which further action is or isn't needed.

Last updated on 27/11/2023



## Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

If an employee under investigation raises a grievance during an ongoing investigation, the employer must ensure that the employee under investigation is treated reasonably and fairly. Thus, the employer must also give attention to the complaint made by the employee and determine if there are reasonable grounds for the concern of the employee. If the employer determines the validity of the grievance raised, the employer may conduct a separate investigation for it.

Last updated on 26/01/2023



## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

In the context of private internal investigations, grievances initially raised by the employee do not usually have an impact on the investigation.

However, if the employer terminates the employment contract due to a justified legal complaint raised by an employee, a court might consider the termination to be abusive and award the employee compensation in an amount to be determined by the court but not exceeding six months' pay for the employee (article 336 paragraph 1 (lit. b) and article 337c paragraph 3, Swiss Code of Obligations). Furthermore, a termination by the employer may be challenged if it takes place without good cause following a complaint of discrimination by the employee to a superior or the initiation of proceedings before a conciliation board

## 20. What if the employee under investigation goes off sick during the investigation?



### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

If an employee goes off sick during the investigation, it is reasonable to adjourn the investigation until the employee is fit to return to work. Difficulties arise if it is a prolonged absence. The absence may necessitate a referral to an occupational health expert and it may be necessary to seek medical advice as to whether the employee can continue to participate in the investigation. It may be that reasonable accommodations should be considered to ensure that the employee can continue to participate. Such situations may impinge on the investigator's ability to conclude the investigation. In that instance, it would be prudent for the investigator to document all attempts to involve the employee in the investigation and to assess whether it can be concluded without the further involvement of the employee.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



### Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

If the employee under investigation goes off sick during the investigation, they will generally be treated as a regular employee on sick leave, meaning they are entitled to continued salary payment and that both employer and employee have a reintegration obligation. This entails regular consults with the company doctor to determine how recovery progresses and when the employee can return to work. If the employer suspects that the employee is merely calling in sick to delay the investigation and such suspicion is not confirmed by the company doctor, the employer can ask the Employees Insurance Agency (UWV) to give a second opinion. When it is determined that the employee is in fact fit for work, the employer can oblige the employee to return to work and cooperate with the investigation. If the employee fails to comply, the employer can – after due warning – suspend the employee's salary payment.

Last updated on 27/11/2023



### Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

Since neither consent nor the presence of the employee is material to the conduct of the investigation, his or her absence would not, in practice, imperil the conduct of the investigation.

As previously discussed, because the employer exercises a wide latitude of discretion in conducting workplace investigations, the employer may choose to proceed with the investigation despite the absence of the employee being investigated. Since the proceeding is only in the investigation phase, the statutory



right of the employee to be heard is not violated, even if the investigation takes place without his or her participation.

Last updated on 26/01/2023



## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

The time spent on the internal investigation by the employee should be counted as working time<sup>[1]</sup>. The general statutory and internal company principles on sick leave apply. Sick leave for which the respective employee is not responsible must generally be compensated (article 324a paragraph 1 and article 324b, Swiss Code of Obligations). During certain periods of sick leave (blocking period), the employer may not ordinarily terminate the employment contract; however, immediate termination for cause remains possible.

The duration of the blocking period depends on the employee's seniority, amounting to 30 days in the employee's first year of service, 90 days in the employee's second to ninth year of service and 180 days thereafter (article 336c paragraph 1 (lit. c), Swiss Code of Obligations).

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<sup>[1]</sup> Ullin Streiff/Adrian von Kaenel/Roger Rudolph, Arbeitsvertrag, Praxiskommentar zu Art. 319–362 OR, 7. A. 2012, Art. 328b N 8 OR.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 21. How do you handle a parallel criminal and/or regulatory investigation?



## Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

Workplace investigations can originate from criminal investigations or proceedings. It may be that an employer only becomes aware of a matter through the involvement of the police (An Garda Síochána) or regulatory bodies.

If a criminal investigation is pending it can complicate a workplace investigation, but it will be specific to the nature of the complaint. Likewise, where a regulatory investigation is in scope, an employee may argue that any internal investigation should be put on hold, on the basis that it will harm any regulatory investigation. Such matters will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis as it may be some time before any regulatory investigation commences, by which time the workplace investigation and any subsequent process may have been concluded.

Employers will also have to consider their reporting obligations to An Garda Síochána. If the matter relates to fraud, misuse of public money, bribery, corruption or money laundering, for example, reporting obligations arise under section 19 of the Criminal Justice Act 2011. A failure to report information that an employer knows or believes might be of material assistance in preventing the commission of an offence, or assisting in the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of another person may be guilty of an offence.

Also, the Irish Central Bank's (Individual Accountability Framework) Act 2023 (the Act) was signed into law

on 9 March 2023 but has not yet been enacted. The framework provides scope for a senior executive accountability regime, which will initially only apply to banks, insurers and certain MiFID firms. However, its application may be extended soon. The Act forces employers to engage in disciplinary action against those who may have breached specific "Conduct Standards".

Last updated on 11/10/2023



## Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

In case there is a parallel criminal or regulatory investigation usually consultation between the investigators and the authorities takes place. Agreements are then sometimes made about the investigation conducted by / for the employer. In some cases, the authorities will ask to stay the investigation. There is no policy from the government on this topic.

There are situations where the authorities can compel the employer to share evidence. This depends on the exact circumstances of the case. For instance if the employer is the suspect in a criminal case.

It does occur that the authorities are given evidence upon request without the authorities having to order the extradition of evidence.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



## Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

It is within the employer's discretion to pursue the investigation even if a parallel criminal or regulatory investigation is taking place. As such, different investigations may proceed independently of each other. However, if the workplace investigation would interfere with or hinder the criminal or regulatory investigation, the workplace investigation should defer to the investigation being conducted by the people in authority. Since the nature of a workplace investigation is highly confidential, the police or regulations cannot compel any evidence from the employer without a court order.

Last updated on 26/01/2023



## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

The actions of the employer may carry through to a subsequent state proceeding. First and foremost, any prohibitions on the use of evidence must be considered. Whereas in civil proceedings the interest in establishing the truth must merely prevail for exploitation (article 152 paragraph 2, Swiss Civil Procedure Code), in criminal proceedings, depending on the nature of the unlawful act, there is a risk that the evidence may not be used (see question 27 and article 140 et seq, Swiss Civil Procedure Code).

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 22. What must the employee under investigation be told about the outcome of an investigation?

### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

The employee whose actions are the subject of the investigation must be advised of the outcome of the investigation. They are usually provided with a copy of the investigator's report.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

### Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

There are no statutory requirements as to employee feedback in internal investigations. The principle of due care requires an employer to typically confront implicated persons with any allegations that concern them; and provide a draft report on their interviews for feedback, if the investigative findings will form the basis of disciplinary measures. It is good practice to also inform an employee under investigation once the investigation is closed.

Last updated on 27/11/2023

### Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

The employee under investigation should be informed of the results of the investigation and the basis of the conclusion. It should be included in the first notice or the notice to explain.

Last updated on 26/01/2023

### Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

Workplace investigations often result in an investigation report that is intended to serve as the basis for any measures to be taken by the company's decisionmakers.

The employee's right to information based on article 8, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection also covers the investigation report, provided that the report and the data contained therein relate to the employee.<sup>[1]</sup> In principle, the employee concerned is entitled to receive a written copy of the entire investigation report free of charge (article 8 paragraph 5, Swiss Federal Act on Data Protection and article 1 et seq, Ordinance to the Federal Act on Data Protection). Redactions may be made where the interests of the company or third parties so require, but they are the exception and must be kept to a minimum.<sup>[2]</sup>

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[1] Arbeitsgericht Zürich, Entscheide 2013 No. 16; Roger Rudolph, Interne Untersuchungen: Spannungsfelder aus arbeitsrechtlicher Sicht, SJZ 114/2018, p. 393 et seq.

[2] Roger Rudolph, Interne Untersuchungen: Spannungsfelder aus arbeitsrechtlicher Sicht, SJZ 114/2018, p. 394.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 23. Should the investigation report be shared in full, or just the findings?



### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

The investigation report should be shared in full, unless there is some specific reason for not doing so. One example is where there is a possibility of a criminal investigation; in that instance, it may be appropriate not to share the full report. Occasionally, there may be several respondents involved in the complaint, and each respondent may only be entitled to the report that relates to them.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



### Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

Employers are typically not required to share the investigation report with implicated persons or other employees involved in an investigation. Depending on the nature and subject of the investigation, the principle of due care may require an employer to share (draft) investigative findings before concluding on such findings.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



### Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

The employer is not compelled to share its investigation report with the employee. However, it would be ideal for the company to keep in its records a comprehensive report that details the findings of the investigation. This would be useful during the administrative disciplinary process when the employee requests to be informed of the substantive grounds for his or her eventual termination.

Last updated on 26/01/2023



## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

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).<sup>[1]</sup> 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.<sup>[2]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> 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).

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 24. What next steps are available to the employer?

### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

The investigator will usually set out recommendations within their report. It will then be up to the employer to act on those recommendations and to accept or reject the findings (if it were a fact-finding investigation). If, for example, a recommendation is made that the matter should proceed to a disciplinary hearing, the employer should then arrange such a hearing and nominate an impartial member of management to carry out the disciplinary hearing. In some instances, recommendations are made by investigators to provide training or update policies and such recommendations should be acted upon without delay. It may also be appropriate to notify a specific regulator of the outcome of the investigation.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

### Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

A distinction can be made between a non-public reprimand and a public reprimand. A non-public reprimand is a warning from the employer to the employee that certain behaviour by the employee may not be repeated. This is a relatively light measure. The employer can apply this measure to behaviour for which a verbal warning is insufficient or has already been given (more than once). The employer should confirm the reprimand to the employee in writing, so that it forms part of the employee's personnel file. It is important to have an acknowledgement so there is no dispute as to whether the reprimand has reached the employee. Often, the letter will also mention the consequences if the employee continues to behave in this

way, so that the employee is aware of them. The employer then has reasonable grounds to apply a more severe disciplinary measure, such as suspension or dismissal, should the behaviour be repeated.

For a public reprimand, the warning is also made known to third parties. This is, therefore, a more severe measure than a non-public reprimand, as the honour and reputation of the employee are affected. A public reprimand must, therefore, be proportionate to the seriousness of the behaviour and will only be possible in the event of a serious offence, for which a non-public warning will not suffice. A public reprimand is also more likely if it is necessary to prevent other employees from engaging in the same behaviour (deterrent effect). Given the impact on the employee, it is important that the employer carefully investigates the facts and allows the employee to tell their side of the story (hearing both sides of the argument). A public reprimand is rarely given.

If the outcome of the investigation is that the employee is culpable, the employer can request that the court dissolves the employment agreement for that reason. The employer will have to show that continuation of the employment agreement is no longer possible. If the court rules that the employee is culpable, the employment agreement will be dissolved, observing the relevant notice period and paying the statutory transition payment. Only if the court rules that the employee has shown serious culpable behaviour, will the notice period not be taken into account and the transition payment will not be due.

If the employee has come into contact with the judicial authorities or is suspected of a criminal offence, but has not been convicted or detained (yet), the employer – when requesting the dissolution of the employment contract – will have to make a plausible case that, based on this suspicion alone, it can no longer be reasonably expected that the employment contract is upheld. This may be the case in a situation where the offence the employee is suspected of has repercussions on the employer, colleagues or customers and relations of the employer. In this situation, the court will assess whether a less drastic measure than dismissal, such as suspension, is sufficient to the interests of the employer.

If there is still no conviction but the employee is unable to perform his or duties due to being detained, the court reviews a request for dissolution in the same way as above. In this case, if the employee's payment of wages is discontinued, justice may already have been done to the employer's interests.

The final stage involves the conviction and detention of the employee. Although the dissolution of the employment contract under section 7:669 (3) under h DCC – which includes conviction and detention – is the most obvious option, it is still necessary to assess whether termination of the employment contract is reasonable because of the employee's conviction and detention. Although the seriousness of the offence, the duration of the detention and how this reflects on the employer are important factors, the court also takes the age, duration of the employment contract and the position of the employee on the labour market into account.

The most far-reaching dismissal method that can be considered is instant dismissal for an urgent reason (section 7:678 paragraph 1 in conjunction with section 7:677 paragraph 1 DCC). According to the case law of the Dutch Supreme Court, the question of whether there are compelling reasons must be answered based on all the circumstances of the case – to be considered together – including the nature and seriousness of what the employer considers to be compelling reasons, the nature and duration of the employment, how the employee performed their duties and the personal circumstances of the employee, such as age and the consequences for the employee of an instant dismissal.

Mere suspicion of a criminal offence will not easily qualify as an urgent reason, as follows from jurisprudence. At the same time, an employer can, instead of criminal suspicion as grounds for dismissal, also base its claim on the behaviour that underlies it. If the behaviour of the employee is already factually established, for example, because the employee has disclosed it to their employer or the employer has established it, the employer does not have to wait for the criminal proceedings before dismissing the employee.

Last updated on 27/11/2023

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

After the investigation has been concluded, the next steps of the employer will depend on the result of the investigation. If there are reasonable grounds to hold the employee for an administrative hearing, the employer may issue a Notice To Explain containing the charges against him or her and allowing the employee to explain his or her side. Otherwise, the employer may terminate the investigation immediately.

Last updated on 26/01/2023

## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

If the investigation uncovers misconduct, the question arises as to what steps should be taken. Of course, the severity of the misconduct and the damage caused play a significant role. Furthermore, it must be noted that the cooperation of the employee concerned may be of decisive importance for the outcome of the investigation. The possibilities are numerous, ranging, for example, from preventive measures to criminal complaints.[\[1\]](#)

If individual disciplinary actions are necessary, these may range from warnings to ordinary or immediate termination of employment.

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[\[1\]](#) David Rosenthal et al., *Praxishandbuch für interne Untersuchungen und eDiscovery*, Release 1.01, Zürich/Bern 2021, p. 180 et seq.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## **25. Who can (or must) the investigation findings be disclosed to? Does that include regulators/police? Can the interview records be kept private, or are they at risk of disclosure?**

### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

Depending on the nature of the subject matter of the investigation, it may be appropriate to notify the Garda Síochána or a specific government body such as Revenue. Also, if the employee occupies a regulated position, it may be necessary to inform the relevant regulator. Again, compliance with GDPR obligations should be borne in mind.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

### Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

The fundamental right to a fair hearing entails that the investigation findings must be disclosed to the employee under investigation at least once, so that they are given the opportunity to respond to them. Under Dutch administrative or criminal law, there are no general provisions requiring disclosure of investigative findings to regulators or criminal authorities. Certain specific provisions, however, apply, for example, in reportable incidents at financial institutions or certain HSE incidents that need to be disclosed to relevant regulatory authorities. Regulatory and criminal authorities, however, do have broad investigative powers enabling them to order the provision of data from subjects or involved parties in investigations they are conducting. Such information may also comprise investigation findings and underlying documents, such as interview records. If such interview records are subject to legal privilege (see question 14), they are typically not subject to disclosure to the relevant authorities.

Under Dutch civil law, a party that possesses certain records (such as investigation findings and underlying documents) is generally not required to disclose those to other parties for inspection. Parties are, in principle, not required to share information with third parties, other than relevant authorities (see above).

An exception to this rule is section 843a Dutch Code of Civil Procedure. Under section 843a, a party can be required to produce specific exhibits, if:

- the requesting party has a legitimate interest;
- the request concerns specific and well-defined records or information (ie, no fishing expeditions); and
- the documents pertain to a legal relationship (e.g., a contract or alleged tort; the requested party does not need to be a party to the relevant legal relationship).

If these requirements are met, the requestee should, in principle, disclose the requested information, except for specific exceptions. Such exceptions, which can also be relevant in the context of internal (workplace) investigations, could include confidentiality arrangements and privacy protection, to the extent that this would qualify as a compelling interest. To establish such a compelling interest, the relevant interest should outweigh the requesting party's legitimate interest regarding the requested information. This is a balancing act. Documents that are subject to legal privilege are protected against disclosure.

Last updated on 27/11/2023



## Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

The result of the workplace investigation must be kept private by the employer. These are confidential matters that should not be disclosed to people or entities who did not take part in the investigation. However, if the investigation findings show that a possibly unlawful or criminal activity has taken place, or is about to take place, the employer should share such findings with the authorities.

Last updated on 26/01/2023



## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
at Bär & Karrer

The employer is generally not required to disclose the final report, or the data obtained in connection with the investigation. In particular, the employer is not obliged to file a criminal complaint with the police or the public prosecutor's office.



Exceptions may arise, for example, from data protection law (see question 22) or a duty to release records may arise in a subsequent state proceeding.

Data voluntarily submitted in a proceeding in connection with the internal investigation shall be considered private opinion or party assertion.<sup>[1]</sup> If the company refuses to hand over the documents upon request, coercive measures may be used under certain circumstances.<sup>[2]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Oliver Thormann, Sicht der Strafverfolger – Chancen und Risiken, in: Flavio Romerio/Claudio Bazzani (Hrsg.), Interne und regulatorische Untersuchungen, Zürich/Basel/Genf 2016, p. 123.

<sup>[2]</sup> Oliver Thormann, Sicht der Strafverfolger – Chancen und Risiken, in: Flavio Romerio/Claudio Bazzani (Hrsg.), Interne und regulatorische Untersuchungen, Zürich/Basel/Genf 2016, p. 102 et seq.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

## 26. How long should the outcome of the investigation remain on the employee's record?



### Ireland

Author: *Bláthnaid Evans, Mary Gavin*  
at Ogier

Irrespective of the outcome of the investigation, the fact that an employee was subject to an investigation is not the key issue. The key concern is whether any further action was taken as a result of the investigation. If a disciplinary process ensued, then it is the outcome of that disciplinary record and any subsequent appeal that would or would not be noted on an employee's record. If a disciplinary sanction were imposed then the length of time the sanction remains on the employee's record would depend on what is specified in the disciplinary policy.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



### Netherlands

Author: *Barbara Kloppert, Mirjam Kerkhof, Roel de Jong*  
at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek

The outcomes are usually kept in the records until termination of the employment agreement and only deleted when personal records are deleted.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



### Philippines

Author: *Rashel Ann C. Pomoy*  
at Villaraza & Angangco

The outcome of the investigation should only remain on the employee's record for as long as is necessary, but shall not be less than three years as this is the record-keeping requirement under the Philippine Labor

Code. If circumstances deem that such a report ceases to have any purpose whatsoever, it should be struck out of the employee's record.

Last updated on 26/01/2023

## Switzerland

Author: *Laura Widmer, Sandra Schaffner*  
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From an employment law point of view, there is no statute of limitations on the employee's violations. Based on the specific circumstances (eg, damage incurred, type of violation, basis of trust or the position of the employee), a decision must be made as to the extent to which the outcome should remain on the record.

From a data protection point of view, only data that is in the interest of the employee (eg, to issue a reference letter) may be retained during the employment relationship. In principle, stored data must be deleted after the termination of the employment relationship. Longer retention may be justified if rights are still to be safeguarded or obligations are to be fulfilled in the future (eg, data needed regarding foreseeable legal proceedings, data required to issue a reference letter or data in relation to a non-competition clause).<sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Wolfgang Portmann/Isabelle Wildhaber, *Schweizerisches Arbeitsrecht*, 4. Edition, Zurich/St. Gallen 2020, N 473.

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## 27. What legal exposure could the employer face for errors during the investigation?

### Ireland

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A failure to follow fair procedures in the investigation can have significant consequences.

Although the exception rather than the rule, an employee could challenge the investigation through injunctive proceedings if there is a breach of fair procedures. Such action would be taken before the High Court. Injunction proceedings may be brought while the investigation is ongoing, or just before its conclusion to prevent publication of a report making specific findings against an employee. A successful injunction may curtail any subsequent attempt to investigate the matter as allegations of penalisation, prejudice and delay may arise.

Errors during the investigation can also give rise to a complaint of constructive dismissal, with allegations that flaws in the procedure have fundamentally breached the implied term of mutual trust and confidence.

A flawed investigation can also undermine any disciplinary process and sanction that is imposed as a result. This commonly occurs when an employee has been dismissed following a disciplinary process launched on foot of the investigation. While dismissal may be an appropriate sanction, the dismissal can still be found to be unfair if there is a failure to follow fair procedures. An employee may challenge their

dismissal before the WRC and the employer should be able to not only an unfair dismissal complaint, but allegations of discrimination and penalisation.

Overall, to carry out a successful workplace investigation, an employer should consider taking advice at the earliest opportunity to ensure that the investigation can withstand challenges.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



## Netherlands

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The employee can request compensation for violation of the right to a fair hearing or reputational damage. If the employee is suspended during the investigation, the employee can request the court to order the employer to allow them to resume their work and request rehabilitation.

In termination proceedings (or after the termination of the employment agreement by the employer), the employee can claim an equitable compensation from the employer if the employer has shown serious culpable behaviour. Such compensation, if granted, is usually based on loss of income by the employee due to the behaviour of the employer.

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## Philippines

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An employer may be liable for illegal termination if a dismissal is made based on wrong information collected during the investigation. Thus, the data and information gathered during the investigation stage must be correct and accurate. Further, investigations should be conducted in a manner that is fair and reasonable to the employee under investigation. Otherwise, the employee may treat the investigation as harassment on the part of the employer, which may subject the employer to a potential lawsuit.

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## Switzerland

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As there are no specific regulations for internal investigations, the usual legal framework within which the employer must act towards the employee derives from general rules such as the employer's duty of care, the employee's duty of loyalty and the employee's data protection rights.

But, for example, unwarranted surveillance could conceivably result in criminal liability (article 179 et seq, Swiss Criminal Code) for violations of the employee's privacy. Furthermore, errors made by the employer could have an impact on any later criminal proceedings (eg, in the form of prohibitions on the use of evidence).<sup>[1]</sup>

Evidence obtained unlawfully may only be used in civil proceedings if there is an overriding interest in establishing the truth (article 152 paragraph 2, Swiss Civil Procedure Code). Consequently, in each case, a balance must be struck between the individual's interest in not using the evidence and in establishing the

truth.<sup>[2]</sup> The question of the admissibility of evidence based on an unlawful invasion of privacy is a sensitive one – admissibility in this case is likely to be accepted only with restraint.<sup>[3]</sup> Since the parties in civil proceedings do not have any means of coercion at their disposal, it is not necessary, in contrast to criminal proceedings, to examine whether the evidence could also have been obtained by legal means.<sup>[4]</sup>

Unlawful action by the employer may also have consequences on future criminal proceedings: The prohibitions on exploitation (article 140 et seq, Swiss Criminal Procedure Code) apply a priori only to evidence obtained directly from public authorities. Evidence obtained unlawfully by private persons (ie, the employer) may also be used if it could have been lawfully obtained by the authority and if the interest in establishing the truth outweighs the interest of the individual in not using the evidence.<sup>[5]</sup> Art. 140 paragraph 1 Swiss Criminal Procure Code remains reserved: Evidence obtained in violation of Art. 140 paragraph 1 Swiss Criminal Procure Code is subject to an absolute ban on the use of evidence (e.g. evidence obtained under the use of torture<sup>[6]</sup>).<sup>[7]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Cf. ATF 139 II 7.

<sup>[2]</sup> ATF 140 III 6 E. 3

<sup>[3]</sup> Pascal Grolimund in: Adrian Staehelin/Daniel Staehelin/Pascal Grolimund (editors), *Zivilprozessrecht*, Zurich/Basel/Geneva 2019, 3rd Edition, §18 N 24a.

<sup>[4]</sup> Pascal Grolimund in: Adrian Staehelin/Daniel Staehelin/Pascal Grolimund (editors), *Zivilprozessrecht*, Zurich/Basel/Geneva 2019, 3rd Edition, §18 N 24a.

<sup>[5]</sup> Decision of the Swiss Federal Court 6B\_1241/2016 dated 17. July 2017 consid. 1.2.2; Decision of the Swiss Federal Court 1B\_22/2012 dated 11 May 2012 consid. 2.4.4.

<sup>[6]</sup> Jérôme Benedict/Jean Treccani, CR-CPP Art. 140 N. 5 and Art. 141 N. 3.

<sup>[7]</sup> Yvan Jeanneret/André Kuhn, *Précis de procédure pénale*, 2nd Edition, Berne 2018, N 9011.

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