

Workplace Investigations

Contributing Editors

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

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

France

Author: *Pascale Lagesse, Valentino Armillei*
at Bredin Prat

Evidence obtained in the context of an investigation must specify who provided it and the date it was provided. No retaliatory measures may be taken against the whistleblower for the act of whistleblowing.

In certain cases, the whistleblower report must be forwarded to the judicial authorities (eg, when there is an obligation to assist persons in imminent danger, for serious offences or a disclosure that a vulnerable person is in danger (ie, minors under 15 or a person who is unable to protect themselves)).

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Switzerland

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

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

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

France

Author: *Pascale Lagesse, Valentino Armillei*
at Bredin Prat

The identity of the complainant must be kept confidential and cannot be disclosed. There are two exceptions: if the complainant consents to the disclosure; or if the employer is asked for this information by the judicial authorities.

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Switzerland

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

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

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

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

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Contributors

France

Pascale Lagesse
Valentino Armillei
Bredin Prat

Switzerland

Laura Widmer
Sandra Schaffner
Bär & Karrer

www.internationalemploymentlawyer.com