

Complaint, Appeal & Dispute Procedure

1. Purpose and Scope

The procedure is available to NCS Estonia Ltd. (hereinafter referred as NCSE) clients, applicants, and third-party individuals or organizations who perceive a stake in the affairs of NCSE and who have reason to question either the actions of NCSE itself or the actions of an NCSE client in regards to conformance with relevant requirements. The procedure is applicable to any formal decision made by NCSE or actions taken by a client where such actions are believed to conflict with the terms and/or conditions of the client's engagement with NCSE. NCSE is responsible for gathering and verifying all necessary information to progress the complaint or appeal to a decision, and for all decisions at all levels of the appeals-handling process.

This procedure is made available in the following ways:

- Publicly available at: www.ncsgroup.eu;
- On request;
- For all applicants told about the procedure during the application/certification process.

NCSE will not take any discriminatory action in relation to the submission of a complaint/appeal. In case of complaint NCSE will treat the complainant and the subject of the complaint confidential.

2. Definitions

Complaint: A written expression of dissatisfaction by any person or organization, relating to the activities of NCSE personnel and/or representatives of an NCSE client.

Appeal: A request by a client (certificate holder or certification applicant) for formal reconsideration of any adverse decision made by NCSE related to its desired status.

Dispute: A Complaint or Appeal that cannot be satisfactorily resolved by NCSE through the Investigation Process such that the matter is referred onto an external body such as the pertinent scheme owner (e.g., PEFC). In the event that the *Dispute* is associated with a NCSE program for which there is no external scheme owner, the matter will be referred to the NCSE Impartiality Advisory Committee (IAC).

Stakeholder Comment: Information and/or concerns regarding a NCSE client's conformity with the requirements of applicable normative standards. Such comments are provided by an individual or group whose interests are affected by the actions of a NCSE client or a certification/verification decision rendered by NCSE. In case a Stakeholder Comment requires an investigation, such investigation will normally be conducted in the course of a scheduled assessment rather than through NCSE Investigation Process.



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3. Investigation process

3.1 Submission

To have a clear understanding about the complaint, comment or appeal it must include the following information minimum:

- Contact information for the complainant/appellant;
- A clear description of the issue or basis of the appeal (date, place, case, reference to the normative documentation) and which parties or individuals are involved with the action;
- Evidence to support each aspect of the case;
- In the case of complaints against the actions of an NCSE client, rather than NCSE itself, the objectives or outcomes what would resolve the issues;

Note: For the purpose to gather all relevant information [Complaint, Comment & Appeal Form](#) should be fulfilled and sent to NCSE. The form is available on request.

3.2 Receipt and initial review

Upon receipt of a complaint, comment or appeal, the person who receives the information will inform CEO who appoints the person who will undertake the following actions:

- Open a complaint, comment or appeal file in which all materials and correspondence associated with the case will be maintained;
- Register the complaint, comment or appeal in the company complaints register;
- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint, comment or appeal **within seven (7) business days**, informing the complainant/appellant that its complaint, comment or appeal is in review process;
- Carry out the initial review of the complaint, comment or appeal & provide a written response to the complainant/appellant **within 14 business days of receipt** of the complaint, comment or appeal, informing complainant/appellant as to whether or not the complaint, comment or appeal qualifies for investigation.
- Should the complaint, comment or appeal qualify for a further investigation, NCSE will select and assign person(s) for the task.

3.3 Evaluation of the complaint, comment or appeal

Depending on the nature of the complaint, comment or appeal one or more of the following options or combination of them may be used:

- **Desk based assessment.** Solicit and collect any additional information necessary to investigate the complaint, comment or appeal. The investigation will be based mainly upon written documentary evidence, photographs, letters etc. supplied by the complainant/appellant. It is the complainant's /appellant's burden to establish that there has been an action taken in contravention of a requirement.
- **Verification on site.** In case the actions or activities of a client require verification on site, NCSE may carry out a site visit.

If necessary, a written overview/report will be prepared where findings and recommendations are presented. Under normal circumstances, the report will be completed **within 100 days of receipt** of the complaint, comment or appeal. When applicable the report will be sent to the complainant/appellant.

- **Submitting the result of the evaluation.** The evaluation summary will be submitted to NCSE Board or to the assigned person for review.

Note: Final decision can not be made by the person who carried out the audit and/or technical review.



3.4 Decision resolving the complaint, comment or appeal

The NCSE Board (or assigned person) will then:

- If necessary, forward the report to the relevant NCSE Impartiality Advisory Committee for review and consultation.
- Make the decision regarding to the complaint, comment or appeal, including actions such as:
 - Denial of the complaint, comment or appeal;
 - Reversal of the action that is the focus of the complaint, comment or appeal; or
 - Issuance of non-conformity reports (NCR), corrective action requests (CAR) and/or recommendations aimed at rectifying the situation.
- Inform in writing the complainant/appellant and other relevant parties (e.g., certificate holder, relevant external parties) of the final decision.

Note: in case of a complaint against certified client NCSE will determine together with the certified client and the complainant whether and if so to what extent the subject of the complaint and its resolution shall be made public.

3.5 Closing the complaint, comment or appeal

If the complainant/appellant accepts the proposed decision or action, then the decision or action is carried out and recorded as such.

3.6 Dispute resolution

If the complainant/appellant rejects the proposed decision or action, then the complaint, comment or appeal will remain open. This will be recorded as a dispute and the complainant/appellant will be informed of the procedure for bringing the dispute before a NCSE Impartiality Advisory Committee, or the dispute procedure of the governing body, if other than NCSE (e.g., PEFC), who will be promptly notified.

If You are not satisfied with the action taken by NCSE as detailed above, you can take your complaint to:

PEFC Estonia

Toompuiestee 24, 10149 Tallinn Estonia

Tel: +372 529 7807

E-mail: info@pefc.ee

PEFC International

ICC Building C, Route de Prè-Bois 20 Case Postale 1862, 1215 Geneva 15 Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 799 4540

E-mail: info@pefc.org

Estonian Accreditation Centre (EAK) (product certification)

Akadeemia tee 21/6, Tallinn 12618 Estonia

Tel. +372 6021801

E-mail: info@eak.ee



3.7 Contacting Us

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us at:

NCS Estonia Ltd.

81 Peterburi street, 13816 Tallinn, Estonia

E-mail: info@ncsgroup.eu

Website: <https://ncsgroup.eu>

