



Asset Recovery

in 19 jurisdictions worldwide

Contributing editors: Jonathan Tickner, Sarah Gabriel
and Alan Bacarese

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Switzerland

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Lalive

Civil asset recovery

1 Legislation

What are the key pieces of legislation in your jurisdiction to consider in a private investigation?

There is no specific Swiss legislation regulating private investigation. The general rules regarding the gathering of information and evidence can be found in the Swiss Code of Civil Procedure (SCCP). It is noteworthy that there is no discovery process under Swiss civil procedural law. Additional rules pertaining to asset recovery can be found in the following statutes:

- Swiss Code of Criminal Procedure (SCCrP);
- Swiss Code of Obligations (CO);
- Swiss Civil Code (CC);
- Swiss Criminal Code (SCC);
- Swiss Debt Enforcement and Bankruptcy Act (DEBA);
- Swiss Federal Act on Banks and Saving Banks (Banks Act); and
- Swiss Private International Law Act (PILA).

2 Parallel proceedings

Is there any restriction on civil proceedings progressing in parallel with, or in advance of, criminal proceedings concerning the same subject matter?

Civil proceedings can be conducted in parallel, in advance of, or within criminal proceedings. Swiss law provides for several procedural means by which civil and criminal proceedings can be coordinated. For example, the civil courts can suspend or stay proceedings if appropriate (article 126 SCCP). The proceedings may be stayed in particular if the decision depends on the outcome of other proceedings such as criminal proceedings. In practice, only in limited cases will the existence of parallel criminal proceedings justify the suspension of civil proceedings. Indeed, the two proceedings are subject to different sets of rules and the findings made within criminal proceedings cannot be incorporated as such without reservation in civil proceedings. Another means of coordination between civil and criminal proceedings is the right granted to victims of criminal offences to bring civil claims as private claimants in criminal proceedings (article 122 SCC).

3 Forum

In which court should proceedings be brought?

Civil proceedings are generally brought before the cantonal civil courts. In certain cases, civil claims can also be brought before the competent criminal authority regarding criminal proceedings concerning the same subject matter (article 122 SCC) (see question 2).

As a rule, ordinary civil proceedings are to be brought before the courts at the defendant's domicile (natural person), or seat (legal

person) (article 10 SCCP). Swiss civil procedural rules also sets forth special venues depending on the subject matter of the dispute (eg, family law, employment law, inheritance law, property law, contract law, torts, company law), the existence of other relevant connections (eg, place of business establishment), as well as depending on the claims or parties involved (eg, counterclaims or third-party claims). In particular, for contractual matters, civil action can be filed before the courts at the domicile or registered office of the defendant or at the place where the characteristic performance must be rendered (article 31 ff SCCP).

As to interim measures, unless the law provides otherwise, they can be ordered either by the court that has jurisdiction to decide the main action or the court at the place where the measure is to be enforced (article 13 SCCP). The same is also provided in the context of international proceedings (article 10 PILA). As to attachment proceedings in support of a monetary claim, they are regulated specifically by the DEBA (see question 10).

4 Limitation

What are the time limits for starting civil court proceedings?

The initiation of civil proceedings is limited by the statute of limitations applicable to the underlying claim. However, there is no procedural statute of limitations limiting civil court proceedings as such.

As a rule, claims which arise out of a breach of contract become time-barred after 10 years unless otherwise provided by law (article 127 CO). Some specific contractual claims become time-barred after five years, such as claims for rent, interest on capital and all other periodic payments, claims in connection with delivery of foodstuffs, as well as claims in connection with work carried out by tradesmen and craftsmen, purchases of retail goods, medical treatment, professional services provided by advocates, solicitors, legal representatives and notaries, and work performed by employees for their employers (article 128 CO). A few contractual claims become time-barred after one year such as a customer's claims for defects in a contract for work (article 371(1) CO).

In general, the limitation period commences as soon as the debt is due (article 130 CO). The limitation period is interrupted if the debtor acknowledges the claim and in particular if the debtor makes interest payments or partial payments or if debt enforcement proceedings are initiated by the creditor (article 135 CO). The effect of such interruption is that a new limitation period commences as of the date of the interruption (article 137 CO).

A claim for damages based on tort becomes time-barred one year from the date on which the injured party became aware of the loss or damage and of the identity of the person liable for it, or 10 years after the date on which the loss or damage was caused, whichever is earlier. It is important to note that if the action for damages is derived from an offence for which criminal law provides for a longer limitation period, that longer period also applies to the civil law claim (article 60 CO).

5 Jurisdiction

In what circumstances does the civil court have jurisdiction? How can a defendant challenge jurisdiction?

The civil courts mainly have jurisdiction for contentious civil matters, court orders in non-contentious matters and court orders in matters of debt collection and bankruptcy law (article 1 SCCP).

The court examines *ex officio* whether the procedural requirements of a claim are satisfied. This includes, in particular, the subject matter and territorial jurisdiction of the court seized (articles 59 and 60 SCCP). A party can, however, object to the jurisdiction of the court as a preliminary matter. The court can thereupon decide to clarify this issue before entering into the merits of the case (article 125 SCCP).

If the court decides that it lacks jurisdiction, it closes the proceedings by deciding not to consider the merits (article 236 SCCP). This decision is subject to either appeal (article 308 SCCP) or objection (article 319 SCCP) depending on the circumstances. Conversely, the court may confirm its jurisdiction either in the final judgment on the merits or by way of an interim decision if a contrary appellate decision could end the proceedings and thereby allow a substantial saving of time or costs. The interim decision can be challenged separately, but cannot be later challenged as part of the final judgment (article 237 SCCP).

6 Admissibility of evidence

What rules apply to the admissibility of evidence in civil proceedings?

Under Swiss civil procedural rules, each party is entitled to have the court accept the evidence that it offers in the required form and time frame (article 152 SCCP).

As to the form, the SCCP provides an exhaustive list of admissible means of evidence which encompasses witness testimony, documents, expert opinions, inspection, written statements from official authorities or individuals (if witness testimony appears to be unnecessary), and interrogation of the parties (article 168 SCCP). Documentary evidence comprises audio recordings, films, electronic files, and the like (article 177 SCCP).

Illegally obtained evidence is only considered by the court if there is an overriding interest in finding the truth (article 152(2) SCCP).

7 Publicly available information

What sources of information about assets are publicly available?

There are several publicly available sources that provide information on assets located in Switzerland. In particular:

- the commercial register provides information on companies (eg, share capital, legal seat, address, corporate purpose). Each canton maintains its own commercial register, which is freely accessible. A summary version of the commercial register is available online;
- the Swiss Official Gazette of Commerce, in addition to gathering the information published in every cantonal commercial register, provides information regarding bankruptcies, composition agreements, debt enforcement, calls to creditors, lost titles, precious metal control, other legal publications, balances and company notices;
- the land register records every single plot of land in Switzerland, with the exception of those in the public domain. Each canton maintains its own land register, which can be consulted upon the showing of a legitimate interest (eg, for purposes of contractual negotiations for the purchase of a property);
- the Swiss aircraft registry contains the records of all Swiss-registered aircraft and provides detailed information regarding the owner and the holder, the type of aircraft, its year of

construction, the serial number, the maximum take-off mass and the fee according to its noise level;

- the debt enforcement and bankruptcy register records include all debt collection proceedings filed against a debtor, and can be consulted by anyone showing a *prima facie* legitimate interest;
- there exists also an unofficial will register that records wills and other testamentary dispositions. This register is, however, not exhaustive and only contains information which has been freely provided; and
- in certain cantons (eg, Vaud and Fribourg), it is possible, under specific conditions, to access information contained in a person's tax certificate.

There is no register of bank accounts in Switzerland. Swiss banking secrecy protects the privacy of banks' clients. However, banking secrecy is not unlimited and can be lifted in the context of criminal proceedings (see question 20).

8 Cooperation with law enforcement agencies

Can information and evidence be obtained from law enforcement and regulatory agencies for use in civil proceedings?

A civil court may obtain information in writing from all official authorities (article 190 SCCP). There is no list of entities falling under the definition of 'official authorities' but it should be interpreted broadly as encompassing every entity financed or subsidised by a public agency. Swiss courts are, moreover, obliged to provide mutual assistance to each other (article 194 SCCP).

A party to a civil dispute that is also a party to criminal proceedings against the same adverse party, if granted the right to access the criminal file, can use such information in the context of civil proceedings.

9 Third-party disclosure

How can information be obtained from third parties not suspected of wrongdoing?

Parties and third parties have a duty to cooperate in the taking of evidence. In particular, they have the duty to make a truthful deposition or statement as a party or a witness; produce physical records, with the exception of correspondence with lawyers provided that such correspondence concerns the professional representation of a party or third party; and allow an examination of their person or property by an expert (article 160 SCCP).

In certain cases, third parties may, however, refuse to cooperate. Third parties have an absolute right to refuse to cooperate if they have a family link or a close personal relationship to one of the parties (article 165 SCCP). In other specific cases, third parties only have a qualified right to refuse to cooperate, which must be justified (article 166 SCCP). This relates, for instance, to cases where in establishing facts third parties would expose themselves or a close associate, as specified by law, to criminal prosecution or civil liability, or where a third party is bound by professional secrecy (eg, lawyers and clerics). If a third party refuses to cooperate without justification, the court may impose a disciplinary fine up to 1,000 Swiss francs; threaten sanctions under article 292 SCC (see question 12); order the use of compulsory measures; or charge the third party the costs caused by the refusal (article 167 SCCP). There is, however, no such sanction as contempt of court under Swiss law.

Furthermore, the confidants of other legally protected secrets may refuse to cooperate if they show credibly that the interest in keeping the secret outweighs the interest in establishing the truth (article 166(2) SCCP). This provision applies to bankers who are otherwise bound by banking secrecy (article 47 Banks Act).

10 Interim relief

What interim relief is available pre-judgment to prevent the dissipation of assets by, and to obtain information from, those suspected of involvement in the fraud?

Swiss law distinguishes between non-monetary and monetary claims. While enforcement of the former is regulated by the SCCP, enforcement of the latter is regulated by the DEBA. Interim relief, both before a claim has been filed or during the proceedings, can be requested by way of interim measures for non-monetary claims and attachment for monetary claims.

Swiss courts can order any interim measures suitable to prevent imminent harm in support of a non-monetary claim (article 262 SCCP). In particular, such interim relief can take the form of an injunction; an order to remedy an unlawful situation; an order to a registry or third party; a performance in kind; or the remittance of a sum of money (if provided by law). In practice, interim measures that are often requested are the registration of property rights in a public register such as the land register. Interim measures can also be requested to prevent a party from disposing of assets such as company shares or moveable property. In cases of special urgency, and in particular where there is a risk that the enforcement of the measure will be frustrated, the court may order the interim measure immediately and without hearing the opposing party, ie, *ex parte* (article 265 SCCP). Moreover, while pretrial discovery is alien to Swiss civil procedure, the SCCP allows the taking of evidence before the initiation of legal proceedings exclusively in cases where evidence is at risk or where the applicant has a justified interest (article 158 SCCP).

In the context of a monetary claim, assets could be frozen by way of attachment proceedings (articles 272 ff DEBA). Such attachment is granted *ex parte* and must thereafter be validated. The applicant must *prima facie*:

- show a claim against the debtor;
- identify assets of the debtor that can be attached; and
- show that one of the specific grounds for attachment, as set out by law, exists (eg, if the debtor does not live in Switzerland and the claim has sufficient connection with Switzerland or is based on a recognition of debt; or if the creditor holds an enforceable title against the debtor).

11 Right to silence

Do defendants in civil proceedings have a right to silence?

Under Swiss civil procedural rules, both the defendant and the plaintiff have a right to refuse to cooperate if:

- the taking of evidence would expose a close associate (ie, a spouse, child or other kin) to criminal prosecution or civil liability; or
- if they are bound by statutory secrecy obligations under criminal liability (eg, if they are a member of the clergy or a lawyer (article 321 SCC)) (article 163 SCCP).

Other confidants entrusted with legally protected secrets may refuse to cooperate if they credibly demonstrate that the interest in keeping the secret outweighs the interest in finding the truth (article 163(2) SCCP). This typically applies to banking secrecy and the persons bound by it.

If a party refuses to cooperate without valid reasons, this will be taken into consideration by the court when appraising the evidence (article 164 SCCP).

12 Non-compliance with court orders

How do courts punish failure to comply with court orders?

If the court order provides for an obligation to act, to refrain from acting or to tolerate something, the enforcement court may:

- issue a threat of criminal penalty under article 292 SCC;
- impose a disciplinary fine not exceeding 5,000 Swiss francs;

- impose a disciplinary fine not exceeding 1,000 Swiss francs for each day of non-compliance;
- order a compulsory measure such as taking away a moveable item or vacating immovable property; or
- order performance by a third party (article 343 SCCP).

Moreover, failure to comply with an official order issued by a court under the threat of the criminal penalty for non-compliance in terms of article 292 SCC is a criminal offence and gives rise to a fine.

Swiss courts can accompany their orders directly with the above-mentioned execution measures. Such measures can also be requested separately by one of the parties to the enforcement court if the other fails to comply with the court order.

13 Obtaining evidence from other jurisdictions

How can information be obtained through courts in other jurisdictions to assist in the civil proceedings?

Requests for judicial assistance for the taking of evidence abroad must follow the legal framework applicable between Switzerland and the requested state (eg, bilateral or multilateral treaties such as the 1954 Hague Convention relating to Civil Procedure or the 1970 Hague Convention on the Taking of Evidence Abroad in Civil or Commercial Matters). In Switzerland, such requests must be addressed to the Swiss Federal Office of Justice, which then transfers the requests abroad (article 11 PILA).

14 Assisting courts in other jurisdictions

What assistance will the civil court give in connection with civil asset recovery proceedings in other jurisdictions?

Swiss courts will assist foreign courts in relation to proceedings of asset recovery within the legal framework applicable between Switzerland and the requesting state. Save for the existence of other bilateral or multilateral agreements between the two states (eg, the 1965 Hague Convention on the Service Abroad of Judicial and Extrajudicial Documents in Civil or Commercial Matters, the 1970 Hague Convention on the Taking of Evidence Abroad in Civil or Commercial Matters or the 2007 Lugano Convention on Jurisdiction and the Recognition and Enforcement of Judgments in Civil and Commercial Matters) by default, Switzerland will apply the 1954 Hague Convention relating to Civil Procedure to foreign requests for service and the taking of evidence (article 11a(4) PILA).

It is noteworthy that service of judicial or extrajudicial documents from abroad in Switzerland as well as the taking of evidence in support of foreign proceedings is considered as being the exercise of public authority on Swiss territory. Accordingly, the execution of such measures on Swiss territory, without passing through the channel of judicial assistance, constitutes a violation of territorial sovereignty and is a crime under Swiss law (article 271 SCC).

15 Causes of action

What are the main causes of action in civil asset recovery cases, and do they include proprietary claims?

Under Swiss law, a civil asset recovery action may be brought to court on the basis of many different causes of action (eg, contract law, tort law, inheritance law, property law).

In particular, contract-based claims may be filed for breach of contract (article 97 CO). If there is no contract between the parties and if a person unlawfully causes a loss or damage to another, a tort-based action may be lodged (article 41 CO). This applies particularly to cases of fraud. Proprietary claims are also possible, notably in the event the owner has been deprived of its ownership (article 641 CC). In insolvency and bankruptcy law, if the debtor has transferred assets

or favoured certain creditors to the detriment of others, an avoidance action may be brought (articles 285 ff DEBA).

16 Remedies

What remedies are available in a civil recovery action?

The remedies available under Swiss law generally depend on the cause of action.

In the context of a contract, the plaintiff may request that the defendant be ordered to perform the contract in accordance with its precise terms (specific performance) (article 107(2) CO). Instead of asking for specific performance, the plaintiff may also choose to claim damages (article 97 CO). Other remedies are available for specific contracts (eg, contracts for work). Similarly, the remedy available for tort-based actions is damages.

Swiss law provides for restitution in the event of unjust enrichment (articles 62 ff CO). In general, the claim for unjust enrichment is considered subsidiary to other, more specific, claims. Restitution is also the remedy available to the owner of an object deprived of its ownership (article 641 CC).

Swiss law provides for an account of profits under specific circumstances. For instance, in the case of a contract of agency without authority the principal is entitled to appropriate any resulting benefits where the agency activities were not carried out with the best interests of the principals in mind but in the agent's interests (article 423(1) CO). Account of profits is also foreseen in relation to profits realised by the infringement of personality rights (article 28a(3) CC).

17 Judgment without full trial

Can a victim obtain a judgment without the need for a full trial?

In certain circumstances, Swiss law allows a judgment to be issued without a full trial. For instance, civil proceedings can continue and a judgment by default can be rendered even if the defendant is in default (articles 147, 206, 223 and 234 SCCP). In other specific cases, the trial is conducted pursuant to simplified or summary proceedings. Simplified proceedings apply *inter alia* to small cases (ie, where the value in dispute is below 30,000 Swiss francs) (articles 243 to 247 SCCP). Summary proceedings go even further in terms of simplification and expediency. They apply, in particular, to urgent requests and requests for provisional measures (articles 248 to 270 SCCP). They also apply to 'clear-cut cases', which are non-contentious matters or matters where the facts can be immediately proven or where the legal situation is straightforward and non-disputable (article 257 SCCP).

18 Post-judgment relief

What post-judgment relief is available to successful claimants?

The successful claimant of a monetary claim can launch debt collection proceedings under the DEBA which also allow for attachment proceedings depending on the circumstances (see question 10).

For a non-monetary claim, if the judgment provides for an obligation to act, to refrain from acting or to tolerate something, the successful claimant may request the court execution measures as set out in question 12. If the judgment relates to a declaration of intent, the enforceable decision takes the place of the declaration. If the declaration concerns a public register, such as the land register or the commercial register, the court making the decision must issue the required instructions to the register (article 344 SCCP).

19 Enforcement

What methods of enforcement are available?

As mentioned, the successful party can request execution measures in support of a non-monetary claim such as, for instance, the issuance of a threat of criminal penalty under article 292 SCC or performance by a third party (article 343 SCCP) (see questions 12 and 18). Moreover, the successful party may demand damages if the unsuccessful party does not follow the orders of the court; or conversion of the performance due into the payment of money.

In turn, monetary claims can be enforced under the DEBA. Eventually, the proceedings set forth by the DEBA will lead to the seizure of any of the unsuccessful defendant's assets as well as garnishes (articles 89 ff DEBA) and their auctioning (articles 125 ff DEBA). The seizure of a real estate property will be automatically registered in the land register (article 101 DEBA).

Criminal asset recovery

20 Interim measures

Describe the legal framework in relation to interim measures in your jurisdiction.

The SCCrP provides for interim measures, in particular, in relation to the pretrial detention of the suspect as well as to the seizure of assets or items under specific conditions (article 388 SCCrP).

According to article 263(1) SCCrP, items or assets belonging to a suspect/accused or a third party may be seized, if it is expected that such items or assets will:

- have to be confiscated or will be used for the purpose of a claim for compensation (see questions 22 and 28);
- be used as evidence;
- be used as security for procedural costs or monetary penalties; or
- will have to be returned to the persons suffering harm.

During the preliminary proceedings (which start when the police begin an inquiry or the prosecutor opens an investigation), the seizure is ordered by the cantonal or the federal prosecutor, depending on the offence under investigation (articles 22 ff SCCrP). During the trial proceedings (which start with the receipt by the court of the indictment rendered by the prosecutor), jurisdiction for seizure lies with the court (article 198(1) SCCrP).

A seizure is ordered on the basis of a written warrant (a 'seizure order') containing a brief statement of grounds (article 263(2) SCCrP). In cases concerning banking assets, the competent authorities can order the bank not to disclose the seizure to the suspect/accused or any third party for a certain period of time. It is noteworthy that Swiss banking secrecy is lifted in the context of criminal proceedings.

The seizure of items and assets may be undertaken only if:

- it is permitted by law;
- there is reasonable suspicion that an offence has been committed;
- the aims cannot be achieved by less stringent measures; and
- the seriousness of the offence justifies the measure (article 197(1) SCCrP).

Furthermore, except in the case of a seizure ordered in relation to security for procedural costs and monetary penalties or claim for compensation, there must be a nexus between the items or assets seized and the offence committed. Fishing expeditions are not allowed under Swiss law.

The continued fulfilment of the conditions underlying a seizure order must be regularly examined by the criminal authorities. The longer the seizure is maintained, the stricter the review of such

conditions will be. If the conditions are no longer met, the seizure order must be revoked and the property or assets handed over to the person entitled to them (article 267(1) SCCrP). According to Swiss case law and doctrine, the persons affected by the seizure can request the seizure order to be revoked when there is a change in the circumstances of the case and in particular if the length of the proceedings becomes disproportionate.

Once a seizure order or an order refusing to revoke the seizure has been rendered, the suspect/accused, as well as third parties whose rights have been directly affected by the order, can file an objection within 10 days after they have been served with the order or have been informed of the order (articles 393 and 396 SCCrP). Such an objection is, however, subject to the demonstration of a legitimate interest in the quashing or amendment of the order (article 382(1) SCCrP). It is noteworthy that the beneficial owner of assets held with a bank does not have such legitimate interest. The beneficial owner, therefore, does not have the right to file an objection against the seizure order, such right belongs to the account holder.

In an international context, a foreign state may request interim measures (eg, the seizure of assets) in order to preserve the existing situation, to safeguard threatened legal interests or to protect jeopardised evidence, provided that proceedings under the Federal Act on International Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters (IMAC) do not clearly appear inadmissible or inappropriate (article 18(1) IMAC, see question 35).

21. Proceeds of serious crime

Is an investigation to identify, trace and freeze proceeds automatically initiated when certain serious crimes are detected? If not, what triggers an investigation?

The criminal authorities have the duty (*ex officio* or upon a criminal complaint) to investigate and, if necessary, to prosecute offences under their jurisdiction. In particular, they have to identify, trace and seize the proceeds of offences depending on whether the seriousness of the offence justifies the measure (see question 20).

Additionally, pursuant to Swiss law provisions against money laundering, a financial intermediary must immediately file a report with the Money Laundering Reporting Office Switzerland (MROS) and seize the assets entrusted to it if it knows or has reasonable grounds to suspect that the assets:

- are the proceeds of a felony;
- are connected to an offence of money laundering or of participation or support to a criminal organisation;
- are subject to the power of disposal of a criminal organisation; or
- serve to finance terrorism (article 9 of the Federal Act on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing in the Financial Sector (AMLA)).

The MROS then has the power to forward the reports to the competent prosecution authority for further investigation (article 23 AMLA).

22. Confiscation – legal framework

Describe the legal framework in relation to confiscation of the proceeds and instrumentalities of crime.

Confiscation is regulated by articles 69 ff SCC that provide for the confiscation, irrespective of the criminal liability of any person, of:

- ‘dangerous objects’, ie, objects used or that were intended to be used for the commission of an offence (*instrumenta sceleris*) or that have been produced as a result of the commission of an offence (*producta sceleris*);
- assets that have been acquired through the commission of an offence or that are intended to be used to persuade the offender in the commission of an offence or as payment thereof; and

- assets of a criminal organisation, ie, assets that are subject to the power of disposal of a criminal organisation, in particular, assets of a person who participates in or supports a criminal organisation.

Assets other than assets belonging to a criminal organisation can only be confiscated if the assets:

- are directly and immediately connected to the commission of an offence;
- are still available; and
- have not been passed on to the person harmed for the purpose of restoring the prior lawful position (article 70 SCC).

As to the confiscation of assets acquired by a third party, see question 26.

The right to order the confiscation of assets is limited to seven years since the commission of the offence. However, if the prosecution of the offence is subject to a longer limitation period (article 97 SCC), this period also applies (article 70(3) SCC).

23. Confiscation procedure

Describe how confiscation works in practice.

Confiscation can be ordered within pending criminal proceedings or outside or outside any criminal proceedings.

In the first case, the prosecutor has the competence to order the confiscation by way of any decision ending the proceedings, ie, a non-proceedings order (article 310 SCCrP); a ruling of abandonment of proceedings (article 320 SCCrP); or a summary penalty order (article 352 SCCrP). Similarly, the court has the competence to order confiscation within its final judgment (article 267(3) SCCrP). When the requirements for the confiscation are fulfilled, the criminal authority must order the confiscation. The confiscation order is subject to appeal or objection depending on the circumstances (articles 322(2), 354 ff and 399 SCCrP).

In case of separate confiscation proceedings, ie, when a decision is made on the confiscation of property or assets outside criminal proceedings (eg, because the Swiss authorities do not have jurisdiction over the offence (articles 376 to 378 SCCrP), see question 32), confiscation proceedings must be carried out in the place where the items or assets to be confiscated are located (article 37(1) SCCrP). The confiscation order can be challenged within 10 days by the person affected by the confiscation (article 377(4) SCCrP). Following the opposition, the court will render a decision or order, which can be further challenged within 10 days (articles 393 ff SCCrP).

Finally, both in cases where confiscation is ordered within pending criminal proceedings or in separate confiscation proceedings, official notice must be given of the confiscation in order to protect the third parties’ right on confiscated assets. If the person harmed or third parties are identified only after the final decision has entered into force, the assets or items confiscated might be restored to them provided that they claim their rights on the assets within five years of the date on which official notice is given (article 70(4) SCC).

24. Agencies

What agencies are responsible for tracing and confiscating the proceeds of crime in your jurisdiction?

Generally, prosecutors have jurisdiction to investigate, trace and seize the proceeds of crime and to confiscate said proceeds while the courts limit their role to the confiscation of assets. As to the competence of the MROS, see question 21.

25 Secondary proceeds

Is confiscation of secondary proceeds possible?

Pursuant to Swiss case law and doctrine, the courts are allowed to confiscate secondary proceeds. However, there must be a paper trail that demonstrates a nexus between the secondary proceeds to be confiscated and the offence committed (see question 22).

26 Third-party ownership

Is it possible to confiscate property acquired by a third party or close relatives?

Confiscation is not permitted if a third party (ie, any natural person or legal entity) has acquired the assets; he or she has done so in ignorance of the grounds for confiscation; and provided such person has paid a sum of equal value, or confiscation would cause him or her to endure disproportionate hardship (article 70(2) SCC). However, regardless of the foregoing, the assets are subject to confiscation if they are the proceeds of the offence.

27 Expenses

Can the costs of tracing and confiscating assets be recovered by a relevant state agency?

There is no specific provision under Swiss law dealing with the recovery by the criminal authorities of the costs of tracing and confiscating of assets. Such costs can, however, be considered part of the procedural costs and can be borne by the accused if the accused is convicted (article 426(1) SCCrP).

28 Value-based confiscation

Is value-based confiscation allowed? If yes, how is the value assessment made?

Value-based confiscation is permitted if the assets subject to confiscation are no longer available. In such a case, the court may uphold a claim for compensation by the state of a sum of equivalent value (article 71 SCC). The amount of compensation must be equivalent to the value of the assets, would the assets still be available for confiscation. To calculate the amount of compensation the criterion is the gross income not the profit resulting from the assets and the value must be determined at the time the assets became unavailable.

29 Burden of proof

On whom is the burden of proof in a procedure to confiscate the proceeds of crime? Can the burden be reversed?

As a rule, the burden of proof in a confiscation procedure lies with the criminal authorities. However, regarding the assets of a person who participates in or supports a criminal organisation, it is presumed that the assets are subject to the power of disposal of the organisation until the contrary is proven (article 72 SCC).

30 Using confiscated property to settle claims

May confiscated property be used in satisfaction of civil claims for damages or compensation from a claim arising from the conviction?

Confiscated property or compensatory claims may be used in the satisfaction of civil claims for damages arising from an offence, subject to the following conditions:

- the person claiming compensation has suffered harm as a result of a felony or a misdemeanour;
- the person is not entitled to benefits under an insurance policy;

- it is anticipated that the offender will not pay damages or satisfaction; and
- the person harmed assigns the corresponding element of the claim to the state (article 73(1) and (2) SCC).

31 Confiscation of profits

Is it possible to recover the financial advantage or profit obtained through the commission of criminal offences?

Under article 70 SCC all financial advantages obtained through the commission of a criminal offence can be confiscated. For instance, in case of a company's profit obtained after a corrupt public procurement process, such profit must be confiscated. Even if it is considered that the corporation is not criminally liable and hence is a third party, article 70(2) SCC does not apply when the company profited directly from the corrupt public procurement process (see question 26).

32 Non-conviction based forfeiture

Can the proceeds of crime be confiscated without a conviction?

Describe how the system works and any legal challenges to in rem confiscation.

Confiscation can be ordered irrespective of the criminal liability of a person (article 69(1) SCC). In this respect, the SCCrP provides specific procedural rules allowing for a confiscation decision to be made independently of criminal proceedings (articles 376 to 378 SCCrP). First, property or assets that will probably be confiscated in separate proceedings is seized (article 377(1)) SCCrP). If the requirements for confiscation (articles 69 ff SCC) are fulfilled, the prosecutor orders their confiscation, and gives the person concerned the opportunity to respond (article 377(2) SCCrP). Conversely, if the requirements are not fulfilled, the prosecutor must order the abandonment of the proceedings and return the property or assets to the entitled person (article 377(3)).

The prosecutor or the court must also decide whether to accept the applications made by the person suffering harm for the confiscated property or assets to be used for his or her benefit (article 378 SCCrP).

For legal challenge see question 23.

Finally, within criminal proceedings, the prosecutor can order a confiscation within a no-proceedings order or a ruling abandoning proceedings (see question 23).

33 Management of assets

After the seizure of the assets, how are they managed, and by whom? How does the managing authority deal with the hidden cost of management of the assets? Can the assets be utilised by the managing authority or a government agency as their own?

As a rule, the holder of the assets or items that have been seized must hand them over to the competent criminal authority (article 265(1) SCCrP). As an exception, in certain circumstances, the suspect/accused; the persons who have the right to remain silent or to refuse to testify; and the corporate undertakings can refuse to hand over such items, if by doing so they could incriminate themselves (article 265(2) SCCrP).

The authority must safeguard the property and assets appropriately (article 266(2) SCCrP). It cannot use the assets as its own. Property that is subject to rapid depreciation or that requires expensive maintenance, as well as securities or other assets with a stock exchange or market price, may be sold immediately and the proceeds seized (article 266(5) SCCrP).

In practice, the private managers of assets continue to manage them, under the surveillance of the prosecutor. If taxes have to

be paid or costs have been incurred, the prosecutor has to give its consent before the payments are made.

34 Making requests for foreign legal assistance

Describe your jurisdiction's legal framework and procedure to request international legal assistance concerning provisional measures in relation to the recovery of assets.

Requests for international legal assistance concerning provisional measures must follow the legal framework applicable between Switzerland and the requested state (eg, bilateral and multilateral agreements such as the 1959 European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters, the 2001 Second Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and the 1985 Convention Implementing the Schengen Agreement). Absent any applicable agreement, the request must follow the rules set up by the law of mutual legal assistance in criminal matters of both countries.

35 Complying with requests for foreign legal assistance

Describe your jurisdiction's legal framework and procedure to meet foreign requests for legal assistance concerning provisional measures in relation to the recovery of assets.

Upon the request of a foreign state, seizure of assets is usually ordered by the prosecutor after delegation from the Federal Office of Justice (article 198(1)(a) SCCrP). Moreover, if any delay would jeopardise the proceedings and if there is sufficient information to determine whether all the conditions are met, the Federal Office of Justice may order the seizure of assets as soon as a request is announced. However, such measures are revoked if the requesting state does not make the request of mutual legal assistance within the set deadline (article 18(2) IMAC).

It is noteworthy that the seizure of assets on Swiss territory is considered to be within the exclusive jurisdiction of Swiss public authorities, and the execution of such measure on Swiss territory without passing through the channel of legal assistance is a criminal offence and constitutes a violation of Swiss territorial sovereignty (article 271(1) SCC).

Usually, the provisional measures remain in force until a final decision on the request for legal assistance. If objects and assets are to be handed over to the requesting state based solely on a final and enforceable order of that state (article 74a(3) IMAC), assets will remain seized until such order is issued or the requesting state notifies the competent executing authority that such an order may no longer be issued, in particular due to lapse of time (article 33a of the Ordinance on International Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters).

Update and trends

Generally, Switzerland remains at the forefront of the recovery of illicit assets of PEPs, the Swiss government being adamant that the country should not serve as a safe harbour for corrupt funds. In this context, the Swiss government has continued to launch initiatives to promote internationally coordinated action to combat the illicit assets of PEPs.

Swiss legislation is also undergoing substantial changes regarding the administrative assistance provided to foreign states in tax-related matters. In this respect, Switzerland intends to enact the latest Financial Action Task Force recommendations to include tax crimes in the list of predicate offences to money laundering.

Swiss law enacted specific rules regarding the recovery of illicit assets of politically exposed persons located in Switzerland. Under the Swiss Federal Act on the restitution of assets illicitly obtained by politically exposed persons (RIAA), the Swiss government may order the seizure of such assets with a view to the instigation of confiscation proceedings under the RIAA, provided the following conditions are fulfilled:

- the assets have been secured provisionally in the context of a process of mutual legal assistance in criminal matters instigated at the request of the state of origin;
- powers of disposal over the assets rest with:
 - politically exposed persons (PEPs); or
 - natural or legal persons who are closely associated with PEPs for family, personal or business reasons (close associates).
- the state of origin is unable to satisfy the requirements of mutual legal assistance proceedings owing to the total or substantial collapse or the unavailability of its national judicial system (failure of state structures); and
- the safeguarding of Swiss interests demands that the assets be frozen (article 2 RIAA).

36 Treaties

To which international conventions with provisions on asset recovery is your state a signatory?

Switzerland is party to several international conventions with provisions on asset recovery. In particular:

- European Convention on Extradition 1957;
- European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters 1959;
- UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988;

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- European Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime 1990;
- OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions 1997;
- European Criminal Law Convention on Corruption 1999;
- UN Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism 1999;
- UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2000; and
- UN Convention against Corruption of 31 October 2003.

37 Private prosecutions

Can criminal asset recovery powers be used by private prosecutors?

Not relevant.

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