

# Workplace Investigations

## Contributing Editors

*Phil Linnard at Slaughter and May*  
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## 01. What legislation, guidance and/or policies govern a workplace investigation?

### 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.

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### Thailand

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The Labour Protection Act B.E. 2541 (1998) (LPA) is the key legislation governing the relationship between employer and employee in Thailand. The LPA set out a minimum standard for the protection of employees' rights, as well as a mechanism for suspension from work for an investigation.

The LPA requires any employer having ten or more employees to prepare work rules in the Thai language and the work rules require an employer to prescribe a procedure for the submission of grievances that would normally include the process for investigations in the workplace. Therefore, the work rules are the main guidance and policy that govern a workplace investigation. In some cases, an employer may have a whistleblowing policy allowing whistle-blowers to submit complaints of illegal or improper activities to the employer. The whistleblowing policy will also prescribe the procedures for investigating in workplace reflecting the complaints submitted by whistle-blowers.

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## 02. How is a workplace investigation usually commenced?

### 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).<sup>[1]</sup> 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.<sup>[2]</sup>

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

<sup>[2]</sup> Klaus Moosmayer, *Compliance, Praxisleitfaden für Unternehmen*, 2. A. München 2015, N 314.

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### Thailand

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Usually, a complainant submitting a grievance to the company would be a trigger for proceeding with a workplace investigation. The LPA does not specify when a workplace investigation should commence but it is subject to the employer's work rules and regulations, including the whistleblowing policy, as the investigation usually commences after an employee or a whistle-blower has filed a complaint to the employer. In some cases, there might be a whistleblower and the start of the workplace investigation would be subject to the whistleblowing policy and the employer's discretion. Also, if a questionable transaction or activity is detected, fiscal audits may be the source that triggers a voluntary workplace investigation.

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

### Switzerland

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

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

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## Thailand

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While an employee is being investigated by the employer, the LPA permits the employer to suspend that employee from work for the duration of the investigation, provided that the suspension can only be made when permitted by the work rules or an agreement related to the conditions of employment. Also, a suspension order must be made in writing and specify the offence and period of the suspension, which may not exceed seven days. Note that the employer must give a written suspension order in advance to the employee before the work suspension.

As aforementioned, the LPA only permits the employer to suspend the employee under investigation from work only for seven days. During the interim period of the suspension, the employer must pay the employee at the rate indicated in the work rules or the agreement reached between the employer and the employee, which must not be less than half of the employee's wages for a working day before his or her suspension. If the employer determines that the employee subject to investigation is not guilty following the outcome, the employer must compensate the employee for outstanding wages from the date of suspension with 15% interest per annum.

In some complicated cases, a workplace investigation does not conclude within seven days, and, in which case the employer should consult with a legal advisor.

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



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

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## Thailand

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The employer should conduct a workplace investigation on its own; however, an outside firm experienced in interviewing witnesses and assessing the credibility of evidence may also be appointed to assist with the workplace investigation.

There is no minimum qualification or criteria provided under Thai laws. It is worth noting that anyone who has been accused of misconduct or potentially has a conflict of interest should be excluded from any role in the investigation. This is to avoid a challenge from the subject employee that the investigation was not conducted fairly.

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



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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.

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There is no mechanism in place to take legal action to halt an investigation. The investigation is an internal process of the employer.

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

# acting as witnesses in an investigation?



## 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.<sup>[1]</sup> 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).<sup>[2]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Nicolas Facincani/Reto Sutter, *Interne Untersuchungen: Rechte und Pflichten von Arbeitgebern und Angestellten*, published on [hrtoday.ch](https://www.hrtoday.ch), last visited on 17 June 2022.

<sup>[2]</sup> Same opinion: Nicolas Facincani/Reto Sutter, *Interne Untersuchungen: Rechte und Pflichten von Arbeitgebern und Angestellten*, published on [hrtoday.ch](https://www.hrtoday.ch), last visited on 17 June 2022.

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Normally, the work rules prescribe requirements for cooperation with investigations. An employer may instruct co-workers to give statements as witnesses as this would be a fair and legitimate order of the employer, because investigations are conducted to maintain a good working environment.

Witness protection measures in a workplace can vary as no minimum standard has been set and they are generally subject to work rules and regulations. However, some legislation, which may not relate to a workplace investigation conducted by an employer, also protects the witnesses who are helping authorities investigate violations under the relevant acts. For example, the Labor Relation Act B.E. 2518 (1975) prohibits an employer from terminating an employee or conducting any action that may result in the employee being unable to work because of filing a complaint or being a witness for the authorities, or providing information on issues related to labour protection laws to the authorities.

The employer may have a policy of non-retaliation for the protection of witnesses who have given statements and evidence for a workplace investigation.

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

### Switzerland

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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.<sup>[1]</sup>

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.<sup>[2]</sup> 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.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Simona Wantz/Sara Licci, Arbeitsvertragliche Rechte und Pflichten bei internen Untersuchungen, in: Jusletter 18 February 2019, N 52.

<sup>[2]</sup> Claudia Fritsche, Interne Untersuchungen in der Schweiz, Ein Handbuch für Unternehmen mit besonderem Fokus auf Finanzinstitute, p. 148.

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The basic premise is that all evidence is admissible unless it violates the law of admissibility and production of evidence, which may vary depending on the jurisdiction. In a criminal court, for example, evidence gathered in violation of the fruit of the poisonous tree doctrine would be typically inadmissible, yet in a civil court, this doctrine would not be an exclusionary rule.

The Personal Data Protection Act, BE 2562 (2019) (PDPA), which is the main data protection law in Thailand, applies when collecting, using, and disclosing pieces of evidence containing the personal data of employees. If the investigation requires sensitive information of the employee under investigation, for example, race, ethnic origin, political opinion, religious or philosophical beliefs, sexual behavior, criminal records, health data, disability, genetic data and biometric data, consent from the employee should be obtained.

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## 08. Can the employer search employees' possessions

## or files as part of an investigation?



### 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.<sup>[1]</sup> 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.<sup>[2]</sup>

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

<sup>[2]</sup> Claudia Fritsche, *Interne Untersuchungen in der Schweiz: Ein Handbuch für regulierte Finanzinstitute und andere Unternehmen*, Zürich/St. Gallen 2013, p. 168 et seq.

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Electronic information created during employment would generally be owned by the employer and would be the employer's assets. If an employee is given a computer or laptop to use for work, the employer has the right to log into that device and take any data that is stored therein, provided that the data does not contain sensitive information of that employee and PDPA requirements are met.

To avoid any potential issues regarding physical data such as documents on the employee's desk, it is advisable to search those areas with the subject employee to show good faith. In practice, the employee normally agrees to search those areas with the employer, or allows the employer to search alone.

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



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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.

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It is down to the employer's discretion and subject to the whistleblowing policy (if any) to commence the investigation resulting from a complaint from a whistleblower. Whistleblowers and those who cooperate with an investigation should be protected. Normally the employer would not try to identify the whistleblowers. Also, it is best not to reveal the identity of the witness or the source of information; otherwise, they may feel uncomfortable giving information or raising their concerns next time. Any allegations of retaliation that surface during the investigation should be treated as a new report of possible misconduct that could be subject to additional investigation.

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## 10. What confidentiality obligations apply during an investigation?



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

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[\[1\]](#) 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.



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Unless the investigation is handled by a qualified professional (eg, attorney or auditor) where certain privileges apply, confidentiality obligations are generally subject to the contractual arrangement between the parties involved in the investigation. The employers need to inform any persons, including the investigators, to respect confidentiality obligations because a leak of the information gathered from the investigations could cause damage to relevant parties.

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



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

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.<sup>[3]</sup>

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)).<sup>[4]</sup> 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).

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[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.

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The subject employee(s) should be informed of the details of the allegations, such as the details of wrongdoing or violations, made against them. This creates a fair opportunity for them to clarify themselves and defend against such allegations properly. Also, if there is any evidence that needs clarification from the employee, it should be shown to the employee.

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



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

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

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It is generally possible to keep the identity of the complainant, witnesses, or information sources confidential. There is no mandatory rule to disclose the identity of a complainant, witnesses, or sources of information. If the complainant, witnesses, or sources of information for the investigation know that their identities would not be disclosed, they will be more confident in cooperating with and supporting the investigations.

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



## 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.

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Non-disclosure agreements can be made between an employer and employees who are involved in an investigation. This may include investigators and witnesses, apart from the employee under investigation. This minimises the risk of information being leaked, which can affect all parties related to the workplace investigation. However, an NDA is not absolute means to prevent the disclosure of confidential information, as the court has the authority to compel disclosure.

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## 14. When does privilege attach to investigation materials?



### 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).<sup>[1]</sup>

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

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<sup>[1]</sup> Claudia M. Fritsche, *Interne Untersuchungen in der Schweiz*, Ein Handbuch für Unternehmen mit besonderem Fokus auf Finanzinstitute, p. 284 et seq.

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Client-attorney privilege between qualified attorneys and the client (ie, an employer) begins once information is made available to the attorney, regardless of the form it takes.

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



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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.<sup>[1]</sup>

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.<sup>[2]</sup> 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.<sup>[3]</sup>

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

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<sup>[1]</sup> Claudia Götz Staehelin, Unternehmensinterne Untersuchungen, 2019, p. 37.

<sup>[2]</sup> Simona Wantz/Sara Licci, Arbeitsvertragliche Rechte und Pflichten bei internen Untersuchungen, in: Jusletter 18 February 2019, N 59.

<sup>[3]</sup> Roger Rudolph, Interne Untersuchungen: Spannungsfelder aus arbeitsrechtlicher Sicht, SJZ 114/2018, p. 392; Niklaus Ruckstuhl, BSK-StPO, Art. 158 StPO N 36.

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Unless the work regulations provide otherwise, an employee has the right to request legal representation during an investigation. If legal representation is requested, it is an opportunity for the employer to confirm and verify that an investigation is being conducted fairly, as the employee under investigation can bring his or her lawyer to attend the investigation.

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



## 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.

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Thai labor laws do not require a workplace investigation to involve participation from trade unions or labour unions. However, it is possible for labour unions established under the Labor Relation Act BE. 2518 (1975) to submit a demand for a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with employers to get a seat at the table. There was a case where a management union made a CBA with the employer wherein the president of the management union would be involved in any investigation of any manager, who is a union member, under investigation. In that case, the employer must comply with the CBA by informing the president and allowing the president to participate in the investigations.

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



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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.<sup>[1]</sup> 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.<sup>[2]</sup>

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

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

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The employees may then file a complaint with the labour inspection officer of the Labour Protection and Welfare Department to investigate the situation if they view that the conduct of the employer in the investigation violates the LPA. For example, if the employer issues a written order for suspending an employee for more than seven days. The labour inspection officer may issue an order requesting compliance, where failure to comply with such an order would result in a criminal penalty.

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



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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.

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Subject to the grievance protocol in place, any matter that emerges during the investigation should be handled separately as a fresh report of potential misconduct that needs further investigation.

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



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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).

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## Thailand

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The investigator should guide the employee who has raised the grievance to properly raise their concerns through the grievance protocols or whistleblowing policy (if any). It is acceptable to preliminarily hear their concerns, but the investigation should be initiated separately and subject to the employer's discretion.

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



## Switzerland

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The time spent on the internal investigation by the employee should be counted as working time<sup>[1]</sup>. 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).

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<sup>[1]</sup> Ullin Streiff/Adrian von Kaenel/Roger Rudolph, Arbeitsvertrag, Praxiskommentar zu Art. 319–362 OR, 7. A. 2012, Art. 328b N 8 OR.

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If the absence is anticipated to be brief, the employer may wait until the employee's return before

concluding the investigation. If the employee's absence is expected to be prolonged, the investigator may alter the time of meetings or request that the employee submits a witness statement. The key point would be that all necessary measures should be taken to give the employee a chance to participate.

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



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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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Employers are not required to wait until the police or regulatory investigations are finished before conducting their disciplinary investigations, but it is necessary to ensure that such internal proceedings do not compromise the integrity of an investigation or result in misrepresentation or a miscarriage of justice. The level of proof for internal disciplinary action is less than the level of proof for criminal proceedings.

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



### 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.<sup>[1]</sup> 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.[\[2\]](#)

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[\[1\]](#) 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.

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There is no mandatory information on the outcome of an investigation that must be disclosed to an employee. However, disclosure of the outcome should, at a minimum, include whether an employee did or did not commit a violation. In addition, an employee who has committed a violation should be informed of any disciplinary action, and the grounds for such a decision (such as a violation of the company's work rules). This enables the employee under investigation to appeal the outcome if it is applicable under the work rules or whistleblowing policy.

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



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

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

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It depends on with whom the investigation report should be shared. If there is a court case or criminal case to be further investigated by police, the investigation report should be shared in full as this would be used as documentary evidence to make a case stronger. On the contrary, if the investigation report is requested by the employee under investigation, employers are entitled to use their discretion as to what information to share.

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## 24. What next steps are available to the employer?

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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.<sup>[1]</sup>

If individual disciplinary actions are necessary, these may range from warnings to ordinary or immediate termination of employment.

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<sup>[1]</sup> David Rosenthal et al., *Praxishandbuch für interne Untersuchungen und eDiscovery*, Release 1.01, Zürich/Bern 2021, p. 180 et seq.

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Upon completion of the investigation, the employer can decide to take proper disciplinary action against the employee if it is found that the employee committed an offence or violated the work rules. An employer may also file a report with the police if the findings of the investigation amount to a criminal offence.

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## 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?

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

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

<sup>[2]</sup> 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.

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The investigation findings should be disclosed to a limited group of persons who are involved in the investigation, and for which the findings are useful. For example, an HR manager who needs to record the findings in the employee's record, the police if the employer decides to proceed further with a criminal claim, the court if requested by that court, or if there is a court case related to the violations of the employee.

Interview records should be kept confidential and private. There is a risk of disclosure because the information in the records may be beneficial to one but damaging to others. If the interview records are leaked to others who are not involved in the investigation, it may affect the work environment in the workplace and the protection of witnesses.

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

## 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).<sup>[1]</sup>

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

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There is no period required by law for keeping the outcome of the investigation on the employee's record. However, if termination of employment is the outcome of the investigation, an employer should keep details of the investigation for at least 10 years, in line with the prescribed period for an employee to file an unfair dismissal claim against an employer. An employer may use the details of an investigation to defend such a claim. For other disciplinary action, the retention of investigation details on the employee's record is at the employer's discretion.

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

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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]

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[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.

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The Thai Supreme Court has ruled that the termination of an employee was unfair due to an investigation being conducted contrary to requirements in the company's work rules. As such, employers may be liable for damages to employees if there are errors made during investigations, or where investigations are not conducted properly.

The Supreme Court has also ruled that in cases of unfair termination, the underlying cause of the termination should be the determining factor, rather than other issues, including investigative procedures.

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