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Tax controversy survey:

Procedures and issues for selected countries - 2nd edition

October 2015

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Tax controversy lawyers with Norton Rose Fulbright around the globe have prepared a second annual survey of certain tax controversy procedures and issues referenced below for Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

While each tax controversy will involve unique circumstances, this survey serves as a reference tool for tax executives at multinational companies. It will be an evolving tool, and we plan to add additional countries in future surveys. If you would like additional information, please feel free to contact any of the lawyers listed on the back of this survey.

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Examinations

In each country, an administrative agency or department conducts examinations of taxpayers. Such agencies or departments generally have broad investigative powers, such as the power to access documents and witnesses. Commonly faced issues vary from one jurisdiction to the next, but transfer pricing and cross border transactions are common issues. The extent to which a taxpayer can recover its costs of contesting administrative proceedings varies widely between jurisdictions.

Country	Nature of Examination Function	Issues Commonly Faced	Recovery of Administrative Contest Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia 	<p>Australian Taxation Office (ATO):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative agency Bbroad investigatory powers including access to documents Does not have adjudicatory powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goods and services tax Taxation of trusts Deductibility of outgoings/ prior year losses ATO's exercise of its information gathering powers Penalties/Interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No recovery unless matter goes to court or tribunal and a costs order is made in favor of taxpayer Typically costs order enables recovery of about 50%-70% of costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has broad powers to access documents and information Important discovery powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income or capital Valuations Anti-avoidance Transfer pricing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ordinary costs award Court discretion Expert fees All reasonable disbursements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<p>Tax Audits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of tax authorities Broad powers to summons documents and testimonies No independent agency; acts for the tax authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer Pricing CFC legislation Thin capitalization rules Loss deduction Hidden dividend distributions Transfer of intangible assets Deduction of expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative cost recovery, if successful tax proceeding and positive costs ruling by tax court. Costs capped to regular fee on the basis of statutory regulation

Country	Nature of Examination Function	Issues Commonly Faced	Recovery of Administrative Contest Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	<p>Agenzia delle Entrate is entitled to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> exert authority over taxpayers through audits, inspections and verifications address requests to the taxpayer and to third parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relocation abroad of non Italian entities Tax avoidance/“<i>abuso del diritto</i>” Cross border transactions Tax compliance of individuals concerning foreign assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Africa 	<p>South African Revenue Service (SARS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative agency Wide powers to request or search for and seize material, interview persons Limited adjudicatory powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debt versus equity Transfer pricing Research credits “Simulated transactions” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not unless an order is made in an appeal to the tax court
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) can open an enquiry into a tax return, and may require adjustments to be made A taxpayer that disagrees may appeal to the Tax Tribunal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges to tax planning Deductibility of various expenses VAT issues “Administrative failures” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some circumstances some costs of litigation may be recovered if matters proceed to court or the Tax Tribunal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US 	<p>Internal Revenue Service (IRS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative agency Broad powers to summons documents and testimony Generally does not have adjudicatory powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Debt versus equity Transfer pricing Foreign tax credits Research credits Loss deductions (worthless stock, bad debt) Penalties Interest (abatement, netting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Net worth requirements: \$2,000,000 for individuals \$7,000,000 for entities Cannot protract proceedings “Reasonable” costs \$190 per hour cap currently (exceptions)

Collection of information

Most departments or agencies have broad administrative powers to request documents and conduct interviews of witnesses. Typically, the department or agency can obtain judicial enforcement of its information request and/or utilize discovery in litigation. Most departments or agencies can issue a request, summons or subpoena to a third party to gather information, administratively and/or in litigation.

Country	Administrative Collection of Information From Taxpayer	Judicial Collection of Information From Taxpayer	Collection of Information From Third Parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice compelling production of documents Notice compelling attendance to give evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In litigation, ATO can use the discovery process to obtain documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In litigation, ATO may use subpoenas or other third party production mechanisms ATO may issue same notices as can be issued to taxpayer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audits Requirements very broad Includes foreign-based documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judicially authorized search and seizures Courts can enforce requirements In litigation, CRA can use discovery and request full disclosure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CRA can issue requirement to third party, including foreign based documents Third party may be examined for discovery (with leave)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broad information duties by taxpayer Tax authorities usually request documents and statements by taxpayer Increased duties by taxpayer in international cases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax authorities can enforce compliance with information duties In proceeding tax court can request documents and information Exclusion of facts, if filed too late 	<p>Tax authorities may request information, if necessary and request with taxpayer had not been successful</p>

Country	Administrative Collection of Information From Taxpayer	Judicial Collection of Information From Taxpayer	Collection of Information From Third Parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax or other public database Information acquired directly (also through assessment activity) or indirectly Formal document request Summons for documents 	<p>Agenzia delle Entrate cannot enforce summons but, in case of refusal, the taxpayer loses the right to avail of certain options envisaged in his favor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual and infra-annual transfer of information from financial institutions to feed the Tax Database Agenzia delle Entrate may summon taxpayers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request relevant material Conduct interviews Hold “inquiries” Conduct audits or criminal investigations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search and seizure In litigation before the tax board or tax court SARS may use discovery 	<p>In litigation before the tax board or tax court SARS may subpoena witnesses and documents</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal information request first By notice, HMRC can require information to check a taxpayer’s position, with no judicial approval of notice is required (but may be sought) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax Tribunal may approve an information notice In litigation, parties must disclose relevant documents, including those adverse to their case 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HMRC can give notice to third parties requiring information to check a taxpayer’s position Such notice must generally first be approved by the Tax Tribunal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Document Requests Summons for documents or testimony Summons power is broad - “may be relevant” “Formal document request” for foreign based documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRS can enforce summons Taxpayer can seek to quash summons Court can enforce “formal document request” - exclude evidence In litigation, IRS may use discovery 	<p>IRS may summon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> US persons Foreign-owned US taxpayer or foreign taxpayer with US business as agent for related foreign party <p>In litigation, IRS may use subpoena</p>

Dispute resolution - administrative

The availability of dispute resolution during an examination varies widely between jurisdictions. However, most jurisdictions provide administrative appeal procedures and/or alternative dispute resolution at the conclusion of an examination. Moreover, most jurisdictions provide alternative dispute resolution or judicial review with respect to the results of an administrative appeal.

Country	During Examination	Administrative Review of Examination Results	Post Administrative Review (General)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATO encourages alternative dispute resolution (ADR) including independent review and early neutral evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxpayer can object to ATO assessment within 60 days ATO must determine objection within 60 days Increasing use of ADR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application to Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) or Federal Court for review of ATO decision Certain decisions of ATO can be subject to review by Federal Court
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft assessment submitted at the end of examination Settlement often negotiated Settlement must be principled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent review by Appeals following notice of objection More than 70% of cases settled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mediation process available
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conclusion of tax contract or settlement agreement not possible Mutual agreement re facts possible at all proceeding stages No time limit for termination of tax audit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxpayer files appeal and (usually) reasons Appeal is dealt by separate section of tax office No costs incurred for appeal by tax authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxpayer can file claim against appeal decision No mutual settlement possible (decision by tax court obligatory)

Country	During Examination	Administrative Review of Examination Results	Post Administrative Review (General)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	None	Taxpayer may submit its own comments to the tax assessment within 60 days from the delivery of the Verification Notice	Self-defense: Agenzia delle Entrate corrects its own errors either on request of the taxpayer or on its own initiative also in case of lack of appeal to the Tax Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Africa 	There are no dispute resolution procedures available to a taxpayer while the taxpayer is under examination	<p>Objection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxpayer files objection Considered by SARS official ADR if parties agree <p>Appeal to tax board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxpayer files notice of appeal Independent members 	<p>ADR;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed between SARS and the taxpayer Appoint a facilitator appointed (SARS official or third party) to mediate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can last indefinitely Emphasis on collaboration between HMRC and taxpayer, information gathering, correspondence and meeting HMRC bound by policy in considering settlement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxpayers can request a review by an independent HMRC officer Following enquiry, a Closure Notice is issued 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for ADR (although usually during enquiry process)—HMRC policy can limit scope of settlement Closure Notice can be appealed to the Tax Tribunal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US 	<p>Fast Track Settlement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRS Appeals division employee mediates Resolves large cases within 120 days, smaller cases within 60 Taxpayer retains traditional Appeals rights 	<p>Review by IRS Appeals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxpayer files detailed protest Appeals is independent division of IRS Appeals may not communicate ex parte with others in IRS 	<p>Mediation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To resolve remaining issues; IRS Appeals mediator, or also, at taxpayer's expense, a third party co-mediator <p>Arbitration program eliminated due to lack of use</p>

Transfer pricing

There is a great deal of variation between jurisdictions in their approach to transfer pricing, although there are ongoing efforts by the OECD to develop consistent “BEPS” approaches. Some apply the OECD Transfer Pricing Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and Tax Administrations. While competent authority is typically available, in some jurisdictions it is not commonly employed. The availability and application of correlative adjustments varies widely between jurisdictions.

Country	Transfer Pricing Issues	Competent Authority Proceedings	Correlative Adjustments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer pricing legislation aligned to OECD standards Administration of law likely to correlate with BEPS developments Contemporaneous documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not commonly employed Advance pricing agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATO has power to make consequential adjustment to tax position of entity or another entity where “fair and reasonable” to do so
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key issues: inter-company pricing of inventory, services CRA applies OECD guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very long process Relief where double taxation arises Choice: competent authority or objection. 	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<p>Key issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intercompany pricing of inventory, services, intangibles Cost sharing agreement Compliance with transfer pricing documentation 	Advanced Pricing Agreement possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correlative allocations to other group entities Formal note to tax office of group entity Allocation must be reflected in group member’s documentation

Country	Transfer Pricing Issues	Competent Authority Proceedings	Correlative Adjustments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agenzia delle Entrate applies OECD guidelines Domestic transfer pricing is verified and detected 	<p>“International tax ruling” procedure might be activated to agree on mutual transfer pricing level for the following four tax years</p>	<p>None</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary adjustments currently a deemed loan, but changing to a deemed dividend Arm’s-length pricing No safe harbours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxpayer may approach competent authority where adjustments not in accordance with double taxation agreement May obtain domestic credits where no DTA relief available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Returns to be submitted with arm’s-length treatment already included Further adjustments made in assessment by SARS Taxed as deemed loan, changing to deemed dividend
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business restructurings Financial transactions, including reinsurance 	<p>Available but not used that frequently</p>	<p>May be made</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key issues – intercompany pricing of inventory, services, intangibles Cost sharing agreements used to reduce valuation risk IRS follows Transfer Pricing Audit Roadmap 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek relief when disputes cause tax adjustments to affiliates Often obtains some double tax relief Need to exhaust remedies to obtain a US foreign tax credit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRS makes correlative allocations to other group members IRS furnishes written statement of allocation Allocation must be reflected in other members’ documentation

Civil and criminal penalties

While precise amounts of penalties vary, all jurisdictions impose substantial civil penalties for cases involving grossly negligent, willful or fraudulent conduct. Most jurisdictions impose significant prison sentences and/or fines for criminal violations. General and/or specific voluntary disclosure programs are, or are planned to be, available in all jurisdictions.

Country	Civil Penalties	Criminal Penalties	Tax Amnesty Programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> False or misleading statement – 75% of shortfall Tax avoidance scheme – 50% of shortfall Adopting position not reasonably arguable – 25% of shortfall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> False or misleading statements – up to A\$9,000 + treble tax avoided Failure to provide tax return or information – up to 2 years prison + A\$9,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remission of penalties/ interest for voluntary disclosure Tax amnesty programs from time to time for various issues, e.g. non-disclosure of foreign income
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50% if gross negligence Planner’s total gross entitlement if misrepresentation Failure to disclose foreign assets (5%) 	<p>Making false statements, destroying documents, evading payment of taxes: fine of 200% and 2 years in prison</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Voluntary disclosure program Cannot be under investigation Must be complete and verifiable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interest (0.5% per month); interest run begins after expiry of 15 months from tax due date Late payment fine (1% of tax amount for each month, the tax is not duly paid) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax fraud – up to 5 years prison (10 years in serious case) or fine Tax evasion – up to EUR 50,000 fine False documentation of bills and receipts – up to EUR 5,000 fine 	<p>Voluntary self-disclosure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed requirements Impossible, if tax office is already aware of facts At least 10% penalty on tax evasion amount, if > EUR 50,000

Country	Civil Penalties	Criminal Penalties	Tax Amnesty Programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3/15% (or 6/30% in case of black list countries) failure to declare foreign assets 100/200% false tax return 120/240% non submitted tax return 30% lack of payment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax evasion – up to 6 years prison False or non submitted tax return – up to 3 years prison Lack of payment of VAT or withholding taxes – up to 2 years prison 	Offshore Voluntary Disclosure Program currently under discussion in Parliament with detailed requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various penalties for non-compliance with tax laws or non-payment of tax Penalties for gross negligence and intentional tax evasion range from 100 – 200% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-compliance with tax laws, secrecy provisions, filing a return without authority – 2 years prison, R80 000 fine Tax evasion – 5 years prison, R200 000 fine 	Voluntary disclosure program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eligible before investigation commences/ after investigation has commenced but not concluded, subject to exceptions detailed requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failures; a one-off fine or daily flat-rate penalty (may be waived) Culpable penalties; up to 150% of tax or up to 200% if matters involve certain offshore jurisdictions 	Various offences, including evasion and fraud: up to 7 – 10 years' prison (depending on the nature of the offence, intent and amount involved)	HMRC run specific campaigns (including disclosure programs) related to specific industries or risk areas (such as offshore income and assets)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20% accuracy-related penalty (40% if gross misvaluation, which can include transfer pricing errors) 75% civil fraud Failure to declare foreign account: 50% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax evasion – 5 years prison, \$500,000 fine False tax return – 3 years prison, \$500,000 fine Failure to declare foreign account – 5 years prison, \$250,000 fine 	General Voluntary Disclosure Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot be under investigation Offshore Voluntary Disclosure Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undeclared foreign accounts Detailed requirements

Judicial challenges

All jurisdictions provide for judicial review of at least some determinations by the tax agency or department. Settlement procedures, such as direct negotiation between the parties or alternative dispute resolution, are common. In all jurisdictions, a taxpayer may recover some portion of the costs of a successful judicial challenge.

Country	Actions Subject to Judicial Review	Settlement Procedures/Options	Recovery of Judicial Challenge Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATO disallows objection against tax assessment, e.g. for inclusion of income or denial of deduction ATO denies refund claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ATO encourages alternative dispute resolution (ADR) such as “independent review”, “early neutral evaluation”, conciliation and mediation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No recovery unless matter goes to court or tribunal and costs order is made in favor of taxpayer Typically a costs order will enable recovery of about 50%-70% of costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister’s refusal to grant interest or penalty relief or extension Rectification orders Minister’s refusal to register a charity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At all levels of process Negotiation with Justice lawyer Settlement conference sponsored by Courts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs to successful litigant Can be solicitor and client costs if settlement proposal rejected
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final decisions of tax office (e.g. appeal decision) Ascertainment of legal position Commitment of tax office to an action or omission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax court decision Revision against legal errors of tax court decision or unclear legal questions 	<p>Same requirements as for administrative costs</p>

Country	Actions Subject to Judicial Review	Settlement Procedures/Options	Recovery of Judicial Challenge Costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	<p>All the tax notices issued by Agenzia delle Entrate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verification process upon acceptance Tax mediation Judicial conciliation 	<p>In general it is granted in case of win but the actual recovery is very low (symbolic).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SARS disallows taxpayer's objection Decision of tax board No decision by tax board in 60 days Common law or administrative grounds of review Imposition of a penalty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SARS may allow if taxpayer requests mediation in notice of appeal All courts: negotiate with other party within dispute settlement guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful party can recover costs in High Court and Tax Court
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Closure Notice may be appealed to the Tax Tribunal The way in which HMRC acts or makes decisions may also be open to challenge by taxpayers in the administrative court 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Tax Tribunal will consider and decide the case The decision of the Tax Tribunal may be appealed on points of law to higher courts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxpayers should not expect to recover all costs May recover some costs in the Tax Tribunal, and costs on appeal will generally follow the decision of the court
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRS issues notice of deficiency IRS denies refund claim IRS denies collection relief (if no prior opportunity to dispute) IRS denies whistleblower claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax Court (deficiency cases): consideration by IRS Appeals All courts: negotiate with government lawyer All courts: court-sponsored mediation or arbitration 	<p>Same requirements as for administrative costs, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must exhaust administrative remedies Can recover costs if judgment does not exceed amount of qualified offer

Privilege protection for information

All jurisdictions provide a privilege for communications between an attorney and client for the purpose of securing or giving legal advice, and the privilege can be waived. The availability of other privileges, such as a tax advisor or accountant privilege or a litigation or work product privilege, varies widely between jurisdictions.

Country	Tax Advisor Privilege	Attorney/Solicitor Privilege	Other Privileges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia 	ATO has an “accountant’s concession” – ATO will not seek access to certain documents except for fraud or evasion or documents relating to transaction implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restricted to legal practitioners Protects communications with dominant purpose of giving or receiving legal advice Can be waived so great care must be taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal professional privilege extends to confidential communications for main purpose of provision of legal advice or use in litigation/expected litigation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada 	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attorney-client privilege None for accountants unless as agent or client of lawyer 	Common interest privilege
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	Tax advisor privilege. Similar to attorney client privilege	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects communication between attorney and client Right to refuse to give evidence Can be waived by client 	None

Country	Tax Advisor Privilege	Attorney/Solicitor Privilege	Other Privileges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	None	Ordinary privilege can be waived	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Africa 	None	Attorney-client privilege: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects communications between client and attorney for purpose of securing legal advice Crime-fraud exception Can be waived 	Litigation privilege <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects communications and materials prepared in anticipation of litigation by party or representative Can be waived
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK 	No specific tax advisor privilege (but in extremely limited circumstances HMRC are prevented from requiring a tax advisor to produce tax working papers)	Legal advice privilege protects confidential communications between lawyers and their clients made for the dominant purpose of seeking or giving legal advice	Litigation privilege protects confidential communications between lawyers and clients (or a third party), made for or used in connection with actual or pending litigation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US 	Federal tax practitioner privilege: similar to attorney-client privilege, but major exceptions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criminal tax matters Promotion of tax shelters 	Attorney-client privilege: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects communications between client and attorney for purpose of securing legal advice Crime-fraud exception Can be waived 	Work product privilege: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects materials prepared in anticipation of litigation by party or representative Unless other party shows substantial need Harder to waive

Statutes of limitations

Specific periods of limitation vary between jurisdictions. Civil periods of limitation are typically a few years, unless fraud is involved, in which case the periods often are much longer or unlimited. Periods of limitation for criminal violations often are also much longer or unlimited.

Country	Assessments	Refunds	Criminal Tax Matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-assessment by lodging return - assessment arises or notice issued Audit and re-assess: 2 years (individuals/small business), 4 years (others) or unlimited (fraud) 	ATO may re-assess at request of taxpayer within 2 years (individuals and small business entities) or 4 years (all other taxpayers) or unlimited (fraud or evasion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlimited period for fraud or evasion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 years from original assessment (individual and private corporations) 4 years for public corporations 3 year extension for non-resident 	None	No limitation for tax evasion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 years from end of return filing year Expiry of limitation can be hindered If no return filed, limitation starts 3 years from tax due date and tax estimation any time 	5 years from the end of the calendar year in which the refund claim becomes due	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 years for tax evasion 10 years for tax fraud

Country	Assessments	Refunds	Criminal Tax Matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 years if no return filed, 5 years 	<p>Refunds are paid upon request within:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 48 months, for income taxes 3 years for indirect taxes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 years in case of challenge of a tax crime or “black list countries” If no return filed 10 years in case of challenge of a tax crime or “black list countries”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 years from original assessment 5 years if self-assessed or no return received or required Fraud or negligent misrepresentation, no prescription 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 years from the date of assessment by SARS 5 years in the case of self-assessment Erroneous refunds regarded as an outstanding tax debt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 years from the time the offence was committed unless otherwise specified
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK 	<p>Generally 4 years, increasing to 6 years for careless conduct by a taxpayer, or 20 years in the case of a deliberate act by a taxpayer resulting in lost tax</p>	<p>In limited circumstances, claims for relief for overpaid tax may be made not more than 4 years after the end of the relevant accounting period</p>	<p>Generally no specific time limitations for criminal tax matters</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 years from filing of return 6 years, if greater than 25% omission of income If no return filed, IRS may assess at any time If civil fraud, any time Agreement may extend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The later of 3 years from filing of return or 2 years from when tax was paid If the former, may only recover amounts paid within preceding three years plus extensions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 or 6 years for felonies 10 years if bank involved Measured from last affirmative act of evasion or overt act in furtherance of conspiracy 3 years for misdemeanors

Interest

Current interest rates vary greatly between jurisdictions, from as low as 2% to as high as almost 10%. The various jurisdictions do not follow a consistent pattern regarding interest on deficiencies or underpayments versus interest on refunds. Most jurisdictions do not have special rules for determining different underpayment interest rates for specified types of underpayments (such as the United States' special rule providing a higher interest rate for large corporate underpayments).

Country	Deficiencies (In General)	Special Rules With Respect to Certain Deficiencies	Refunds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates determined quarterly Underpayment: base rate + 3% (currently 5.15%) Late payment: base rate + 7% (currently 9.15%) 	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Base rate (currently 2.15%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada 	Determined quarterly – currently 5%; and not deductible	None	None
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.5% per month (i.e. 6% per annum) Interest expenses not deductible for income tax purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax evasion amounts subject to regular interest rate (i.e. 0.5% per month) Interest run may begin earlier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0.5% per month (i.e. 6% per annum) Refunds taxable for income tax purposes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	Interest on arrears due at 5,14% on an annual basis starting from the enrollment of the sums on the register (“iscrizione a ruolo”)	None	6% on a semi annual basis starting from the following semi-annual period from the undue payment

Country	Deficiencies (In General)	Special Rules With Respect to Certain Deficiencies	Refunds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest on tax debts is currently 9% but depends on when debt became due • In SARS interest rate table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In SARS interest rate table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest on refunds now 9%, depends on when debt became due • Interest on overpayment of provisional tax now 5%, depends on the period • In SARS interest rate table
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK 	<p>The interest rate on late paid taxes is usually pegged to be a few basis points above prevailing interest rates</p>	<p>Differing deficiencies are dealt with by way of penalties, rather than different interest rates</p>	<p>The repayment interest rate is usually pegged to be a few basis points above prevailing interest rates</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal short-term rate plus 3% • Rate currently is 3% 	<p>“Hot Interest”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate underpayments greater than \$100,000 • Federal short-term rate plus 5% • Begins running 30 days after first letter proposing deficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For corporations, federal short-term rate plus 2%; rate currently is 2% • For all others, federal short-term rate plus 3%; rate currently is 3%

Reconciliation of laws/applications of doctrines

Most jurisdictions have statutory and judicial anti-avoidance rules targeting transactions that are dominated by tax avoidance purposes or that lack economic substance. Rules applying substance over form are also common. In most jurisdictions, tax laws may be challenged as contravening constitutional or EU law, but the frequency of such challenges varies.

Country	Anti-avoidance Statutes	Anti-avoidance Judicial Doctrines	Compliance of Tax Laws with EU Law/ Constitutional Law
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General anti-avoidance rules: ATO can cancel tax benefits from transaction with sole or dominant purpose of obtaining a tax benefit Also specific anti-avoidance rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sham transactions: form of transaction can be disregarded if parties intend that form is disguise for some other transaction Whether transaction has legal effect 	Often constitutional challenges to imposition of new tax and those usually fail
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada 	General anti-avoidance rule: requires tax benefit, avoidance transaction and abuse	Judicial doctrines: sham, ineffective or incomplete transaction, substance over form	On rare occasions: <i>Charter</i> challenge (infringement of human rights)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tax office can disregard and re-qualify transactions that lack economic substance Substance over form Many special anti-avoidance provisions 	Same principles as for tax offices apply for tax courts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges to tax laws are common Many court proceedings in relation to the compliance of tax laws with German Constitutional law and EU law

Country	Anti-avoidance Statutes	Anti-avoidance Judicial Doctrines	Compliance of Tax Laws with EU Law/ Constitutional Law
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Italy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance over form approach of the tax assessment disregarding the legal form of the transactions Need to demonstrate a non fiscal interest supporting the transaction and its tax consequences 	<p>The “<i>abuso del diritto</i>” doctrine starting from the ECJ decisions in 2008 has been strongly developed by the domestic tax courts irrespective of any provisions inserted into the legislative framework</p>	<p>Corporate taxation (i.e. the treatment of the dividends) is strongly affected by the EU tax provisions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SARS can disregard, combine, re-characterize steps of an avoidance arrangement (transactions not normally employed for <i>bona fide</i> purposes, lacking commercial substance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance-over-form: Courts can treat transactions in accordance with their substance rather than form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges to tax laws rare Tax Administration Act – unconstitutional retrospective imposition of penalties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General anti-abuse rule to tackle abusive arrangements Numerous targeted anti-avoidance rules, particularly looking at the objects or purposes of parties to a transaction 	<p>No specific judicial doctrine (other than in VAT matters, where EU ‘abuse of law’ regime can apply); however, legislation is interpreted purposively</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of challenges to tax law have been made on the basis of breaches of EU freedoms Challenges are occasionally made on the basis of the Human Rights Act
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IRS can disregard transactions that lack economic substance Partnership anti-abuse regulations: IRS can recast transactions to be consistent with intent of statutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance-over-form: Courts can treat transactions in accordance with their substance rather than form Step transaction: Courts can collapse steps of a transaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges to tax laws rare Affordable Care Act – constitutional exercise of taxing power Defense of Marriage Act – unconstitutional, including as applied to tax laws

Regulation and investigations
Tax investigations and disputes contacts

Global head of tax

Andrius Kontrimas
Tel +1 713 651 5482
andrius.kontrimas@nortonrosefulbright.com

Australia

Andrew Spalding
Tel +61 3 8686 6949
andrew.spalding@nortonrosefulbright.com

Dr. Ashley Tsacalos

Tel +61 2 9330 8151
ashley.tsacalos@nortonrosefulbright.com

Canada

Dominic Belley
Tel +1 514 847 4318
dominic.belley@nortonrosefulbright.com

Wilfrid Lefebvre

Tel +1 514 847 4440
wilfrid.lefebvre@nortonrosefulbright.com

Geoffrey Walker

Tel +1 416 216 4814
geoffrey.walker@nortonrosefulbright.com

Germany

Uwe Eppler
Tel +49 40 970799 179
uwe.eppler@nortonrosefulbright.com

Alexander Hemmelrath

Tel +49 89 212148 307
alexander.hemmelrath@nortonrosefulbright.com

Italy

Andrea Fiorelli
Tel +39 06 684109 1
andrea.fiorelli@nortonrosefulbright.com

South Africa

Andrew Wellsted
Tel +27 11 685 8809
andrew.wellsted@nortonrosefulbright.com

UK

Chris Bates
Tel +44 20 7444 3392
chris.bates@nortonrosefulbright.com

Angela Savin

Tel +44 20 7283 6000
angela.savin@nortonrosefulbright.com

Dominic Stuttford

Tel +44 20 7444 3379
dominic.stuttford@nortonrosefulbright.com

US

John R. Allender
Tel +1 713 651 5664
john.allender@nortonrosefulbright.com

Charles W. Hall

Tel +1 713 651 5268
charles.hall@nortonrosefulbright.com

Robert C. Morris

Tel +1 713 651 8404
robert.morris@nortonrosefulbright.com

Jack Taylor

Tel +1 713 651 5670
jack.taylor@nortonrosefulbright.com

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