

Complaints and Appeal procedure

Introduction

It is Fair & Sustainable Consulting's aim to be a reliable and transparent organization. This means that Fair & Sustainable Consulting wishes to treat seriously complaints and appeals made by clients and other stakeholders (hereafter referred to as "clients"). To this end Fair & Sustainable Consulting has a complaints and appeals procedure. The procedure applies to all the work performed.

Definitions

A complaint is said to occur when a client of Fair & Sustainable Consulting is dissatisfied with the quality of the performance or service of Fair & Sustainable Consulting. This may concern the way procedures have been followed by Fair & Sustainable Consulting or how the client felt they have been treated by a staff member. It is important for Fair & Sustainable Consulting to deal with such complaints correctly, not only not to endanger the good relationship, but also to improve quality control and procedures.

An appeal relates to a legally binding decision made by Fair & Sustainable Consulting, which is deemed financially or otherwise harmful by the recipient. Fair & Sustainable Consulting's decision may also affect the social and/or political standing of the recipient.

Principles

Complaints and appeals are dealt with by Fair & Sustainable Consulting's director. The way in which they are dealt with is described in the Procedure below.

In cases where there is said to be a significant interest involved on the part of the organization or Fair & Sustainable Consulting, either due to the amount of money involved (EUR 25,000 or more) or the social or political sensitivity of the program, an independent advisory committee, consisting of 3 independent members (of which 1 development aid expert and 1 thematic expert and one legal expert), will advise the director. This ad hoc Committee will be appointed by Fair & Sustainable Consulting in agreement with the client.

All complaints and appeals will be dealt with confidentially. Fair & Sustainable Consulting's director decides which staff may have access to the case.

Complaints procedure

1. Basic procedure

- a. All formal complaints and appeals should be submitted in writing or by email. Appeals should be submitted within two months after the decision the appeal concerns.
- b. Fair & Sustainable Consulting's director is responsible for an adequate and timely process of dealing with the complaint or appeal in a satisfactory way.
- c. The director will decide on the way the case is processed. Appeals will usually be dealt with by the director himself, whereas in most cases, complaints will be passed on to the member(s) of staff concerned.
- d. The course of events will be reassessed on all its merits and in case of unclear positions/standpoints, the staff involved will speak to the client and any other parties, and request any additional information necessary.
- e. The director will take a decision based on his assessment, or the recommendations of the staff dealing with the case.
- f. The director will send a clearly motivated decision to the client within two weeks of receipt of the complaint or appeal.
- g. If this time-frame is not possible, the director will send a confirmation of receipt to the client, specifying the date by which the case will be processed, and how.

2. In case the complainant is not satisfied with the decision

- a. He/she can request the director to have the initial decision reviewed. This request should be done within 4 weeks after the day the decision has been sent.
- b. The director will assess if the procedure has been properly followed, doing a limited review¹ only of the decision, unless new information has become available concerning the content of a case.
- c. A new decision will be sent to the client within 2 weeks. If that time-frame is not possible, the director will send the client a confirmation of receipt of the request for review, specifying the date by which the review will be done, and how.
- d. If the client is then satisfied with the decision, or is not satisfied but accepts it, this will mark the end of the procedure.
If there is a significant interest involved on the part of the client or Fair & Sustainable Consulting, either due to the amount of money involved (EUR 25,000 or more) or the social or political sensitivity of the program, the client may appeal against the decision again within 4 weeks.
- e. Fair & Sustainable Consulting will then refer the case to an ad hoc independent advisory committee that will advise the director according to the following procedure.
- f. The committee will be appointed by Fair & Sustainable Consulting in agreement with the client, and will consist of 3 independent members (of which 1 development aid expert, 1 thematic expert and one legal expert).
- g. The advisory committee will assess whether the procedure has been followed correctly and will make a limited review of the decision. This review will take into consideration whether Fair & Sustainable Consulting has acted within reason with respect to the disputed decision.
- h. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee will be returned to the director of Fair & Sustainable Consulting within 6 weeks after receipt of the request for advice by the committee.
- i. Fair & Sustainable Consulting's director will take a final decision, after seriously taking the advice of the Advisory Committee into consideration. The final decision and the recommendations of the advisory committee will be sent to the appellant within two weeks after receipt of the recommendations. This decision will mark the end of the procedure.
- j. If the client is still not satisfied, they may take the case to the Dutch court.

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¹ A limited review makes an assessment of the way the complaint was dealt with, based on set policy and procedures, rather than reviewing the content of the decision.