Appeal and complaint processing at GreenSign Standard GmbH

Purpose and scope

- This process describes GreenSign Standard GmbH's procedure for handling appeals and complaints.
- The objective is to ensure a structured and standards-compliant handling of appeals and complaints in order to meet the requirements of all interested parties, increase satisfaction, and ensure continuous improvement in accordance with the requirements of DIN EN ISO 9001 and DIN EN ISO/IEC 17067.
- This process applies to appeals and complaints submitted to GreenSign Standard GmbH.
- This process therefore applies to all interested parties, in particular employees, contracted parties, and the management of GreenSign Standard GmbH, who are involved in the implementation of the appeal and complaint handling process.

Appeal processsing

Receipt of appeals

- Appeals to GreenSign Standard GmbH may be submitted verbally, by telephone, in writing, or via the appeal form.
- The person submitting the appeal will promptly receive confirmation that the appeal has been received by GreenSign Standard GmbH.
- All appeals are systematically documented.
- All appeals are treated confidentially.

Forwarding of appeals

- All appeals concerning conformity assessment programs are forwarded to the management of GreenSign Standard GmbH.
- If the appeal concerns a certification body or certification activities, such as a certification decision, the appeal is forwarded to the management of the respective certification body with a request for a statement within 48 hours.

Evaluation of appeal

- Appeals that cannot be resolved by the certification body are assessed by the management of GreenSign Standard GmbH.
- For appeals concerning a certification body: the statement from the head of the certification body is evaluated by the management of GreenSign Standard GmbH.

Decision on the validity and process of the appeal

- Management reviews the appeal and the response to determine:
  - the validity of the objector;
  - new and previously unconsidered information;
  - procedural errors and irregularities (in the case of certification activities, for example, errors in the certification process, conflicts of interest, lack of objectivity, or incorrect assessment of evidence).
- To ensure that the decision resolving the appeal is made by a party not involved in the certification activities, management decides on how to handle the appeal. There are two options:

Appeal is not justified

- Management decides that the appeal is not justified/is rejected if:
  - the objector is not entitled to appeal;
  - no new, relevant information is available;
  - the appeal does not concern factual or procedural aspects or does not appear to be related to the conformity assessment program;
  - the appeal concerns aspects that have already been conclusively reviewed.

Appeal is justified

- Management decides that the appeal is justified/accepted if:
  - the objector is entitled to appeal and
  - new and previously unconsidered information is available, and
  - procedural errors and irregularities are proven (for example, errors in the certification/audit process, conflicts of interest, lack of objectivity, or incorrect assessment of evidence) and are related to the conformity assessment program.

Decision on the appeal and implementation

- In the event of an appeal related to certification: if the appeal is accepted, the auditor will adjust the audit and certification documentation in accordance with the appeal, followed by a re-assessment of the audit and a new certification decision by the management of the certification body.
- If the certification result has changed, the head of the certification body grants a new certificate, and the result is documented accordingly.

Notification of results to the objector/company

- The objector and the company concerned will be notified of the decision.
- If the appeal is accepted, the new certification documentation is sent.
- The conclusion of the appeal is documented.

If necessary, initiation of preventive measures

- Accepted appeals are analyzed for possible systematic errors.
- In the event of systematic errors, preventive measures are initiated to avoid similar appeals as part of the continuous improvement process.
- The risk analysis is adjusted accordingly.

Appeal and complaint processing at GreenSign Standard GmbH

Complaint processing

Receipt of complaints

- Complaints against GreenSign Standard GmbH may be submitted verbally, by phone, in writing, or via the complaint form.
- The complainant will promptly receive confirmation that GreenSign Standard GmbH has received the complaint.
- All complaints are systematically documented.
- All complaints are treated confidentially.

Classification of complaints

- The complaint is classified based on the subject matter and severity:
  Subject of the complaint:
  - GreenSign Standard GmbH and its conformity assessment programs
  - Authorized certification bodies
  - Certified company
- Severity
  - Minor complaint: a minor complaint or claim concerning minor deviations or irregularities that has no serious consequences for the quality, trust, or conformity of a certified company, a certification body, or GreenSign Standard GmbH and its conformity assessment programs. The causes of minor complaints can usually be resolved without extensive measures and have no impact on the certification or the credibility of GreenSign Standard GmbH.
  - Major complaint: a major complaint concerning significant deficiencies, violations, or misconduct that may significantly compromise the integrity, trust, or conformity of a certified company, a certification body, or GreenSign Standard GmbH and its conformity assessment programs. Major complaints require comprehensive investigations and corrective actions regarding both the conformity assessment programs and the certification processes and may result in the revocation of certification.

Forwarding of complaint

- **Complaint regarding a certified company or certification body:**
  - Minor complaint:
    - Minor complaints are forwarded to the certified business or certification body for information.
  - Major complaint:
    - Management is informed of the major complaint.
    - The major complaint is forwarded to the certified company or the certification body with a request for a response within 48 hours.
- **Complaint regarding GreenSign Standard GmbH:**
  - Minor complaint:
    - The minor complaint is forwarded to the responsible employee with a request for a response within 48 hours.
  - Major complaint:
    - HR and management are informed of the major complaint.

- The major complaint is forwarded to the appropriate employee with a request to respond within 48 hours.

Decision on the validity and processing of the complaint

- The responses from the company, the certification body, or the responsible employee are forwarded to management.
- Management decides on how to handle the complaint. There are two options:

Complaint is not justified

- Management decides that the complaint is not justified/is rejected.
- The complainant is thanked and informed that, as a result of the internal review, no further action will be taken.

Complaint is justified

- Management decides that the complaint is justified/accepted and determines how to handle the complaint.

Decision on the complaint and Implementation

- **Complaint regarding a certified company or certification body:**
  - Management informs the relevant certification body of the decision regarding the complaint.
  - If the complaint is accepted, the certification body is required to adjust the audit and the certification documentation in accordance with the complaint. The audit is re-assessed, and the head of the certification body must take a certification decision.
  - If the certification result has changed, the result must be documented accordingly, and the certificate must be revoked if necessary.
- **Complaint regarding GreenSign Standard GmbH:**
  - Management informs the responsible employee.
  - The responsible employee implements the corrective action.
  - The responsible employee reports on the corrective action taken.
  - The responsible employee verifies the effectiveness of the corrective action taken after a reasonable period of time.

Notification of results to complainant/company

- The complainant and the company are informed of the decision taken.
- The resolution of the complaint is systematically documented.

If necessary, initiation of preventive measures

- Accepted complaints are analyzed for potential systemic errors.
- In the event of systematic errors, preventive measures are implemented to avoid similar complaints as part of a continuous improvement process.
- The risk analysis is adjusted accordingly.