

Workplace Investigations

Contributing Editors

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



India

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There is no codified law in India on conducting workplace investigations, so they largely depend on the internal policies of the employer. Certain requirements and best practice measures have evolved through judicial precedent, and these are codified through internal policies.

For claims involving sexual harassment, however, investigations can only be undertaken by the Internal Committee (IC), which an employer needs to constitute under the Prevention of Sexual Harassment of Women and Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 (SH Act).

The general principle laid down by the courts is that any action against an employee for misconduct should be taken after conducting a disciplinary inquiry as per the principles of natural justice (PNJ). Whether or not a disciplinary inquiry can be done away with in any circumstances is a very fact-specific assessment and depends on various factors, including but not limited to the seniority and location of employment of the employee, and the nature and circumstances of the alleged misconduct.

The PNJ broadly require:

- that the accused employee should be issued with a written charge sheet or notice setting out the allegations against him or her along with a reasonable opportunity to respond;
- appointment of an independent inquiry officer to assess whether the allegations are proven or not; and
- that action must be taken based on the outcome of the inquiry, any punishment ordered should be proportionate to the gravity of the misconduct, and also take into account the service history (eg, prior warnings) of the individual.

The charge sheet or notice issued to the employee has to set out the evidence used by the employer to support the allegations in sufficient detail. Therefore, gathering necessary information and evidence is usually a critical precursor for any disciplinary process that an employer may eventually initiate against an employee.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

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.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

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.



Vietnam

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There are no specific legislative requirements for workplace investigations in Vietnam. However, Labor Code No. 45/2019/QH14 dated 20 November 2019 (2019 Labor Code), which is currently the primary legislation governing employment relationships, requires employers that have more than ten employees to provide a mechanism and procedure for handling sexual harassment cases in the workplace. Other than that, an employer may incorporate policies and guidelines on how to deal with workplace investigations into its handbook.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

02. How is a workplace investigation usually commenced?



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As a precursor to the actual disciplinary process, investigations are usually initiated when the employer becomes aware of an allegation or complaint of misconduct, or observes any acts or omissions by an employee constituting workplace misconduct. The employer (or investigating committee – which could also be an outside agency like an auditor or law firm appointed by the employer) would generally commence the investigation by speaking with the complainant (or whistleblower) to gather as many details as possible (relevant facts, evidence, list of witnesses, etc) concerning the allegations, so that the next steps and approach can be determined upfront.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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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.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



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).^[1] 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.^[2]

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

^[2] Klaus Moosmayer, *Compliance, Praxisleitfaden für Unternehmen*, 2. A. München 2015, N 314.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Vietnam

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The circumstances in which an employer commences a workplace investigation may vary, either through a whistleblower, through an internal system, email or phone call; complaints from suppliers, contractors, or customers; or accounts from observations and hearsay. Sometimes, it comes from anonymous complaints. However, it is common for an employer to verify whether the report or complaint is substantiated, partially

substantiated, or unsubstantiated, which is sufficient to initiate and commence a workplace investigation.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



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Yes, an employee can be suspended or placed on administrative leave during an investigation if the circumstances warrant it. It is recommended to include the right to suspend in employee-facing policies. The employee should be informed about the suspension in writing, by issuing a suspension letter. In practice, a suspension is used when the charges against the employee are serious or if the employee's presence at the workplace is likely to prejudice the investigation in any manner (eg, where there are concerns that evidence may be tampered with or witnesses pressurised). The requirement to suspend the employee should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and should not be exercised in every instance. If an employee is suspended, the investigation and inquiry should be completed as quickly as possible.

Further, concerning payment during the period of suspension, the law varies depending on the state and the category of employee. Generally, Indian law requires that individuals who are "workmen" be paid a subsistence allowance during the period of suspension, usually at the rate of 50% of their regular wages during the first 90 days of the suspension, and at varying rates thereafter. The exact rates at which subsistence allowance is paid will vary from state to state. In our experience, many companies choose to suspend employees with full salary even if there is an applicable subsistence allowance statute. This helps take some pressure off of the timeline within which the investigation and subsequent disciplinary inquiry can be completed.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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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.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

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

[1] David Rosenthal et al., *Praxishandbuch für interne Untersuchungen und eDiscovery*, Release 1.01, Zürich/Bern 2021, p. 181.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Vietnam

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Article 128 of the 2019 Labor Code explicitly states that an employer has the right to temporarily suspend an employee who is being investigated for committing an alleged act of misconduct in breach of the labour rules, if the following conditions are met:

- the misconduct committed is complex in nature, and any further work carried out by the employee may jeopardise the ongoing investigation. The law does not clearly define "complex nature"; it may be open to various interpretations by the employer. In practice and from our experience, allegations of sexual harassment may be considered complex misconduct and, therefore, can be a ground for suspension;
- the employer has consulted with (and effectively obtained the approval of) the grassroots-level representative organisation of the employee. No formal process is stipulated under the law for such consultation with this organisation. From our experience, the consultation can be in the form of a meeting between the management of the employer and the executive committee of the organisation. However, the organisation should require the employee to acknowledge their consent in writing by signing the meeting minutes;
- the period of suspension cannot exceed 15 days or 90 days in "special circumstances". The law does not define what falls under "special circumstances". In our view, this will be subject to the interpretation and discretion of the employer after consulting with the grassroots-level representative organisation of the employee; and
- the employee must be paid 50% of his or her wage that would be due during the period of the temporary suspension in advance. When the temporary suspension ends, if no disciplinary measure is imposed on the employee, the employer must pay the full wage for the period of the suspension by paying the remaining 50%.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



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Complaints pertaining to sexual harassment can only be investigated by the IC constituted under the SH Act.

For other kinds of misconduct, employers usually constitute a fact-finding investigation team with members who are independent and unbiased. The fact-finding team can be appointed internally, or the employer could also engage an external agency, depending upon the gravity and sensitivity of the matter, the nature of the issues being investigated or a desire to try and maintain legal privilege regarding the findings of the investigation.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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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.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



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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^[1], if the allegations concerned are quite substantive and, in any case, where an increased degree of independence is sought.

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

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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There are no statutory minimum qualifications or criteria for someone to conduct a workplace investigation. The employer can simply delegate the investigation task to anyone. However, it is good practice for qualified persons with proper training in workplace investigations to conduct the investigation as these involve intricate issues. It is also important that investigators are fair, unbiased, and impartial. In addition, they should not be related to any parties involved in the investigation.

In complex cases or cases involving a senior or high-ranking employee, the employer should appoint a person with a higher authority or rank in the company to lead and oversee the conduct of the investigation. This also applies in instances where it is foreseeable that the investigation may lead to disciplinary action, summary dismissal of the employee, or a report to an authority.

There are instances when engaging with external parties or professional advisors may be necessary. This is especially the case if the conduct under investigation is serious or widespread, which may lead to regulatory consequences if the employer does not have the expertise to handle the investigation.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



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An employee has very limited ability to bring legal action to stop the investigation, as no disciplinary measure is taken against an individual during the investigation stage. The risk of claims or disputes generally arises after the employer has taken disciplinary measures against the individual.

An employee could, however, bring claims in some circumstances – for example, if the individual has been suspended without pay, or if the individual's assets have been seized as part of the investigation without following due process. Therefore, it is critical that robust internal guidelines are framed that lay out the framework to follow in investigations to mitigate the risk of legal claims or disputes.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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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.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

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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.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

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The employee can only bring legal action to stop the investigation if he or she claims that his or her rights have been clearly and blatantly violated during the investigation. However, the employee bears a heavy legal burden of proof to substantiate his or her claims. Based on our experience, most of the time, it is very difficult for the employee to prove this and successfully stop the investigation.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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

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Yes, in matters pertaining to sexual harassment, the SH Act expressly stipulates that the IC holds the powers of a civil court to summon any person to be examined as a witness. In misconduct cases, the investigating authority can ask employees to appear and testify before it as witnesses and internal policies should have provisions for this. As a result, employees are duty-bound to fairly and honestly participate in any investigative or disciplinary proceedings relating to the workplace, including offering truthful evidence and testimony on matters they may have observed or experienced as an employee of the organisation. While employees don't have any express statutory protections when acting as witnesses, any such policy

should be balanced and include necessary safeguards, such as assuring employees that any retaliation against them will not be tolerated and that the details of their participation will only be shared on a need-to-know basis.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

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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.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

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.^[1] 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).^[2]

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

^[2] Same opinion: Nicolas Facincani/Reto Sutter, *Interne Untersuchungen: Rechte und Pflichten von*

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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There are no provisions in Vietnamese law that impose any statutory or legal obligation on an employee to act as a witness in an investigation. Hence, an employer does not have the power to compel its employees to act as witnesses in an investigation. However, a request for an employee to provide evidence or give details of an event that he or she knows of may reasonably be deemed to be a lawful and reasonable directive from an employer. Consequently, an employee's refusal to act as a witness may be tantamount to an act of insubordination, which may lead to disciplinary action by the employer. In any circumstances, if an employee refuses to attend an interview or is generally not cooperating with an investigation, the reasons for this will need to be considered carefully by the employer.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



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In India, the collection, disclosure, transfer and storage of personal data is regulated by the Information Technology (Reasonable Security Practices and Procedures and Sensitive Personal Data or Information) Rules, 2011 (SPD Rules). Accordingly, if during an investigation any sensitive personal information (such as information relating to passwords; financial information such as a bank account, credit or debit card or other payment instrument details; a physical, physiological or mental health condition; sexual orientation; medical history; and biometric information) is collected, then the requirements under the SPD Rules will need to be complied with. This would include obtaining an individual's "informed consent" before collecting any sensitive personal data if such information is intended to be collected or stored in an electronic format.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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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.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

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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.^[2] 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.

^[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

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Decree No. 13/2023/ND-CP on personal data protection is the main data protection regulation in Vietnam. It regulates the processing of personal data, including the collection or gathering of data. If the physical

evidence contains personal data of an individual, the gathering of physical evidence must comply with this decree.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



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Yes, an employer can search its employees' official possessions and files as part of an investigation. It may be difficult, however, to seize personal assets or possessions of an employee (such as the individual's mobile phone or personal laptop).

Employers should expressly create policies that address key issues associated with employee surveillance, forensic searches and investigations, such as:

- whether or not the official assets and infrastructure of the company can be used for personal purposes by employees;
- the organisation's right to monitor, surveil or search any authorised or unauthorised use of its corporate assets; and
- that the employee should not have any expectation of privacy when using the companies' resources, etc.

Any forensic review of digital data must be carried out with due regard to Indian rules of evidence to avoid situations where such evidence becomes unreliable in a future legal claim or dispute.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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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.

Switzerland

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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.^[1] 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.^[2]

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

^[2] 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

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As part of an investigation, an employer may search the objects or files that are part of the company's property (eg, company or employers' laptops or phones for business purposes and emails or messages stored on the company's servers) without prior notice and without the need of the consent of the employee. However, the employer has no right to search an employee's personal possessions without consent.

To further avoid arguments or conflicts as to the right of ownership of a particular object or property, employers may specify in their internal policies, labour contracts, and handover documents what is to be regarded as the company's assets and subject to a search in a workplace investigation.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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

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Indian labour legislation does not stipulate any additional considerations or requirements concerning whistleblower complaints in private organisations and these are only available if there are complaints against public servants. Further, under the Companies Act, 2013, certain companies are required to

establish a “vigil mechanism” for directors and employees to report genuine concerns regarding the affairs of the company. The vigil mechanism should provide adequate safeguards against the victimisation of persons using it.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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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



Switzerland

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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



Vietnam

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It is up to the employer to determine whether or not to open an investigation after a complaint from a whistleblower. It is very important that the identity of the whistleblower is protected and that the employer also should not reveal the identity of the witness or the source of information, as the sources and witnesses may fear retaliation and feel uncomfortable or hesitant in giving information or raising concerns again.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

10. What confidentiality obligations apply during an investigation?



India

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Indian labour statutes do not contain any specific confidentiality obligations concerning investigations. However, in practice, the records of investigative or disciplinary proceedings should be kept confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis to ensure that the parties do not suffer prejudice. The internal policies should also include provisions on confidentiality.

The SH Act, however, provides that certain information must not be published or made known to the public, press and media such as:

- the contents of the SH complaint;
- the identity and addresses of the complainant, accused and witnesses;
- any information on the conciliation and inquiry process;
- the recommendations of the IC; and
- action to be taken by the employer.

The SH Act permits the dissemination of information regarding remedies extended to any victim without disclosing the name, address or identity of the victim or witnesses. The SH Act also outlines punishments for violating confidentiality obligations.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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

Switzerland

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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.[\[3\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) 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

Vietnam

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Workplace investigations should be conducted in a strictly confidential manner to preserve the integrity and professionalism of the investigation and to protect the identity of the employee under investigation. This means that all information gathered, received, and shared during the investigation (ie, the subject employee and any material witnesses) should only be disclosed on a need-to-know basis.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



India

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As mentioned earlier, workplace investigations are normally a precursor to the actual disciplinary process against an employee. If the individual is being suspended during the investigation, the employer is only expected to inform the individual that they are being suspended on account of an ongoing investigation along with the broad nature of allegations or concerns, and does not need to disclose specific details about the allegations until the appropriate time. Further details may be provided at the investigation stage itself when the employee may be interviewed, or at the subsequent disciplinary inquiry.

Where a disciplinary process is necessary and initiated (after the investigation), the employee will have to be given a charge sheet or notice setting out the allegations against the individual in detail and be provided with an opportunity to submit an explanation.

In sexual harassment investigations, the SH Act mandatorily requires the IC to submit a copy of the complaint to the accused. Further, the accused should be informed of the requirement to file his or her reply to the complaint along with a list of supporting documents, evidence, names and addresses of witnesses, etc, and the timelines for submitting his response in defence.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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



Switzerland

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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.^[1] The employer, on the other hand, is not obliged to provide the employee with existing evidence, documents, etc, before the start of the questioning.^[2]

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.^[3]

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)).^[4] 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).

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

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

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

^[4] Claudia Götz Staehelin, *Unternehmensinterne Untersuchungen*, 2019, p. 37.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Vietnam

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There is no legal requirement as to what particular information should be stated in the allegations; however, such information must be provided to the employee under investigation. The information provided by the employer to the employee must be sufficiently clear and specific so that the latter understands the case or alleged issues against him or her and can respond to it.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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

confidential?



India

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The response and approach to this would be very fact-specific.

Under the SH Act, an individual cannot file an anonymous complaint and, therefore, the name of the complainant cannot be kept confidential. The same would go for details of witnesses, if any.

For other types of misconduct, the name of the complainant could potentially be kept confidential, depending on the nature of the allegations. For example, if an individual observes another colleague or employee committing inappropriate conduct (such as fraud or bribery) and reports this, the name of the complainant may not necessarily have to be disclosed to the accused employee, especially where the company is independently able to gather evidence substantiating the allegations. The names of witnesses generally cannot be kept confidential, since doing so may prove prejudicial to the accused employee. Further, as part of the disciplinary inquiry process, the accused has the right to cross-examine witnesses.

Notwithstanding the above, the approach to this issue should be assessed on a case-by-case basis by looking at the underlying sensitivities and risks involved. Courts have, in limited circumstances, permitted non-disclosure of the names of witnesses or complainants.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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



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's 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.[\[1\]](#)

[\[1\]](#) Roger Rudolph, Interne Untersuchungen: Spannungsfelder aus arbeitsrechtlicher Sicht, SJZ 114/2018, p. 390.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Vietnam

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The identity of the complainant and witnesses must be kept confidential and cannot be disclosed to anyone, unless both the complainant and witnesses consent to its disclosure or if the employer is asked to disclose this information by the competent authorities under Vietnamese law.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



India

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Yes. While it is common for employees to be bound by general confidentiality obligations at the beginning of employment, it is advisable to reiterate such confidentiality obligations through NDAs during an investigation.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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



Switzerland

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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



Vietnam

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Generally, NDAs can be used to keep the facts and substance of a workplace investigation confidential. There are no express prohibitions against such NDAs. However, there are cases set out under Decree No. 13/2023/ND-CP on personal data protection where personal data is allowed or required to be disclosed without the data subject's consent, in instances that are necessary to serve the public interest or to protect the life and health of the data subject.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

14. When does privilege attach to investigation materials?



India

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Professional advice given by an "advocate" to a client is protected as "privileged communication" and is not admissible as evidence in a court of law. Such privilege may not attach to advice or communications involving in-house lawyers as they are not licensed advocates (since they are expected to surrender their bar licences when they take on in-house roles). This is a grey area as there are conflicting judicial precedents on this. Hence, communications, documents or information gathered during an investigation conducted entirely internally may not be legally privileged and may be discoverable in a dispute. That said, companies generally mark sensitive communications with in-house attorneys as privileged and confidential in an attempt to protect the same.

For the above reasons, investigations conducted by external advocates have better chances of retaining legal privilege. However, the following will not be treated as privileged information:

- any correspondence about the commission of a crime or fraud by the client; and
- the observations of an attorney that would suggest that a crime or fraud will be committed by the client.

Ireland

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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.

Last updated on 11/10/2023

Switzerland

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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).^[1]

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

^[1] 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

Vietnam

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Generally, privilege does not apply to internal workplace investigation materials as the investigation does not constitute a relationship between a lawyer and his or her client, and even less so a judicial investigation. However, if a lawyer is appointed to represent a specific party in an investigation, for example, as an investigator, the privilege may apply to materials exchanged between the lawyer and that client.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



India

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In SH cases, parties are not allowed to bring in a legal practitioner to represent them in the IC's proceedings.

In investigations related to other forms of misconduct, there isn't a statutory right to be accompanied by another employee, colleague or lawyer during a fact-finding investigation. In a disciplinary inquiry, if the employee seeks permission to be represented by another person, such as an advocate, co-worker or a union leader, the inquiry officer must decide whether to allow the request based on the specific facts and circumstances as well as any company policies on the subject. If the management has appointed a lawyer to present the company's case in disciplinary proceedings or if the matter is complex and involves legal aspects, courts have held that the employee would also have a right to legal representation.

Further, in general misconduct matters, "workman" employees would generally have the right to be represented by a co-worker in inquiry proceedings, if the establishment is covered under the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946 (SO Act). The applicability of this statute depends on the nature of the establishment and its headcount.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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



Switzerland

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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.^[1]

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.^[2] 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.^[3]

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

^[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



Vietnam

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Yes, the employee under investigation has a right to be accompanied or have legal representation during the investigation. Before the start of investigation proceedings, the employee under investigation must be informed about his or her right to have someone present with him or have a legal representative during the investigation.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



India

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No.

There is no specific requirement to constitute a works council for most industries or inform the trade union about an investigation or disciplinary inquiry.

It is common, however, for individuals to share details of the matter with trade union representatives and seek their support. Further, if an employee has the right to be represented or supported by a colleague (for example, if the establishment is covered by the SO Act), the individual may request trade union representatives to support them during inquiry proceedings.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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



Switzerland

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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



Vietnam

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In Vietnam, the “trade union” is the only organisation solely dedicated to protecting employees’ legitimate rights and interests. Under the 2012 Labor Code, the term referring to trade unions was changed to “grassroots-level representative organisation of employees”. But the essence of this organisation remained and was later defined as “the executive committee of a grassroots trade union or the executive committee of the immediate upper-level trade union in a non-unionised company”. As such, it could be said that it was old wine in a new bottle.

As required under article 70.1 of Decree No. 145/2020/ND-CP, which serves as a guide to the Labor Code on working conditions and labour relations, when suspecting that an employee has committed a violation of labour discipline, the employer has to make a record of the violation at the time and notify the grassroots-level representative organisation of employees of which the employee is a member, or the legal representative of the employee if they are under 15 years of age. If the employer detects a violation after it has occurred, it will collect evidence to prove it. In this instance, the employer has no obligation to inform or involve the trade union or grassroots-level representative organisation of employees during the workplace investigation stage.

Also, an employee who is a member of the trade union or organisation has the right to seek assistance from this organisation and may authorise the trade union’s representative to represent and get involved in the workplace investigation.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



India

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Every workplace investigation is unique and varies based on the facts and circumstances of each case. As a result, the nature or type of support to be given to an employee would also vary from case to case. The bare minimum should be an assurance that there will be no retaliation against them for participating in the investigation. Other measures may include:

- changing the reporting relationship if the accused is the reporting manager or boss of the complainant;
- conducting investigations and interviews virtually or through videoconferencing in cases where parties or witnesses may not be able to physically appear before the investigating authorities; and
- allowing witnesses to be cross-examined virtually or through a written questionnaire where there is a fear of intimidation or retaliation from the parties.

The employer should be mindful that any interim measures or support it extends does not prejudice any particular party.

Under the SH Act, employers are legally required to assist the complainant if he or she chooses to file a complaint about workplace sexual harassment with the police under the Indian Penal Code or any other law that is in force. Further, the complainant can also seek interim protective measures from the IC, such as a request for transfer for the accused or the complainant or to grant leave to the complainant for three months.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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

Switzerland

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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.^[1] 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.^[2]

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

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

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Vietnam

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It is quite stressful for an employee, whether as the victim, the subject of an investigation, or a witness, to be involved in a workplace investigation. Thus, transparency in the investigation process would alleviate the employees' stress and anxiety. This could be achieved by providing involved and concerned employees with the timeline for different stages of the investigation and regular updates. Further, the employer can make necessary work arrangements to minimise potential interaction with other involved employees so that it would not further aggravate the conflict or situation, (eg, days off or temporary suspension of work).

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



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Where unrelated matters are revealed during, or because of, the investigation, the course to be adopted may depend on several factors. Normally, if additional instances of misconduct are revealed against the same accused employee, even if they are unrelated to the original investigation, it would be advisable to independently investigate those issues too, to ensure that there are comprehensive grounds for any future disciplinary inquiry or action. If unrelated matters are revealed against other stakeholders involved in the investigation – for example, a forensic review reveals that the complainant or some witnesses have themselves potentially engaged in some other form of policy breach – whether or not those issues are investigated (as well as the timing of such investigation) would need to be decided on a case-by-case basis. Issues to consider include whether these matters affect the credibility of their statements, point at some form of other conspiracy, or create the risk of retaliation claims at a later date.

In SH matters, however, if the complaint involves instances of sexual harassment as well as other forms of general harassment or misconduct, to the extent such other issues aren't linked to the instances of sexual harassment (eg, creation of a hostile work environment for the complainant), these other concerns should preferably not be investigated by the IC and instead should be referred to the employer to address, as per its general grievance-redressal mechanisms.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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.

Last updated on 11/10/2023



Switzerland

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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

Vietnam

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If unrelated matters are revealed during the investigation, the employer should consider whether an investigation is needed. If necessary, the employer should decide whether it is appropriate to incorporate the new matters into the scope of the existing investigation by expanding the terms of reference. However, such action may not be appropriate if different individuals are involved or the inclusion of a new unrelated matter would unduly complicate or delay the progress of the existing investigation. If that is the case, the employer should investigate that matter separately.

Also, as detailed in article 19 of the 2015 Criminal Code of Vietnam, there is a legal duty on any person who is aware that a certain violation is being committed or has been committed to report it to the police unless otherwise provided for under law. Failure to comply with this requirement may lead to criminal liability for the offender.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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

India

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Indian labour statutes do not prescribe any particular process to be followed if the accused raises any grievances during the investigation and such situations would need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. For example, if the grievances relate to the fairness of the investigation or inquiry process, the lack of impartiality of the investigators or the inquiry officer, those may need to be addressed upfront before proceeding further. Where grievances may be unrelated to the investigation or inquiry at hand (and potentially also a method to distract the employer from the core issues or delay or confuse the main investigative proceedings), it may be advisable to communicate to the employee that such grievances will have to be dealt with separately and other safeguards adopted to avoid calling the main investigation or inquiry proceedings into question (eg identifying an independent team to review the grievances).

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Ireland

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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



Switzerland

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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 or a court by the employee (article 10, Federal Act on Gender Equality).

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Vietnam

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The employer should require the employee to raise any grievance under the company's existing policy on grievance reporting, disciplinary, and investigation processes, so that it can determine if the grievance is relevant to the current investigation. The grievance can be investigated together with the ongoing investigation. It can also be dealt with separately and independently from the existing investigation.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



India

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The approach to be adopted would be fact-specific but the investigation itself can normally continue, even in the absence of the accused employee. Where it is critical to speak with the employee as part of the investigative process, delays on account of the employee's sickness may need to be accommodated. At the same time, the employer would normally be justified in seeking necessary evidence of the authenticity of the employee's illness and anticipated duration of absence. An accused individual's participation would be more crucial in a disciplinary inquiry to formally respond to the written charges or present their side before the inquiry officer, and absences due to genuine health concerns may need to be reasonably accommodated. Significantly long periods of absence for health reasons may itself be valid grounds to

terminate employment under Indian law, subject to the terms and conditions of employment.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Ireland

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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

Switzerland

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The time spent on the internal investigation by the employee should be counted as working time^[1]. 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).

^[1] 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

Vietnam

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Workplace investigations do not require the presence or active cooperation of the employee under investigation. Thus, the investigation may start or continue in the employee's absence due to illness.

If the employee's presence is necessary for the conclusion of the investigation, the employer may invite the employee to provide information either by submitting his or her answers to a written questionnaire or attending a virtual meeting. However, the employee may not accede to the employer's requests and

proposals, especially if the employee has an illness. As a result, the employer may not be able to conclude the investigation due to the absence of the involved employee.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



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Often the tests or standards applied by external agencies (such as the police or regulators) in their investigations vary significantly in comparison to those that apply for internal investigations that are focused on potential disciplinary action against an accused employee. For example, the standard of proof required for taking an internal disciplinary measure is one of a preponderance of probability and does not require the employer to establish guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, which is the standard applied in criminal proceedings. Depending on the circumstances, conducting or continuing an internal investigation can also place the organisation in a better position to collaborate with external agencies such as the police or a regulator in their investigations, and be better prepared to share information that such agencies may request. It may also help demonstrate that the organisation does not tolerate potential violations of law or its policies and that it proactively investigates and addresses such issues. This may also help in protecting innocent members of management from liability from external agencies. To that extent, a parallel criminal or regulatory investigation may not normally be a reason for the organisation to suspend its internal investigation.

In the context of sexual harassment claims, the complainant has the right to file a police complaint against the alleged harasser (and the organisation must support her in doing so). However, a parallel police investigation would not take away the organisation's responsibility to address the grievances through its IC, which would be expected to complete its proceedings within 90 days.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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

Switzerland

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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

Vietnam

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There are no issues with an internal workplace investigation being conducted in parallel to any criminal or regulatory investigation. In such a case, the employer should handle the workplace investigation meticulously, pay attention to all the facts and evidence, inform the authorities of the ongoing internal workplace investigation, and ensure that it complies with all applicable legal requirements or directions made by the relevant authorities concurrently. Also, the employer should not take any steps that interfere with, hinder, or obstruct the parallel investigations.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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

India

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Concerning SH cases, the IC must supply a copy of the preliminary findings to the complainant and accused (where both are employees of the organisation) to allow them to make their representations before final findings and recommendations are shared. The IC's final report with recommendations for disciplinary action, if any, must also be shared with both parties.

For other forms of misconduct, it is not mandatory to share the details of the fact-finding investigation itself. However, if disciplinary action is contemplated and a disciplinary inquiry is necessary against the employee under investigation, the relevant details of the evidence gathered against the individual will need to be shared with him or her as part of the charge sheet. On the other hand, where no disciplinary inquiry is being conducted after an investigation (eg, if there is no merit in the allegations), the employer may choose to not share the investigative findings and only inform the individual that no further action is being taken.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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



Switzerland

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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.^[1] 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.^[2]

^[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



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It is recommended that the employer informs the employee under investigation of the outcome and provides information on a need-to-know basis. Consequently, the employer has the discretion to proceed with any labour disciplinary procedure or actions against the employee based on the outcome of the

investigation.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



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Please see question 22.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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



Switzerland

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

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

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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There is no obligation to share the investigation report or the findings unless the employer and employee agree to do so.

However, under Decree No. 13/2023/ND-CP on personal data protection, the contents of the investigation report or findings related to the employee are likely to constitute the personal data of the employee under investigation. In that case, the employee may have a right under the said Decree to obtain copies of such documents by making a statutory data access request after the workplace investigation is completed. Where the employer is required to provide such documents to the employee under Decree No. 13/2023/ND-CP but the requested documents also contain the personal data of any other third parties (such as the employee's co-workers who participated in the interview during the investigation), the employer should first redact or erase such data before providing the requested documents, unless the relevant third parties have consented to the disclosure of their personal data.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

24. What next steps are available to the employer?



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In misconduct cases, the next steps for an employer would depend on the outcome of the investigation. If the investigation reveals that the employee has violated the terms of employment and the employer wishes to take disciplinary action (which may include dismissal, depending on the gravity of the misconduct), it would normally be necessary to conduct a disciplinary inquiry as per the principles of natural justice before any actual punishment is meted out. Such a disciplinary inquiry would normally require the issuance of a charge sheet, the appointment of an independent inquiry officer (who should not have been involved in the investigation or otherwise in a position of bias vis-a-vis the parties involved), and conducting disciplinary hearings, etc.

With SH complaints, once the investigation is concluded by the IC, the employer will be provided with a copy of the final report by the IC along with recommendations (ie, the disciplinary measures to be taken against the accused) for the employer to implement. The employer would then be required to act upon the recommendations shared by the IC within 60 days.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Ireland

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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

Switzerland

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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.

^[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

Vietnam

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After the completion of the investigation, the employer may:

- take the appropriate labour disciplinary action against the employee;
- proceed with legal action against the employee (eg, reporting the criminal violations of the employee to the proper authority or filing a civil lawsuit against the employee before the court); or
- adopting preventive or remedial measures on how to avoid these violations and to mitigate the damage to the company (eg, reviewing internal policies and conducting employee training).

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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?

India

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Please see question 22.

For SH complaints, the report would normally contain a complete record of interviews conducted, evidence provided and other associated artefacts.

While investigation reports for other forms of misconduct may be kept private (subject to observations in the prior response relating to disciplinary inquiries), whether or not the investigative report should be disclosed to external agencies such as the police or other regulators would be a subjective decision. Disclosure may be necessary where a demand is made by the external agency as per powers it enjoys under the law (to seek production of necessary documents or personnel Rules of legal privilege may also be important to assess if any information can be withheld based on client-attorney privilege).

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Ireland

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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

Switzerland

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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.^[1] If the company refuses to hand over the documents upon request, coercive measures may be used under certain circumstances.^[2]

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

^[2] 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

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Generally, the employer does not have to actively disclose the findings of a workplace investigation to any party.

Notwithstanding this, the employer should be aware of certain statutory disclosure requirements that may apply as a result of the matters revealed during the workplace investigation, if the said investigation reveals any knowledge or suspicion of an indictable offence that has been committed.

Interview records should be kept private unless disclosure is required by the authorities.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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

India

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There is no statutory guidance on this. It is common for employers to retain details of disciplinary proceedings on an employee's record for the entire duration of their employment.

It is also advisable to retain the details of any investigations or disciplinary proceedings for at least three years after an individual has been dismissed on account of such proceedings, as this is the general limitation period for raising claims of unfair dismissal. In labour matters, courts in India often allow delays in filing suit after the limitation period, meaning organisations sometimes make a practical call to retain details of investigations and disciplinary proceedings for longer.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

Ireland

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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

Switzerland

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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).^[1]

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

Last updated on 15/09/2022



Vietnam

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Vietnamese law does not provide for a period during which the outcome of the investigation should remain on the employee's records and files. However, this will depend on the employer's record-retention policies, which must comply with applicable data protection laws.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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



India

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The risk an employer may face would be quite subjective. For example, if an individual is suspended without pay, the individual may attempt to argue that the entire investigation should be set aside, as non-payment of salary affects an individual's ability to properly represent themselves. Material errors in disciplinary proceedings or not adhering to the rules of natural justice may result in disciplinary action being set aside, and potentially also orders for reinstatement of the employee with back pay (if the individual is protected by local labour laws) if the dismissal is found to be unfair or disproportionate to the gravity of the misconduct.

In addition to the above risks, in SH matters, if the IC constitution is incorrect or there are allegations of bias against a committee member, the whole investigation may be set aside and the organisation ordered to conduct a fresh inquiry through a properly constituted committee.

Last updated on 15/09/2022

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 alive 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

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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).[\[1\]](#)

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.[\[2\]](#) 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.[\[3\]](#) 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.[\[4\]](#)

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.[\[5\]](#) 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^[6]).^[7]

[1] Cf. ATF 139 II 7.

[2] ATF 140 III 6 E. 3

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

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

[5] 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.

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

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

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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The employer may be exposed to legal action for its failure to conduct the investigation properly, such as a lawsuit for labour disputes or sanctions for its failure to protect personal data as required under personal data protection regulations. For instance, if there were errors during the investigation which led to erroneous results for the investigation and consequently, the employee was dismissed, the employee may file a claim for illegal dismissal against the employer.

Last updated on 25/09/2023

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