

Workplace Investigations

Contributing Editors

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

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

France

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In determining who is to conduct a workplace investigation, the main objective is to ensure that the team is independent or at least that it is perceived as being independent. The key people in the investigation team can be identified in a pre-established procedure. It is good practice to give decision-makers the possibility to set up, on a case-by-case basis, the team most appropriate to the situation.

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Switzerland

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The examinations can be carried out internally by designated internal employees, by external specialists, or by a combination thereof. The addition of external advisors is particularly recommended if the allegations are against an employee of a high hierarchical level^[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.

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07. What data protection or other regulations apply

when gathering physical evidence?

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GDPR principles fully apply to data gathering, as well as case law protecting the right to respect one's private life and the secret of correspondence.

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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.

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