

Workplace Investigations

Contributing Editors

Phil Linnard at Slaughter and May
Clare Fletcher at Slaughter and May

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

Before commencing a workplace investigation, an employer must review the terms of any applicable employment contract, policy, procedure or industrial instrument. These documents will likely contain clauses that will dictate the investigation process.

There is also a significant body of common law that dictates how an investigation should be conducted and the procedural fairness that should be afforded to those involved. To ensure a workplace investigation is procedurally fair, employers must consider several factors, including:

- putting all allegations to the respondent in a manner which does not suggest a pre-determination of the outcome;
- conducting the investigation in a timely manner;
- providing the respondent with the opportunity to respond to the allegations;
- conducting a fair investigation process;
- making an unbiased (and not pre-determined) decision; and
- permitting the respondent and complainant to involve a support person or union representative.

Employers should also consider the additional steps they can take to conduct a best-practice investigation, including:

- being thorough and taking the time to plan the investigation;
- communicating clearly and fairly;
- considering whether the allegations are indicative of a wider workplace behaviour problem;
- maintaining confidentiality; and
- preventing victimisation.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*

at Hengeler Mueller

There are no specific legislative requirements for workplace investigations in Germany. In 2020, the Federal Ministry of Justice presented a draft bill with regulations on internal investigations and, in particular, employee interviews. However, this law failed to pass under the previous government. The current government has announced it will take up this matter again and plans to create a precise legal framework for internal investigations. Details, timing and content remain to be seen.

Nevertheless, workplace investigations do not take place in a "lawless space". They must comply with the provisions of employment and data protection law. Further, criminal and corporate law aspects can play a role. Moreover, works council information and co-determination rights may have to be taken into account.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

In Greece, workplace investigations are not heavily regulated.

However, internal disciplinary procedures are governed by certain general principles, while there is also legislation regulating certain aspects of investigations opened in the context of whistleblowing procedures or concerning complaints for workplace violence or harassment. These include Law 4990/2022, which transposed EU Directive 2019/1937 into Greek Law; and Law 4808/2021, which ratified the ILO's Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No190) and introduced relevant provisions.

As far as disciplinary procedures in private-sector companies are concerned, employers that must have internal labour regulations in place (ie, those with more than 70 employees) or opt to adopt them voluntarily, can regulate the procedures themselves.

In the public sector, internal investigations are governed by disciplinary provisions included in the civil servant code.

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02. How is a workplace investigation usually commenced?

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

A workplace investigation will generally be triggered by an employee making a complaint; however, issues may also be brought to the attention of an employer through an anonymous tip, by suppliers or contractors, from customers or because of observations and hearsay.

Complaints can be made directly to Human Resources (HR), anonymously, by email to a line manager or a third party. While complaints do not need to be written and can be informal, brief or verbal, complaints of this nature can make the process harder and more information may be required.

The receipt of a complaint does not necessarily mean that an employer needs to undertake an investigation immediately. A grievance policy ordinarily contains a multi-step approach to dealing with complaints, starting with internal resolution options such as informal discussions, conciliation and mediation. However,

an investigation should be commenced where:

- the complaint alleges serious misconduct or unlawful conduct;
- the employer is required to conduct a workplace investigation as per an employment contract, policy, procedure or industrial instrument; or
- the complaint is complex and requires clarity on what has occurred to establish the facts.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Typical triggers for a workplace investigation may be internal hints (eg, from employees), internal audits, compliance or the legal department. However, investigations by the public prosecutor or other authorities can also lead to a workplace investigation.

There are no strict guidelines for the course of the investigation. The measures to be taken and the sequence in which they will be carried out to clarify the facts must be decided on a case-by-case basis. However, the first step should be to secure evidence. All relevant documents and records (eg, e-mails, hard disks, text messages, data carriers, copies) should be collected and employees may be interviewed. The second step should be to evaluate the evidence and the third step is to decide how to deal with the results (eg, whether any disciplinary measures should be taken or the intended procedures should be adjusted).

Irrespective of how a workplace investigation is commenced, when it comes to severe breaches of duty by an employee, a two-week exclusion period for issuing a termination for cause must be observed at all stages. This two-week period starts when the employer becomes aware of the relevant facts but is suspended as long as the employer is still investigating and collecting information, provided that the investigation is carried out swiftly.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

Internal investigations can be initiated either upon a complaint or report by an employee, (or other persons providing services or seeking employment, etc) in the workplace or by the employer as part of their managerial right.

If from an employee, the complaint or report may fall within the scope of an internal disciplinary procedure, if any, or may concern an alleged workplace violence or harassment incident, or fall within the scope of L.4990/2022 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law.

Reports by whistleblowers are submitted to the manager with responsibility for receiving and monitoring reports, a person appointed for that purpose under L.4990/2022. Complaints for incidents and harassment in the workplace can also be submitted, according to L.4808/2022, to the person or internal body specifically assigned to receive such complaints. Both laws require the employer to define the persons competent for receiving and monitoring complaints or reports and notifying the employees *stricto sensu* and any other persons falling within the scope of the respective provisions.

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

It is an important consideration as to whether any of the employees involved in the investigation should be suspended, stood down or asked to undertake alternative duties for the period of the investigation. This decision will need to be made taking into consideration the nature of the complaint, any further damage to workplace relationships that could be caused by employees continuing to interact with each other, and potential work, health and safety issues.

It should not be automatic that the respondent is suspended as the employer will need to consider whether this is necessary in the circumstances. However, a period of suspension should be considered where:

- the allegations involve serious misconduct;
- there is a risk that the conduct will continue throughout the investigation;
- the respondent's presence could exacerbate the situation; or
- the respondent's presence could be disruptive to the investigation.

As an alternative to suspension, other options include working from home, performing amended duties or moving to a different workspace.

If an employee is suspended then they should ordinarily receive their full pay for this period. There are some exceptions to this, for example, if the employee is a casual employee or if a policy, employment contract or other industrial instrument allows the employee to be suspended without pay.

Generally, there is no minimum or maximum period a suspension should last, as this will depend on the length of the investigation.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Generally, under German employment law, an employee has a right to perform his^[1] work and, therefore, suspending an employee would only be possible with the employee's consent. If an employer decided to suspend an employee without his consent, the employee could then claim his right to employment has been affected and seek a preliminary injunction before the competent labour court.

Unilaterally suspending an employee is, in principle, not permissible. Exceptions are made in cases where the employer has a legitimate interest. Typically, such legitimate interest exists after the employer has issued a notice of termination. During a workplace investigation, the employer may have a legitimate interest in suspending the employee, for example, if there is a risk that evidence may be destroyed, colleagues may be influenced, or the employee's presence may otherwise have a detrimental effect on the investigation or employer. Whether or not there is a legitimate interest must be assessed in each case. In practice, it is rare for employees to take legal action against a suspension.

In any event, during a suspension, the employee would be entitled to further payment of his salary without the employer receiving any services in return.

[1] The pronouns he/him/his shall be interpreted to mean any or all genders.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

Internal labour regulations may allow for the suspension of an employee when there is reasonable suspicion that a disciplinary offence has been committed. Given that under Greek law employees have the right to receive wages and to be employed, suspension without a specific provision in the internal labour regulation may only be imposed in an extreme case where the offence and the risk of keeping the employee employed during an investigation is obvious.

Payment of remuneration during suspension should not be withheld, otherwise, the suspension could be considered a disciplinary penalty not provided in law and imposed without completion of the disciplinary procedure, thus illegally harming the employee.

In any case, suspension is one of the ultimate measures that may be taken, in contrast to, for example, a change of work position.

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

Once the decision to undertake a workplace investigation has been made, it is important to decide who is the most appropriate person to conduct the investigation. For the investigation process to run smoothly a single lead investigator should be selected, although they may work with a larger team. The lead investigator and investigation team can be internally or externally appointed.

In deciding whether to appoint an external investigator an employer should consider:

- the nature of the allegations;
- the seniority of the respondent;
- whether a fair investigation can be conducted internally without any actual or perceived bias;
- whether there is a dedicated HR department with someone who has the required capability, skills and experience to conduct the investigation; and
- whether the employer wants the investigation to be covered by legal professional privilege.

If the employer decides to investigate the matter internally without appointing a third party, then the investigator does not need to have any specific qualifications. However, it is prudent to confirm that the investigator has the time and skills to conduct the investigation and that they can be objective.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

It is up to the company to decide who should carry out the workplace investigation and individual investigative steps. If their staff is used, the question arises of which person or department (compliance, legal, internal audit, HR or management) should take the lead. The answer to this question may depend on various factors such as the number of employees affected by the workplace investigation and the nature of the alleged misconduct. In any event, due to various employment law and data protection issues, the HR department and the legal department should be involved.

Further, it may make sense to bring in external advisors to lead the investigation together with an internal investigation team of the company. The engagement of an external investigation team can also be advantageous concerning the two-week exclusion period for termination for cause. This period does not start to run as long as the external advisors are investigating, but only when the persons authorised to terminate employment receive the investigation report.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

As far as the persons in charge of an internal investigation are concerned, L. 4990/2022 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law provides for certain conditions that should be met when exercising their duties (ie, being impartial and abstaining when there is a conflict of interest), which also apply as general principles in all disciplinary procedures. Whistleblowing legislation stipulates that persons appointed to receive and investigate a whistleblowing procedure should meet certain conditions, including no penal proceedings against them, no disciplinary proceedings or convictions for specific offences, and no workplace suspensions.

Official disciplinary procedures are conducted by the competent bodies as described in the respective internal labour regulations.

Although not specifically regulated, support from external advisors (eg, lawyers) is allowed.

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

The respondent has several rights including the right to have the complaint investigated in a fair, impartial and adequate manner, to hear the allegations in full and to not be victimised. However, there is no avenue for a respondent to bring legal action to stop a procedurally fair investigation.

In 2014, Australia introduced an anti-bullying jurisdiction which gave the Fair Work Commission (FWC) the

powers to issue a Stop Bullying Order. There have been circumstances where it has been successfully argued that an investigation itself amounted to bullying and accordingly the respondent applied to the FWC for a Stop Bullying Order to suspend the investigation.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

There is no general legal remedy against the conduct of the investigation itself. However, if individual measures are carried out in violation of the law (eg, data protection rules), the employee can take legal action against the specific measure through an interim injunction. In addition, the employee has the right to complain to the works council and ask for the works council's support if he feels that the employer has discriminated against him, has treated him unfairly, or that he has been adversely affected in any other way (section 84 paragraph 1 s 2, German Works Constitution Act (BetrVG)).

Additionally, the works council has the right to take legal action against investigative measures that were carried out in violation of its co-determination rights (see question 16).

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

Although there is no specific legal provision, access to legal action and judicial proceedings cannot be obstructed under any circumstances as this is a fundamental right under the Greek constitution. Thus, if an employee manages to bring legal action to stop the investigation (eg, a prolonged investigation for a frivolous complaint harms them), then the investigation may have to be temporarily paused or permanently terminated depending on the court decision.

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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?



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

Co-workers can be interviewed as part of an investigation where they are witnesses to a complaint. If the employee refuses to attend the interview or is generally not cooperating with the investigation, the reasons for this will need to be considered carefully by the employer. Employers should consider whether there can be any amendments made to the interview process to accommodate the employee. However, an employer can make a reasonable and lawful direction to an employee to attend an interview. If an employee fails to comply with a lawful and reasonable direction, then it may constitute grounds for disciplinary action.

Witnesses who are employees are entitled to the legal protections that ordinarily attach to their employment, including not being bullied, discriminated against, or harassed and having their health and safety protected. Employers should also ensure that witnesses are not victimised as a result of participating in the investigation and that confidentiality is maintained.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Since there is no mandatory law (yet) that provides a framework for workplace investigation interviews, there are also no special protective regulations for employees acting as witnesses.

Employees have a contractual duty to participate in interviews – be it as a suspect or as a witness – as part of workplace investigations. The employee must provide truthful information based on his duty of loyalty if:

- the questions relate to his area of work;
- the employer has an interest worthy of protection in obtaining the information; and
- the requested information does not represent an excessive burden for the employee.

Whether such a burden can be assumed when the employee must make statements by which he may incriminate himself is disputed in German case law and legal literature. The German Federal Labour Court has not yet decided on this question. Since an internal workplace investigation interview is an interview under private law and not under criminal law, there are, in our view, good arguments that the employee must also make a true statement even if he incriminates himself, provided his area of work is concerned. However, some labour courts assume that in these cases such a statement could not be used in criminal proceedings.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

Indirectly involved employees may be interviewed as witnesses in the context of the investigation, as the employee has a duty of loyalty towards the employer originating from the employment relationship. However, they cannot be forced to do so (in contrast with criminal procedures). Any harmful act that could be considered retaliation against witnesses in the context of violence or harassment or whistleblowing investigation is prohibited. In addition, the identity of any employees as witnesses is also covered by the principle of confidentiality.

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

As part of an investigation, the investigator may want to collect evidence such as camera footage from CCTV, swipe card records, computer records, telephone records or recordings and GPS tracking. There are state-based workplace surveillance laws that operate in each jurisdiction in Australia. The laws recognise that employers are justified in monitoring workplaces for proper purposes, but this is balanced against employees' reasonable expectations of privacy.

The Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) (Privacy Act) also regulates how certain organisations handle personal information, sensitive personal information and employee records. The Privacy Act contains 13 privacy principles that regulate the collection and management of information. Employers should familiarise themselves with the privacy principles before conducting any investigation to ensure they are not in breach when gathering evidence.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

When collecting data (in physical or digital form), the employer must ensure compliance with the data protection principles according to the General Data Protection Regulation (DSGVO) and the German Data Protection Act (BDSG). These principles include, among other things, that data collection must be carried out lawfully (principle of legality) and transparently (transparency principle) and must be comprehensively documented – specifically concerning the purpose of the workplace investigation – to be able to prove compliance with data protection.

The principle of legality states that data may only be collected on a legal basis (ie, there must either be a law authorising this or the employee must have consented to the collection of his data).

The transparency principle may constitute a special challenge during workplace investigations. Under the transparency principle, the employee must be generally informed about the collection of his data. This includes information on who processes the data, the purposes for which it is processed and whether the data is made available to third parties. However, there may be a risk of collusion, particularly when electronic data has to be reviewed, and thus the success of the investigation may be jeopardised if the relevant employee is comprehensively informed in advance. Accordingly, the employer should check, with the assistance of the data protection officer, whether the obligation to provide information may be dispensed with. This may be the case if providing the information would impair the assertion, exercise or defence of legal claims and the interests of the employer in not providing the information outweigh the interests of the employee. The respective circumstances and employer's considerations should be well documented in each case.

Regardless of whether the employee is informed about the investigation, to prevent data loss, the employee should be sent a so-called hold notice (ie, a prohibition to delete data). Additionally, to prevent automatic deletion, blocking mechanisms should also be implemented.

When gathering evidence by searching the employee's possessions or files, the employee's privacy rights also need to be observed (see question 8).

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*

at Karatzas & Partners

GDPR and the provisions of L. 4624/2019 regulate the gathering of physical evidence from a data protection perspective, providing, among other things, that personal data should be processed with transparency and to the extent necessary for the investigation.

L.4990/2022 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law regulates data protection issues in the context of whistleblowing investigations, mainly to safeguard confidentiality throughout the investigations.

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



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

The starting position is that there is no general right for an employer to search an employee's possessions. However, an employer may be able to undertake a search in circumstances where:

- the employee consents to the search;
- there is a "right to search" contained in a contract, policy, procedure or industrial instrument; or
- the request to search constitutes a lawful and reasonable direction.

If an employee agrees to a search of their possessions, this consent should be confirmed in writing. If the employee does not consent then the employer can issue a direction to the employee. If the direction is lawful and reasonable, and the employee does not comply, then disciplinary action may be considered.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Files and documents that are purely business-related – whether in physical or digital form – may, in principle, be inspected by the employer without restriction. The employee has no right to refuse inspection.

When searching business laptops, computers, phones and e-mail accounts, a distinction must be made as to whether private use is permitted (or at least tolerated) or not: if the employee is allowed to use the items exclusively for business purposes, the employer may monitor and control them. If private use is permitted, the employee's right to privacy must be observed for private files, as must the protection of the secrecy of correspondence. Accordingly, the employer must avoid accessing private documents, files and e-mails. However, a review of private documents, files and e-mails may be permissible in the event of particularly serious violations if the employer's interest in the review outweighs the employee's interest in safeguarding his right to privacy. Generally, employers should allow private use of electronic devices only if employees have previously consented to the terms of use (including searches in certain cases).

A search of the employee's workplace by the employer is, in principle, permissible. However, a search of personal items (eg, bags, clothes, personal mobile phone) is generally only permissible with the employee's consent. Similarly to the review of digital personal data, a search of personal items may be permitted,

however, in the event of particularly serious violations if the employer's interest in the search outweighs the employee's right to privacy.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

As a first step, the employer should ask for the employee's permission to access their possessions and files. Employment contracts and internal labour regulations may include provisions regarding an employer's access to employees' documents created and kept for business purposes or related to business activity.

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

A complaint will be a whistleblowing complaint where a complainant has reasonable grounds to suspect that the information they are disclosing about the organisation concerns misconduct or an improper state of affairs or circumstances. The information can be about the organisation or an officer or employee of the organisation engaging in conduct that:

- breaches the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth);
- breaches other financial sector laws;
- breaches any other law punishable by 12 months' imprisonment; or
- represents a danger to the public or the financial system.

Since 2020, all public companies, large proprietary companies and trustees of registrable superannuation entities in Australia are required to have a whistleblower policy. Employers conducting an investigation will need to follow the processes outlined in their policy.

One of the key differences when conducting an investigation that involves whistleblowing is identity protection and the ability of the whistleblower to disclose anonymously and remain anonymous.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdecı*
at Hengeler Mueller

In 2023, Germany has implemented the EU Whistleblowing Directive into national law with the German Whistleblower Protection Act (HinSchG).

The German Whistleblower Protection Act provides that companies with at least 50 employees must

establish internal reporting channels as further set out in the law. Among other things, the confidentiality of the whistleblower as well as of the individuals affected by the report must be protected.

Further, whistleblowers must be protected from negative consequences that may arise from their reports. If the employment of a whistleblower were terminated or if the whistleblower were to be denied promotion after reporting a violation, the employer would have to prove that this was not related to the whistleblowing but was based on justified reasons.

Employers should familiarise themselves with the provisions of the new law.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

L. 4990/2022 includes specific requirements regarding, among other things, the procedure of receiving and investigating respective reports, confidentiality issues (especially regarding the identity of the whistleblower), data protection issues (including restrictions to the right of access) and the employer's right to keep a record of the relevant complaint and investigation. Such provisions are expected to be further detailed by Ministerial Decisions in future.

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10. What confidentiality obligations apply during an investigation?

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

Confidentiality protects the interests of the persons involved in the investigation as well as the integrity of the investigation. Before providing information as part of the investigation, employers should direct the complainant, respondent or witnesses to sign confidentiality agreements. This agreement should direct the person to refrain from discussing the investigation or matters that are the subject of the investigation with any person other than the investigator.

It is also best practice for participants in the investigation to be directed not to victimise (threaten or subject to any detriment) any persons who are witnesses to or are otherwise involved in the investigation.

After an investigation, employers should write to the complainant, respondent and any witnesses reminding them of their ongoing confidentiality obligations.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Depending on the subject of the investigation and the severity and significance of the suspected violation,

employees who are involved in the workplace investigation may already have to maintain confidentiality based on their contractual duties. The prerequisite for this is that the employer has a legitimate interest in maintaining confidentiality. Criminal acts are not subject to confidentiality, but there is also no general obligation for the employee to report or disclose a criminal act to the authorities or the public prosecutor. However, reporting to the competent authorities may be required in certain cases (see question 25).

Lawyers are bound by professional confidentiality and are generally not allowed to provide information about any information they receive from their clients. An exception exists, for example, if the lawyer must provide information to defend himself in court proceedings. There is also no absolute protection against the seizure of documents at an attorney's office (see question 14).

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

Confidentiality applies as a general principle in disciplinary investigations.

Moreover, L. 4990/2022, which transposed EU Directive 2019/1937 into Greek Law, regulates the issue of confidentiality during investigations that start based on an internal report. The managers conducting the investigation must respect and abide by the rules of confidentiality regarding the information they have become aware of when exercising their duties[1]. They must also protect the complainant's and any third party's (referred to in the report) confidentiality by preventing unauthorised persons from accessing the report[2].

Finally, L. 4808/2021 provides that employers must create a procedure that should be communicated to employees regarding all the necessary steps of an investigation following a complaint. Throughout the whole process, the employer, managers and the employer's representatives responsible for the investigation must respect and abide by the rules of confidentiality in a manner that safeguards the dignity and personal data of the complainant and the person under investigation[3].

[1] Law 4990/2022, art. 9 par.8(b)

[2] Law 4990/2022, art. 10 par. 2(e)

[3] Law 4808/2021 art. 5 par.1(a) and 10 par.2(b)

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

To ensure procedural fairness, the allegations must be put to the respondent in writing in advance of the

investigation interview. The allegations must be specific, but the respondent does not need to be provided with a copy of the original complaint. The respondent should also be informed that if the allegations are substantiated they may result in disciplinary action up to and including the termination of the employee's employment.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

In principle, the employer does not have to inform the employees about the investigation. Furthermore, there is no obligation to inform the "suspect" about the specific content of the workplace investigation itself and the allegations against him.

However, if personal data relating to the employee is collected and reviewed, the employee must be informed under German data protection principles (see question 7).

If the employer considers issuing a notice of termination based on the suspicion of wrongdoing, the employee must be allowed to comment on the allegations against him before receiving the termination notice. This requires that the employee be properly informed about the allegations and evidence against him. However, until the time of such a hearing, which usually follows the workplace investigation, there is no obligation on the part of the employer to inform the employee concerned about ongoing investigations.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

As a matter of general principle, employees under investigation must have access to the necessary information to be able to defend themselves, in the context of their fundamental right to a fair trial and hearing.

Moreover, from a data protection perspective, they may be entitled to access their personal data in the respective files.

The above rights must be balanced with confidentiality and the need to safeguard the completion of the investigation and to protect the complainant from retaliation.

According to L.4990/2022, all data and information as well as the identity of the complainant are confidential, and any disclosure is only permitted where required by the EU or national legislation or during court proceedings, and only if it is necessary for the protection of the defence rights of the employee under investigation. The section of L.4808/2021 for the elimination of workplace violence and harassment does not regulate this specifically but provides a general obligation for confidentiality.

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

Employers will generally take steps to treat complaints sensitively and confidentially. However, because of the obligations employers have, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as part of the investigation and the complainant, respondent and witnesses should be made aware of this.

Understandably, the complainant or witnesses may wish to remain anonymous. However, because the details of the allegations need to be put to the respondent so that they can provide an informed response or explanation, the source of the information will often need to be disclosed.

Employers can take steps to “ringfence” the investigation by asking employees to sign a confidentiality agreement. This will protect the interests of the participants of the investigation and uphold the integrity of the investigation.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

There is no general obligation on the part of the employer to disclose to the employee concerned the identity of the complainant, witnesses or other sources of information during the workplace investigation.

However, as described in question 11, the employee must be sufficiently informed of the allegations before a termination based on suspicion of wrongdoing is issued. This may also require disclosing the complainant's or witnesses' identity or other sources of information. In addition, the employer would have the burden of proof in the context of a legal dispute (eg, termination protection proceedings or proceedings about the legality of certain investigation measures) and may have to name witnesses and disclose sources of information.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

According to express provisions of L.4990/2020, in principle personal data and any other information that may lead directly or indirectly to the identification of the complainant must not be disclosed to anyone other than the investigating individuals unless the complainant gives consent^[4] and that is why pseudonyms should be used. The witnesses and third persons that aid the complainant are deemed as “mediators” by the Law and their contribution to the procedure should be confidential^[5].

L.4808/2021 does not indicate when such disclosures are permitted; however, it is obvious that this is a matter of cost-benefit analysis where the public interest and the fundamental rights of the involved persons should be considered in a balanced way to ensure the best results. From a data protection perspective, it could be argued that the person under investigation's right to know the identity of the complainant, witnesses or sources of information should be limited to protect the rights of these persons.

[4] Law 4990/2022 art.14 par.1

[5] Law 4990/2022, art.3 par. 7 and art.10 par.2(e)

Last updated on 03/04/2023

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



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

Non-disclosure agreements, also known as confidentiality agreements, can be used to maintain the confidentiality of the investigation. In this agreement, the employee will be directed to maintain confidentiality concerning the investigation and matters that are the subject of the investigation, and not speak to anyone outside the investigation team about the investigation without authorisation.

Confidentiality agreements are legal documents. Employees should be informed that a breach of the confidentiality agreement could result in disciplinary action being taken against them, up to and including termination of their employment.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

In principle, it is possible to conclude non-disclosure agreements with external consultants of the investigation or with employees involved in the investigation. However, regarding external lawyers, a non-disclosure agreement is not necessary since lawyers are already subject to professional confidentiality. Concerning employees, it is rare in Germany to conclude confidentiality agreements in connection with a workplace investigation.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

NDAs are an option, especially to outline in detail the obligations of the persons conducting the investigation, which is also provided for in law. On the other hand, NDAs will not prevent persons involved from providing information to the competent authorities in the context of criminal or other similar procedures, where they must do so by law. Moreover, they may not protect confidentiality if persons who report breaches of Union law decide to make an external or public report, according to the provisions of L. 4990/2022.

Last updated on 03/04/2023

14. When does privilege attach to investigation materials?



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

Investigation materials are not privileged and an employer may be required to disclose them in subsequent legal proceedings. If an employer is concerned about privilege attaching to an investigation, they should engage a legal practitioner to facilitate the investigation.

Employers who are concerned about privilege attaching to investigation materials should also consider the method of a lawyer's engagement. The lawyer should be expressly engaged to investigate, report and to assist the employer by providing legal advice. Additional benefits can be achieved if the legal practitioner engages an external investigator to investigate the complaint and prepare the investigation report. Privilege will attach to the investigation materials because they are prepared for the lawyer to allow the lawyer to provide legal advice to the employer.

It is important that employers do not expressly or inadvertently waive privilege. For example, by disclosing the investigation report or substantial contents of the investigation report. It is a balance between providing information to the respondent and complainant about the outcome of the investigation and disclosing too much information.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdecı*
at Hengeler Mueller

The legal situation regarding attorney-client privilege for investigation materials compiled by external advisors (in particular investigation reports) is unclear. In principle, there is no absolute protection against seizure by the public prosecutor in the relationship between client and lawyer. Such protection only exists in the relationship between the accused in a criminal proceeding and his criminal defence attorney.

In recent years, German courts have repeatedly issued different rulings on the question of whether investigation materials (at the company itself or a lawyer's office) may be seized. In 2018, the Federal Constitutional Court (BVerfG) ruled that the seizure of documents at the offices of an international law firm that is not based in Germany, and therefore can not invoke German constitutional rights, is lawful. However, the BVerfG did not comment on what would apply to seizures at law firms based in Germany.

For violations that could lead to the company itself being exposed to investigative proceedings at some point and possibly having to defend itself, there are, in our view, good arguments for investigation materials being subject to attorney-client privilege. Additionally, the lawyer's hand file, in which he usually keeps his notes on the case or minutes of conversations with his client, may also not be seized. In all other cases, under the current legal situation, there is a risk that the materials may be seized, even in the office of the company's lawyer. From a practical point of view, it is nevertheless advisable to label investigative materials, especially interview protocols and investigation reports, with a notice that they are confidential documents subject to attorney-client privilege and to store them not at the company's premises but in an attorney's office.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

Regarding L.4990/2022 for whistleblowers' procedures, many categories of privilege may occur during an investigation, such as: attorney-client privilege; doctor-patient privilege; and court or other proceedings' privilege deemed as classified. L.4990/2022 provides that its provisions do not affect any of these privileges and these privileges supersede^[6].

Privilege may also be attached to investigation materials in investigations relating to workplace harassment and violence incidents; however, since L.4808/2021 does not offer a specific provision and criminal proceedings may also commence, the matter of privilege must be examined ad hoc.

[6] Law 4990/2022 art.5 par.2(b) and par.2(c)

Last updated on 03/04/2023

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

The respondent should be given the opportunity to have a support person present during the investigation meeting and any subsequent conversations that concern the termination of their employment. Failure to allow the respondent to have a support person may result in any subsequent termination of employment being found to be an unfair dismissal. This is because under the Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth), when the FWC is considering whether a dismissal is an unfair dismissal, they must consider any unreasonable refusal by the employer to allow the person to have a support person present to assist at any discussions relating to dismissal.

Employers should request that the respondent inform them 48 hours before any meeting of the identity of their support person. This will allow the employer to confirm the support person's suitability. A support person can be a legal representative or trade union representative, but the role of a support person is limited to assisting the employee and they are not there to act as an advocate or representative.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Generally, the employee is free to engage a lawyer at his own expense if he needs legal advice in connection with a workplace investigation. However, the employee does not have a right to consult a lawyer at the employer's expense or to have a lawyer present at an interview. Similarly, the employee is not entitled to be accompanied, for example, by a works council member, during an interview. The involvement of legal counsel may potentially inflate the investigation unnecessarily, making it longer and more expensive. However, it may be advisable from the employer's point of view to (proactively) allow legal representation (eg, to increase the employee's willingness to testify or to create trust) and even to bear the legal counsel's fees. Specifically, if the employee is already a defendant in criminal proceedings or runs the risk of incriminating himself, he should be allowed to be accompanied by a lawyer, otherwise he may be unwilling to cooperate.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

Greek law does not specifically regulate the right to be accompanied or have legal representation during internal investigations for private-sector employees.

However, the right to legal representation established in article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights could be interpreted to cover cases such as internal investigations in the workplace. In addition, according to article 136 of Civil Servant Code, the employee under investigation has the right to be represented by an attorney at law. There is an additional argument regarding private-sector employees and their right to legal representation, by applying this provision by analogy.

Last updated on 03/04/2023

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

A trade union does not have any right to be informed of, or involved in, an investigation by an employer. However, an employee may request that their support person is a trade union member or trade union representative. This is appropriate and should be permitted.

Employers should review the terms of an employment contract, policy or industrial instrument as this may contain terms regarding trade union involvement. In particular, heavily-unionised workplaces may contain enterprise agreements which contain relevant clauses.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*

at Hengeler Mueller

The works council does not have a general right of co-determination on whether and in what way a workplace investigation is carried out. However, workplace investigations may trigger co-determination rights of the works council in specific cases, as outlined below. If co-determination rights come into consideration, the employer must inform the works council about the investigation to put the works council in a position to assess whether or not co-determination rights are affected.

In connection with workplace investigations, the works council may have a co-determination right in the following cases:

- If e-mail accounts and data are screened by using technical devices that are suitable to monitor the behaviour or performance of employees (section 87 paragraph 1 no. 6, BetrVG).
- If, for example, the employer instructs all or a large group of employees to participate in interviews, the co-determination right of the works council regarding the rules of operation of the establishment and the conduct of employees in the establishment (section 87 paragraph 1 no. 1, BetrVG) may be affected.
- If standardised questionnaires are used in employee interviews, provided they are used for a large group of interviewed employees (section 94, BetrVG).

If co-determination rights exist in the specific case, the works council has the right to co-determine the type and structure of the specific investigative measures used (ie, the relevant investigative measure cannot be carried out without the works council's consent). To avoid any conflicts, the employer should set up, together with the works council, general rules about workplace investigations well ahead of any investigation.

Trade unions have no right of co-determination in workplace investigations.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

L.4990/2022 explicitly states that the exercise of employee rights that refer to consulting from representatives or trade unions and protection against any detrimental measure that results from those consultations does not affect the implementation of any legal provisions. The autonomy of social partners and their right to enter into collective agreements regardless of the level of protection provided by L.4990/2022^[7] is also unaffected.

Under L.4808/2021, legal persons and associations of persons, including trade unions, that have a legitimate interest in doing so may, with the consent of the complainant, bring an action in the complainant's name before the competent administrative or judicial authorities. They may also intervene in their defence^[8].

^[7] Law 4990/2022 art.5 par.2 (e)

^[8] Law 4808/2021 art.14

Last updated on 03/04/2023

17. What other support can employees involved in the

investigation be given?



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

Employers should be conscious that the investigation may have an impact on the complainant, respondent and witnesses. Employers will need to consider how to support their employees. The level of support provided will often depend on the size of the organisation and programmes already in place.

Many employers have an Employee Assistance Programme and employees should be reminded about this programme if further support or assistance is required. An employer's HR team may also be able to assist if an employee has concerns about the progress of an investigation.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Generally, when employees may also use their devices for private purposes, the employer should ensure it allows its employees to tag their private data as "private". This tagging may facilitate the differentiation between business data (relevant for the investigation) and (non-usable) private data in the event of e-mail and electronic data screening.

In addition, the employer may, in appropriate cases, assure the employee that, if there is complete and truthful disclosure of facts to be clarified, the employer will refrain from imposing sanctions under labour and civil law (eg, a warning, termination of employment and the assertion of any claims for damages). In practice, assistance in finding a lawyer and the payment of legal fees is sometimes offered. However, such amnesty programmes are commonly only useful if there is a large number of cases that are particularly complex, poorly documented and difficult to resolve without amnesty offers.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

According to L.4990/2022, any form of retaliation against complainants is prohibited, including threats of retaliation^[9]. The complainants have the right to cost-free legal advice about possible acts of retaliation as well as cost-free provision of psychological support (to be defined by Ministerial Decisions)^[10]. In terms of other types of support, the complainants are not in principle liable for the acquisition of information or releasing the information they reported under specific conditions (eg, the acquisition or access does not independently constitute a criminal offence, if they had reasonable grounds for believing that a report was necessary to reveal the violation)^[11].

L. 4808/2021 states that the dismissal or termination of the legal relationship of employment and any other discrimination that constitutes an act of revenge or retaliation is prohibited and invalid^[12].

[9] Law 4990/2022 art.17

[10] Law 4990/2022 art.19

[11] Law 4990/2022 art.18 par.1(a)

[12] Law 4808/2021 art.13

Last updated on 03/04/2023

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



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

During the investigation, unrelated matters can come to light, usually made by the complainant or a witness during the interview process. Unrelated matters may take the form of further complaints against the respondent (but on grounds that are outside the scope of the current investigation), or entirely different complaints.

An employer should first assess the nature of the new allegations. Entirely unrelated matters should be dealt with separately. However, if the matter relates to the respondent it may be appropriate to obtain consent from the respondent and complainant for the scope of the investigation to be widened. It is important to remember that all allegations must be put to the respondent and they must be given an opportunity to respond.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

There are no specific rules if unrelated matters are revealed during the investigation. If, in the course of the workplace investigation, new facts are discovered, the same principles apply as for the original reason for the investigation and the employer should consider whether to extend the investigation to the new matter too.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

If any unrelated matters are revealed as a result of an investigation and are of legal importance, the applicable legal provisions must be implemented and any relevant policies or agreements between the involved parties should be taken into account. For example, if the reporting procedure sheds light on other criminal acts, criminal law procedure may be followed if the matter is reported to the competent

authorities.

If these unrelated matters fall under the ambit of another company's policies, the relevant procedures may also be followed separately. However, the employee under investigation must be allowed to defend him or herself, otherwise he or she may raise complaints relating to the procedural guarantees of the investigation.

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



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

If a respondent raises a grievance during the investigation this should be dealt with under any employment contract, grievance policy or industrial instrument. This may involve investigating and responding accordingly. The content of the grievance should be carefully considered, but in many circumstances it is appropriate for the initial investigation to continue. Multiple investigations can be run simultaneously.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

As seen in question 6, the employee must participate in interviews requested by the employer under certain circumstances. Generally, the employee must provide truthful information even if it is incriminating.

The raising of a grievance by the employee does not directly affect the workplace investigation (ie, the investigation does not have to be stopped and the employee's obligation to provide truthful information continues). This may change, however, once the court decides that certain measures were conducted unlawfully and must, therefore, cease.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

Employees under investigation frequently raise grievances during investigation procedures that are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The grievances raised by the employee under investigation are examined by the employees responsible for the investigation. They may either pause the relevant proceedings and review the grievance, especially if the claims of the employee under investigation are linked to a breach of his or her data or hearing rights, or they may continue the investigation.

Last updated on 03/04/2023

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



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

It is not uncommon for respondents to an investigation to take personal or carer's leave (sick leave) claiming that they are suffering from stress or anxiety. If this occurs, employers need to act appropriately, but this does not necessarily involve stopping the investigation process.

Employers should:

- assess the medical evidence to ascertain the respondent's condition and determine how long they are likely to be unwell;
- avoid exacerbating the condition;
- determine whether the employee is unfit to attend the investigation meeting;
- take into consideration the evidence of other witnesses;
- consider delaying the investigation for a short period; and
- consider conducting the interviews in other ways, for example, in writing.

While all efforts should be made to accommodate an employee who has taken personal or carer's leave during an investigation, if the respondent does not participate in the investigation, the investigation report may be prepared based on the available evidence.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Workplace investigations that do not require the presence or active cooperation of the employee may also start or continue during the employee's absence due to illness. If the employee's cooperation is required, for example for an interview, the employer can only instruct the employee to participate despite an existing illness if certain narrow conditions are met:

Regarding staff meetings at the company, the German Federal Labour Court has ruled that the employer can only instruct the employee to attend the staff meeting during illness if

- there is an urgent operational reason for doing so, which does not allow the instruction to be postponed until after the end of the incapacity to work; and
- the employee's presence at the company is urgently required and can be expected of him.

Similar rules are likely to apply to the employee's presence for workplace investigations.

Urgent operational reasons that cannot be postponed could exist, for example, if during the employee's absence due to illness, there is a risk that evidence will be lost (eg, where only the employee affected has access to certain files or data) or there is a risk of significant damage to the employer if workplace investigations are stopped until after the employee's return.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

In principle, the health of an ordinary employee would not prevent the investigation procedure from taking place (eg, interviews with witnesses or the collection of evidence would not be postponed or suspended). However, if the employee under investigation is unwell and they can't participate in the procedure, the investigation may be suspended or postponed until the employee can take part. Bearing in mind the majority of company internal policies and regulations governing workplace investigations provide for a specific framework and timetable for the whole procedure to be completed, the long-term sickness of an employee under investigation may impede the completion of the procedure in the prescribed time. As a result, the person conducting the investigation may seek alternative measures to facilitate participation (eg, teleconferencing).

On a related note, if sickness occurs after the investigation is completed and the employer decides upon the imposition of disciplinary measures against the said employee and the initiation of a relevant procedure, the decision should be duly and timely communicated to the employee, irrespective of whether his or her presence in the workplace is not possible because of the illness.

Last updated on 03/04/2023

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

There are circumstances of misconduct in the workplace that can also constitute criminal conduct and be subject to a criminal or regulatory investigation. This can include physical or sexual assault, theft, fraud, illegal drug use or stalking.

An employer can proceed with an investigation to determine whether the respondent engaged in misconduct on the balance of probabilities. The employer can terminate an employee's employment before the outcome of any criminal investigation. However, the employer must keep in mind that procedural fairness must be afforded to the employee, particularly in circumstances where an employee is awaiting the outcome of a court proceeding.

Alternatively, an employer may decide to suspend the employee pending the outcome of the criminal investigation. If a criminal act has been committed, then the employer may decide to terminate the employee's employment.

Co-operation with the police and regulatory authorities is sensible and evidence can be compelled by the police or regulators by, for example, a subpoena, search warrant or an order for production.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

In principle, workplace investigations and criminal or regulatory investigations are not dependent on each other and can therefore be conducted in parallel. German public prosecutors have an ambivalent view of internal investigations. On the one hand, they are to some extent sceptical about workplace investigations. They fear that evidence will be destroyed and facts manipulated. On the other hand, they often do not have the resources to conduct investigations as extensive as the companies do. In any event, due to the principle of official investigation that applies in Germany, the investigating public prosecutor's office will usually reassess the results of an internal investigation and conduct independent investigations.

Regarding whether internal investigations reports and material have to be shared with or can be seized by the public prosecutor, please see question 14.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

Incidents of violence and harassment may be dealt with by certain independent authorities, such as the Labour Inspectorate Body and the Greek Ombudsman. The former is competent to impose sanctions on the employer if there is a breach of the general prohibition of violence and harassment at the workplace and the obligation of employers regarding the prevention of such incidents and the obligation to adopt policies within the business. The Greek Ombudsman is competent to deal with disputes when there is violence or harassment in the workplace coupled with discrimination due to, for example, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or gender identity. Moreover, the applicable legal framework^[13] stipulates that victims of violence and harassment are entitled to lodge a report before the Labour Inspectorate Body and the Greek Ombudsman. This is in addition to the judicial protection he or she may seek and the internal investigation procedure to which he or she may have recourse, without specifying whether internal proceedings may be suspended before the regulatory bodies decide on the matter.

On the other hand, the National Transparency Authority and in certain cases the Hellenic Competition Commission are external reporting channels for employees reporting breaches of Union law. In such cases, L.4990/2022 (article 11 paragraph 5) stipulates that the investigation before the National Transparency Authority is not suspended if reporting procedures before other regulatory authorities have been initiated.

Moreover, criminal investigations can run in parallel with internal probes.

^[13] Law 4808/2018 art.10

Last updated on 03/04/2023

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

Managing the outcome of the investigation is an important part of the process. The respondent must be informed of the outcome of the investigation as soon as possible after the investigation is completed and

the decision-maker has decided how to proceed.

The investigator must decide whether the claims have been substantiated on the balance of probabilities and the decision-maker must decide what disciplinary action, if any, will be taken. Any disciplinary action should be proportionate to the seriousness of the misconduct. Disciplinary action could include a warning, counselling, monitoring of behaviour or termination of employment.

Ideally, the outcome of the investigation should be communicated to the respondent and complainant in writing, setting out the allegations that have been substantiated, unsubstantiated or whether there is insufficient evidence to make a finding.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

The employer has no general obligation to proactively inform the employee about the outcome of an investigation. However, if personal data was collected, the employee has the right to request certain information: the purpose of the data collection, type of data, recipients of the data, the planned storage period of the data, his right to have the data corrected or deleted, his right to complain to a supervisory authority, and information on the source of the data.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

The employer has an obligation, towards the alleged victim but also the alleged perpetrator, to carefully investigate the report and any existing evidence before making decisions. The employee under investigation must be informed about the outcome of the procedure and any measures adopted in this regard. The respective decision must have due justification.

Last updated on 03/04/2023

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



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

The investigator should prepare a written report setting out whether the allegations are substantiated, unsubstantiated or cannot be determined due to insufficient evidence. This report should be used for internal purposes only. Accordingly, the report should not be shared with the complainant, respondent or witnesses unless required by law, the employer's policies or another industrial instrument. It is particularly important not to share the investigation report should the employer wish to maintain privilege in respect of

the report.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Generally, general data protection regulations apply. This means that, after the investigation, the information described in question 22 must only be provided if the employee requests it.

Whether, in the context of such a request, the full report needs to be shared is disputed in Germany. Some legal scholars and labour courts argue that a summary of the content of the report is sufficient. Others state that the employee should be presented with the full report, whereby passages that do not concern him should be redacted. In practice, it is highly uncommon to share the full report with the employee.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

There is no explicit legal provision stating the whole report must be communicated with the employee under investigation. The legal framework (L.4990/2022 and L.4808/2021) is governed by strict confidentiality obligations and obligations to protect the complainant's data. From a data protection regulation perspective, it could be argued that the right of the person under investigation to know the identity of the complainant, witnesses or sources of information should be limited to protect the rights of such persons.

However, if the outcome of the investigation leads to the imposition of disciplinary measures, the right of the employee under investigation to request the whole investigation report, to aid in their defence is enhanced. Moreover, if a complaint is made in bad faith or is unfounded, it may be supported that the employee under investigation is entitled to receive full documentation so he or she can seek adequate legal protection or file an action before the courts.

Last updated on 03/04/2023

24. What next steps are available to the employer?



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

Employers must take steps to deal with the findings of the investigation and implement any recommendations promptly. This may involve commencing disciplinary action.

The complainant and respondent need to be informed of the outcome of the investigation. All witnesses who participated in the investigation should also be thanked for their contribution and advised that the investigation has been completed. All participants in an investigation should be reminded of their ongoing obligations concerning confidentiality and victimisation.

If an employer decides that it may be appropriate to terminate a respondent's employment, the employee must be provided with the opportunity to respond and to "show cause" as to why their employment should not be terminated.

The investigation report along with any other materials produced during the investigation should be kept in a separate confidential file.

Employers should also consider whether action should be taken at an organisational level to prevent future misconduct. In particular, employers are required to take a proactive approach to addressing systemic workplace cultural issues in relation to sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation.

Last updated on 25/09/2023



Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Depending on the results of the investigation, different steps may have to be taken by the employer. Specifically, the following should be considered:

- in certain cases, there may be an obligation (or at least good reason) to share the results of the workplace investigation with the authorities (see question 25);
- filing of a criminal complaint against the employee;
- disciplinary measures against the employee such as a warning, ordinary termination or termination for cause;
- assessing and asserting claims for damages against the employee;
- offering compliance training to the relevant employees or introducing additional measures to prevent further violations;
- if there is a risk that the company itself is exposed to investigative proceedings at some point and may have to defend itself, investigation materials should be stored at the company's external attorney's office; and
- depending on the individual circumstances of the case and to mitigate potential reputational damage, proactively informing the public (eg, by issuing a press release) may be beneficial.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

For workplace violence and harassment investigations, depending on the outcome of the internal investigation, the employer may adopt certain measures including, for example, recommendations to the employee under investigation, changes to the employee's working hours and transfer to another department.

If the employer decides to terminate the employment relationship, without having previously followed existing corporate policies regarding reporting procedures or without having provided the alleged perpetrator with the right to be heard, the dismissal could be deemed invalid. In any case, the measures adopted should be appropriate and proportional to the act committed.

Last updated on 03/04/2023

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?



Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

The outcome of the investigation must be disclosed to the complainant and respondent. If there is a concurrent police or regulatory investigation, they may request a copy of the investigation report. Employers should generally cooperate with regulatory authorities, but should be careful about disclosing the investigation report as this may be privileged and privacy obligations must be considered. Employers should consider only disclosing the investigation findings and interview records if compelled to do so by regulators or police.

Interview reports, the investigation report and communications about the investigation should be kept in a separate file. The file should be marked confidential and access to the file should be restricted.

If proceedings are commenced, the investigation materials may be subject to disclosure unless legal professional privilege can be asserted, see above.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

At the end of the workplace investigation, the results are presented to the company's management bodies so that they can make a decision. This may be a mere summary of the facts, or it may contain a legal assessment and recommendation for action.

There is no general obligation to report compliance violations to the police or public prosecutor's office. For some violations, there are statutory disclosure requirements. For example, data protection violations must be reported to the responsible supervisory authority (article 33 and 34, DSGVO), violations in connection with money laundering must be reported to the Central Office for Financial Transaction Investigations (section 43, Anti-Money Laundering Act), unlawful claiming of subventions must be disclosed to the subsidy-providing authority (section 3, Subventions Act), and incorrect information in the tax declaration must be reported to the tax authority (section 153, Tax Code). Additionally, in listed companies, criminal acts may constitute insider information in individual cases, and this must be disclosed within the framework of ad hoc publicity following market abuse regulations.

Also, there may be cases where reporting to the authorities should be considered for corporate policy and tactical reasons (eg, to avoid or mitigate negative consequences for the business).

Pursuant to section 17 paragraph 2, HinSchG, feedback will need to be provided to the whistleblower within three months of confirmation of receipt of the report or, if the receipt has not been confirmed to the whistleblower, within three months and seven days after receipt of the report. This includes the communication of planned and already taken follow-up measures as well as their reasons. Feedback to the whistleblower may only be provided to the extent that it does not affect the workplace investigation and does not prejudice the rights of the persons who are the subject of the report or who are named in the report.

For the question of whether internal investigations reports and material need to be shared with or can be seized by the public prosecutor, please see question 14.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

In principle, there is no specific obligation for investigating persons to disclose their findings. For proceedings before a court that have been initiated or investigated by the police or competent regulatory bodies, the relevant findings may be communicated under strict conditions and provided that the personal data of the parties involved are not publicly disclosed.

More specifically, under L. 4490/2022, in the context of whistleblowing procedures, personal data and any information that leads, directly or indirectly, to the identification of the complainant are not disclosed to anyone other than employees involved in the investigation, unless the complainant consents. The identity of the complainant and any other information may only be disclosed in the context of investigations by competent authorities or judicial proceedings, to the extent necessary for the protection of the employee under investigation's rights of defence. Confidentiality obligations govern the procedure for revealing trade secrets to police and regulatory bodies, especially in the framework of L.4990/2022.

Last updated on 03/04/2023

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

There are legal requirements related to the time you must keep certain employee records in Australia, such as pay slips and time sheets. However, there are no laws concerning disciplinary records.

Employers can rely on previous misconduct to justify an employee's termination of employment where it can be shown it is part of a course of conduct. Accordingly, if complaints have been substantiated, and disciplinary action has been taken, these records should be maintained. However, if a significant period has elapsed since the misconduct, an employer should carefully consider whether it is appropriate to rely on this past behaviour to justify future disciplinary action for similar conduct.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

If there is no special statutory storage period (which is the case for investigative reports and findings), personal data may only be stored for as long as is necessary for the purposes for which they are collected. As soon as the data is no longer required, it must be deleted. In connection with workplace investigations,

the question arises as to how this obligation to delete personal data relates to the company's corporate interests. From the company's perspective, there may well be legitimate interests that speak in favour of retaining existing data for as long as possible. Under the data protection regulations of the DSGVO and the BDSG, data can be stored for as long as it is required for the assertion, exercise or defence of (civil) legal claims. This means that the data can, in any event, be saved at least as long as any measures related to the workplace investigation have not yet been completed and any legal disputes have not yet been concluded.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

Under the General Data Protection Regulation, employees' personal details and information must be kept in the business records for as long as is necessary for the purposes of the employment relationship. Otherwise, stored data must be deleted. However, under L.4990/2022[14], reports remain in the relevant record for a reasonable and necessary time, and in any case until the completion of investigations or proceedings before the courts that have been initiated as a consequence of a complaint against the employee under investigation, the complainant or any third parties.

[14] L.4990/2022 art.16 par.1

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

Australia

Author: *Joydeep Hor, Kirryn West James, Chris Oliver*
at People + Culture Strategies

It is important for employers to conduct procedurally fair investigations that result in a fair outcome. Failure to do so may expose the employer to various claims by an employee. The most common type of claim following an investigation is an unfair dismissal claim. If a respondent's employment is terminated because of an investigation, they may be eligible to bring an unfair dismissal claim in the FWC alleging their dismissal was harsh, unjust or unreasonable.

An employee may also bring a bullying, discrimination or general protections claim. These claims may be made even where the investigation does not result in the employee's dismissal.

If an employer has departed from the procedures set out in their policies, or they have not followed the terms of an employee's employment contract or another applicable industrial instrument then an employee may bring a claim for breach of contract.

Australia has also recently introduced the "Respect@Work" legislation which places a positive obligation on employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation, as far as possible. Accordingly, an employer who is not perceived to have taken a proactive and fair approach to these workplace issues faces significant legal exposure.

Failure to conduct an investigation properly (or a failure to conduct an investigation in circumstances where it is needed) can also cause significant reputational and financial risk.

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Germany

Author: *Hendrik Bockenheimer, Susanne Walzer, Musa Müjdeci*
at Hengeler Mueller

Different consequences may result from mistakes made by the employer (or its advisors) in the course of the workplace investigation. For example, if the employer has violated the data protection provisions of the DSGVO or BDSG, this may result in fines. This may also result in claims for damages by the employee. The employee may also have a claim for damages if it turns out that the suspicion of misconduct on the part of the employee is not confirmed and the employer has arbitrarily conducted workplace investigations without sufficient cause.

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Greece

Author: *Angeliki Tsatsi, Anna Pechlivanidi, Pinelopi Anyfanti, Katerina Basta*
at Karatzas & Partners

The employee can contest the decisions of disciplinary councils before the courts and request their annulment.

Moreover, in the framework of L.4990/2022, a monetary penalty and prison sentence (to be defined by an implementing Ministerial Decision) may be imposed on any person violating confidentiality obligations concerning the identity and personal data of employees or third parties included in the investigation procedure, while monetary penalties are also provided for legal entities[15].

Moreover, administrative fines may also be imposed if the employer does not comply with the legal requirements concerning the prevention of violence and harassment in the workplace.

Furthermore, the employee under investigation may initiate proceedings before the courts under tort law, by claiming compensation for moral damages suffered if the company did not comply with its confidentiality obligations after the incident (eg, due to the spread of rumours in the workplace). This may also be linked with criminal law proceedings against the persons responsible for dealing with the investigation (and not against the legal person, since under Greek law there is no criminal liability for legal persons).

On the other hand, the employer may also be exposed to liability vis-à-vis the complainant, witnesses or facilitators, for breach of confidentiality or other obligations prescribed in the respective legal provisions, or if there are retaliation measures.

[15] L.4990/2022 art.23 par.1

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Contributors



Australia

Joydeep Hor

Kirryn West James

Chris Oliver

People + Culture Strategies



Germany

Hendrik Bockenheimer

Susanne Walzer

Musa Müjdecı

Hengeler Mueller



Greece

Angeliki Tsatsi

Anna Pechlivanidi

Pinelopi Anyfanti

Katerina Basta

Karatzas & Partners