

Workplace Investigations

Contributing Editors

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10. What confidentiality obligations apply during an investigation?



South Korea

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It is general practice in Korea for a company to require interviewees to maintain confidentiality concerning a workplace investigation and instruct them that they are not permitted to discuss the matter under investigation with other employees, etc. If an employee violates this instruction, it may be possible for the company to take disciplinary action against them under the company's rules.

Further, the company or its employees who have engaged in an investigation for sexual harassment or workplace harassment in the workplace are obliged to maintain the confidentiality of the investigation. Failure to comply with such requirements may lead to an administrative fine from the Ministry of Employment and Labour for the company or its registered representative.

There may be some exceptions to the confidentiality obligation, such as when an employee is required by government authorities to provide relevant information in a parallel investigation.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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

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



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As discussed in question 22, when taking disciplinary action against an employee based on the outcome of an investigation, the company would need to disclose sufficient detail on the employee's wrongdoing. However, this does not mean that the full investigation report would need to be shared with the employee to be disciplined. Key details of the investigation findings that apply to the relevant employee due to be disciplined should be shared, and not other findings concerning other persons.

There is also no requirement under Korean law for a company to disclose the investigation report or investigation findings to the whistleblower. If the company discloses the personal identity of the target employees, such disclosure could constitute a violation of the PIPA, libel or defamation under the Criminal Code. If the whistleblower strongly requests that the company share the investigation report or the findings, the company may consider providing a summary of the key findings concerning the allegations that the whistleblower raised, without disclosing personal information.

Last updated on 15/09/2022



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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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