

144 Complaints and appeals

1. Introduction

This procedure relates to paragraphs 9.7 and 9.8 (appeals and complaints) of ISO 17021-1:2015 and paragraph 4.6 d of ISO 17065:2012.

2. Complaints procedure

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction addressed to Brand Compliance with regard to its products or services, or the complaint handling process itself, in which context an explicit or implicit response or solution is expected. By means of the procedure below, Brand Compliance B.V. has ensured that submission, handling and resolution of complaints will not lead to discriminatory measures against the complainant. Complaints may be submitted via the website (www.brandcompliance.com) by completing the 160 Complaint form or by email or telephone. Brand Compliance B.V. employees use the 423 Complaint Handling Form when accepting a valid complaint for processing.

- a) Upon receipt of the complaint, Brand Compliance B.V. Management will first establish whether the complaint relates to Brand Compliance B.V. certification activities performed;
- b) Upon receipt, a confirmation of receipt will be sent to the person submitting the complaint by email within 3 working days. This will be recorded in Brand Compliance B.V.'s CRM system;
- c) Based on the outcome of point a, an employee will be designated for the complaint handling. In appointing the employee, account shall be taken of the necessary independence and impartiality with regard to the complainant and, if applicable, the certificate holder;
- d) If the complaint concerns a Brand Compliance B.V. certificate holder, this will be reported to the relevant party. The effectiveness of the certified management system will also be taken into account when assessing the complaint;
- e) Brand Compliance B.V. is responsible for all decisions at any level of the complaint handling process;
- f) It is Brand Compliance B.V.'s responsibility to actively collect and verify the information necessary to validate the complaint;
- g) If necessary, an internal audit will be part of the assessment of the complaint. This may result in corrective actions which are also communicated to the complainant;

- h) The investigation of the complaint must take no longer than 10 working days. After this, the decision must be communicated to the complainant in writing;
- i) Decisions must be taken in consultation between the management and those directly involved, thus ensuring confidentiality;
- j) Brand Compliance B.V. will determine together with the certificate holder and the complainant whether, and if so to what extent, the subject of the complaint and its resolution should be made public.

After delivering feedback to the customer, the complaint is considered to be resolved. If the customer does not consider this feedback sufficient, the above procedure will be restarted.

The above procedure is based on the “average type” of complaint. However, in the event of deviating circumstances (such as the scope of the complaint, degree of difficulty, absence of employees due to holidays, illness, etc.) and in the event that the estimated processing time of the complaint exceeds 10 working days, the customer must be informed in writing and must receive regular reports on the progress of handling the complaint.

At the end of the procedure, the Lead Auditor will be informed about the complaint.

3. Appeal proceedings

If the Client wishes to appeal against a decision by Brand Compliance B.V. regarding:

- refusal to accept an application for certification;
- refusal to recommend certification;
- suspension, withdrawal or cancellation of the certificate;
- objection by third parties against the issuance of a certificate,

such an appeal must be filed within four weeks of the relevant fact. By means of the proceedings below, Brand Compliance B.V. has ensured that lodging, handling and resolution of appeals will not lead to discriminatory measures against the person lodging the appeal. An appeal must be lodged in writing (by post or email) to Brand Compliance B.V.

- a) Upon receipt of the appeal, a written confirmation of receipt will be sent to the person lodging the appeal within 3 working days. This will be recorded in Brand Compliance B.V.’s CRM system;
- b) An employee will be appointed to process the appeal. In appointing the employee, account shall be taken of the necessary independence and impartiality with regard to the person lodging the appeal;
- c) Brand Compliance B.V. is responsible for all decisions at any level of the appeal proceedings;

- d) It is Brand Compliance B.V.'s responsibility to actively collect and verify the information necessary to validate the appeal;
- e) If necessary, an internal audit will be part of the assessment of the appeal. This may result in corrective/preventive actions which are also communicated to the person lodging the appeal;
- f) The investigation of the appeal must take no longer than 10 working days. After this, the decision must be communicated to the person lodging the appeal in writing;
- g) Decisions must be taken in consultation between the management and those directly involved, thus ensuring confidentiality. The results of previous similar appeals shall be taken into account in the decision-making process;

After delivering feedback to the customer, the appeal is considered to be resolved. If the person lodging the appeal does not consider this feedback sufficient, the above procedure will be restarted.

If, in the case of deviating circumstances, the estimated processing time of the appeal exceeds 10 working days, the person lodging the appeal must be informed in writing and must receive regular reports on the progress of the appeal proceedings.