

Workplace Investigations

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

France

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A criminal investigation always takes precedence over other investigations. However, this does not mean that the internal investigation has to stop. It can and should continue, and the report drawn up upon completion of the investigation could be used by the authorities in the criminal investigation. In some cases, especially when privilege does not apply, police or regulatory authorities may request that the employer share such evidence. However, even when privilege does apply, there is no certainty that the evidence would not have to be communicated to certain authorities.

Some administrative authorities often challenge the application of legal privilege or try to reduce its scope. For example, the French financial markets authority (AMF) regularly puts forward its view of legal privilege, according to which an email where a lawyer is only copied (and is not one of the main recipients) in from one of their clients is not confidential and can therefore be disclosed in proceedings. However, if the AMF investigators impose disclosure of privileged documents, this should result in the annulment of the investigation procedure. By way of exception, legal privilege cannot be invoked against certain other authorities, such as the URSSAF (authority in charge of collecting social security contributions) or the DGCCRF (directorate-general for competition, consumer protection and anti-fraud investigations). Where legal privilege is enforceable, the judge must first determine whether the documents constitute correspondence relating to defence rights and, second, must cancel the seizure of documents that they find to be covered by legal privilege due to the principle of professional secrecy of relations between a lawyer and their client and the rights of defence.

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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).

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