

# HANDBOOK

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## The new alliance between Switzerland, the United Kingdom and France to tackle bribery and corruption threat

A shift in the fight against corruption from compliance to prosecution

By Antonia Mottironi

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On 20 March 2025, a landmark step in international anti-corruption enforcement was taken when the United Kingdom's Serious Fraud Office (SFO), France's Parquet National Financier (PNF), and Switzerland's Office of the Attorney General (OAG) signed a founding statement establishing the International Anti-Corruption Prosecutorial Taskforce. This new alliance aims to intensify and streamline the fight against cross-border bribery and corruption, reflecting a growing recognition of the global nature of financial crime and the need for coordinated responses.

### Background

Bribery and corruption are not confined by borders; they often involve complex, multinational schemes that can only be effectively tackled through robust international cooperation. The SFO, PNF, and OAG have a history of collaboration, having worked together on major cases such as the Airbus and Glencore investigations, which resulted in billions in

finances and demonstrated the effectiveness of joint action. The new taskforce formalises and deepens this cooperation, signaling a shared commitment to confronting what the agencies describe as the "significant threat of bribery and corruption and the severe harm that it causes".<sup>1</sup>

### Structure and objectives

The taskforce is structured to maximise both strategic alignment and operational efficiency:

- **Leaders' group:** This group will facilitate the regular exchange of insight and strategy among the heads of the SFO, PNF, and OAG, ensuring that high-level priorities and emerging threats are addressed collaboratively.
- **Working group:** Tasked with devising concrete proposals for cooperation on specific cases, this group will focus on operational matters, sharing intelligence, and coordinating investigative and prosecutorial actions.

- **Best practice sharing:** The taskforce will serve as a platform for exchanging expertise and methods, aiming to enhance the effectiveness of each agency's efforts by leveraging their combined experience.
- **Open membership:** The founding statement explicitly invites "other like-minded agencies" to join, potentially expanding the taskforce's reach and influence beyond the three founding countries.

### Legal and practical implications

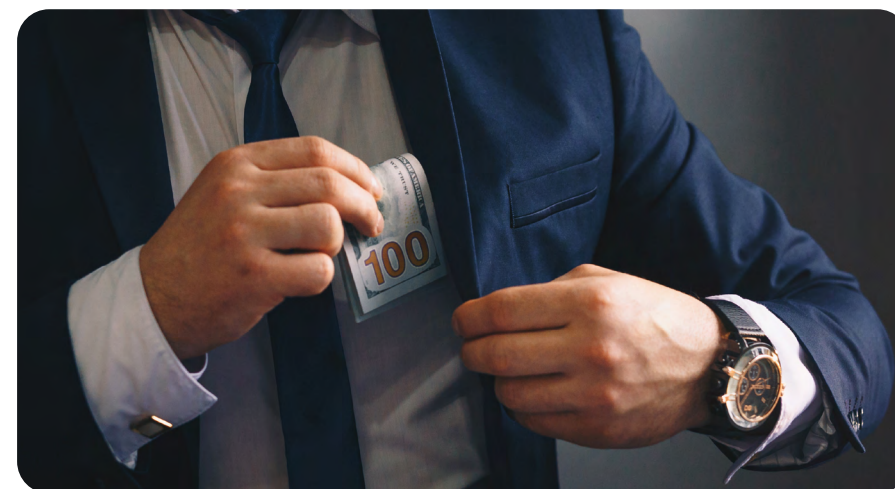
Each member agency brings powerful legal tools to the table. The UK's Bribery Act 2010, France's Sapin II law and Article 102 Para. 2 of the Swiss criminal Code all have extraterritorial reach, allowing prosecution of foreign conduct if there is a sufficient nexus to the prosecuting country. Switzerland, for its part, has recently stepped up enforcement against corporate and individual offenders, increasing fines and prison sentences in high-profile cases. In 2024, for instance, TRAFIGURA BEHEER BV, GUNVOR SA and PKB PRIVATBANK

AG were indicted or criminally convicted for bribery of foreign officials (and/or subsequent money laundering) by the Swiss federal law enforcement authorities.<sup>2</sup>

The taskforce is designed to streamline the use of these tools, making it easier to share information, coordinate actions, and avoid duplication of effort. By pooling resources and intelligence, the agencies hope to accelerate investigations and prosecutions, particularly in complex cases involving multiple jurisdictions and legal systems.

### A shifting global enforcement landscape

The announcement of the taskforce comes at a time of uncertainty in global anti-corruption enforcement. In February 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump issued an executive order pausing enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), historically a cornerstone of international anti-bribery efforts. While the SFO has stated that the creation of the taskforce is not a direct response to the U.S.





pause, the move is widely seen as a signal that European authorities are prepared to fill any enforcement gaps and take a more prominent role in leading multijurisdictional cases<sup>3</sup>.

### Impact on companies and compliance

The creation of the taskforce has significant implications for companies operating in or with connections to the UK, France, or Switzerland:

- **Increased scrutiny:** Companies can expect more coordinated investigations and enforcement actions, especially in high-risk sectors such as energy, construction, and finance.
- **Expanded jurisdiction:** The extraterritorial reach of criminal corporate liability (in particular through subsidiaries or branches abroad, as well as by the prosecution of money laundering), combined with Switzerland's increased willingness to prosecute, means that even companies based outside these countries may fall within the taskforce's sights if their activities have a sufficient connection.
- **Compliance expectations:** Authorities in all three countries emphasise the importance of robust anti-corruption compliance programmes. Companies should review and, if necessary, strengthen their risk assessments, policies, procedures, and training to ensure they meet evolving standards.

This multinational taskforce is part of the broader trend toward harmonisation of due diligence and reporting requirements (exemplified by the implementation of the new EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive CS3D) means companies

must be prepared for more consistent but also more comprehensive obligations across Europe. Also, the taskforce, combined with the start of the operations of the European Public Prosecutor's Office EPPO in 2021, which includes the prosecution of bribery and corruption committed at the EU's expense, may further raise the bar for what is considered an effective compliance programme, pushing companies to adopt the highest standards observed among all (EU and non-EU) European jurisdictions.

### Looking ahead

The taskforce's founding statement leaves the door open for further expansion, inviting other like-minded agencies to join. This could lead to a broader, more unified front against international corruption, potentially involving other European or even global partners. While the taskforce does not create new legal powers, it is expected to remove practical obstacles to cooperation, promote faster information exchange, and result in more effective enforcement.



As The Attorney General of Switzerland Stefan Blättler declared: "'As part of this cooperation, we will be able to help ensure that fraud and crime can be better combated in the future. This task force is therefore of great importance for Switzerland.'" [He] also recalled the agreements concluded almost 30

years ago under the "Geneva Call" to create a fairer and safer European judicial area, from which corruption will be truly eradicated. "These magistrates were pioneers at the time, and today we are following in their footsteps," said Attorney General Blättler".<sup>4</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> See [www.assets.publishing.services.gov.uk](https://www.assets.publishing.services.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> See Ardenter Law, Bribery and Corruption 2025, 12th edition, in Global Legal Insights, [https://www.ardenterlaw.ch/\\_files/ugd/377cbb\\_dda845ab88304235ae42bf42e517a38.pdf?lang=en](https://www.ardenterlaw.ch/_files/ugd/377cbb_dda845ab88304235ae42bf42e517a38.pdf?lang=en)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.skadden.com/insights/publications/2025/03/uk-france-and-switzerland-focus-on-enforcement>; see also <https://www.mayerbrown.com/en/insights/publications/2025/04/eye-on-economic-crime-uk-swiss-and-french-international-anti-corruption-taskforce>.

<sup>4</sup> See OAG's press release of 20 March 2025, <https://www.news.admin.ch/en/nsb?id=104571>