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**PEFC Slovakia procedures for the investigation and  
resolution of complaints and appeals**



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## **1 Objective**

The objective of this guideline is to describe the responsibilities and actions of the PEFC Slovakia (PEFC SK) and the Arbitral Commission in relation to the investigation and resolution of complaints and appeals.

PEFC SK regards all complaints and appeals as opportunities to improve its services and implement corrective and preventive measures.

## **2 Scope**

This guideline details procedures for complaints and appeals to the PEFC SK which concern decisions and/or activities of the PEFC SK. Complaints and appeals relating to a certified entity; an accredited certification body or an accreditation body shall be dealt with by the complaints and appeals procedures of the relevant accredited certification body; accreditation body; or by the International Accreditation Forum.

## **3 Definitions**

### **Complaint**

Written expression of dissatisfaction (other than appeal) by any person or organisation which relates to the activities of the PEFC SK.

### **Appeal**

Written request by the appellant for reconsideration of any decision made by the PEFC SK decision making bodies where the appellant considers such decision have been taken in breach of the PEFC SK requirements or procedures.

### **Activities and decisions of the PEFC SK**

All activities and decisions of the PEFC SK relating to the procedures of documentation development and implementation, and to the interpretation of requirements of the Slovak Forest Certification System.

## **4 Complaints**

- 4.1 Complaints submitted to the PEFC SK shall be limited to activities and decisions of the PEFC SK.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of the complainant to submit written information supporting the complaint which can be verified as accurate and correct through an independent source.
- 4.3 Complaints submitted regarding a specific certified entity shall be referred to the relevant certification body's own complaints resolution procedure.
- 4.4 Complaints submitted regarding a specific accredited certification body shall be referred to the relevant accreditation body's own complaints resolution procedure.
- 4.5 Complaints submitted regarding a specific accreditation body shall be referred to the International Accreditation Forum's complaints resolution procedure.
- 4.6 Regardless of the outcome of any complaint, the complainant and the PEFC SK will each meet their own costs.
- 4.7 It is expected that any formally accepted complaint, not requiring an on-site investigation, should normally be resolved within 6 months.

## **5 Appeals**

- 5.1 Appeals submitted to the PEFC SK shall be limited to activities and decisions of the PEFC SK.
- 5.2 It is the responsibility of the appellant to submit written information supporting the complaint which can be verified as accurate and correct through an independent source.
- 5.3 Regardless of the outcome of any appeal, the appellant and the PEFC SK will each meet their own costs.
- 5.4 It is expected that any formally accepted appeal, not requiring an on-site investigation, should normally be resolved within 6 months.

## **6 Complaints and appeals acceptance**

- 6.1 All complaints and appeals shall be addressed in writing to the PEFC SK.
- 6.2 The secretariat decides on formal acceptance:
  - a) of the complaint and its further investigation provided that the complaint is in accordance with 4.1 and the information supporting the complaint can be authenticated as being in compliance with 4.2,
  - b) of the appeal and its further investigation provided that the appeal is in accordance with 5.1 and the information supporting the appeal can be authenticated as being in compliance with 5.2.
- 6.3 The national secretary shall without delay:
  - a) acknowledge to the complainant / appellant (in writing) the receipt and subject of the complaint / appeal or rejection of the complaint / appeal with justification if it is not in accordance with clause 4.1 and 4.2 (in case of the complaint) or 5.1 and 5.2 (in case of the appeal).
  - b) provide the complainant / appellant with details of the PEFC SK complaints and appeals procedures.

## **7 Complaint investigation and resolution process**

- 7.1 After receiving the complaint, the PEFC SK chairman shall assign the Arbitral Commission to investigate the complaint. The investigators shall have no vested, or conflict of, interest in the complaint.
- 7.2 The Arbitral Commission shall undertake a thorough investigation and seek a resolution. The Arbitral Commission shall submit in a timely matter, a detailed written report, to the PEFC SK chairman and the national secretary shall present it to the PEFC SK Council. The report shall include a statement indicating whether, or not, the complaint has been substantiated, procedures for its resolution and decision on resolving the complaint.

Note: it is expected that complaints not requiring an on-site investigation should normally be investigated within 1 month

- 7.3 The national secretary shall inform in writing the complainant and other interested parties about the outcomes of the complaint resolution process and, based on the character of the outcome, the secretary shall request the adoption of appropriate corrective and preventive measures.

## **8 Appeal investigation and resolution process**

- 8.1 After receiving the appeal, the PEFC SK chairman shall assign the Arbitral

Commission to investigate the appeal. The investigators shall have no vested, or conflict of, interest in the appeal.

- 8.2 The Arbitral Commission shall undertake a thorough investigation and seek a resolution. The Arbitral Commission shall submit in a timely matter, a detailed written report, to the PEFC SK chairman and the national secretary shall present it to the PEFC SK Council. The report shall include a statement indicating whether, or not, the appeal has been substantiated, procedures for its resolution and decision on resolving the appeal.

Note: it is expected that appeals not requiring an on-site investigation should normally be investigated within 1 month

- 8.3 The national secretary shall inform in writing the appellant and other interested parties about the outcomes of the appeal resolution process and, based on the character of the outcome, the secretary shall request the adoption of appropriate corrective and preventive measures.

## **9 Binding decisions of the Arbitral Commission**

- 9.1 Decisions of the Arbitral Commission shall be issued in writing and shall be obligatory for all participants in certification process.
- 9.2 In order to implement the decisions of the Arbitral Commission all parties in the dispute shall adopt appropriate corrective and preventive measures.
- 9.3 Adoption of measures shall be documented and recorded by the PEFC SK secretariat.

## **10 Data processing**

- 10.1 In order to investigate and resolve the complaints and appeals the PEFC SK may collect some personal data. The personal data collected includes: full name of the contact person, email address and telephone number. This information is necessary for the management of complaints relating to the governance and administration of the PEFC scheme. They are not made publicly available, but PEFC SK may share them with third parties limited to and exclusively for the complaints and disputes resolution purposes.
- 10.2 Personal data of the complainant and concerned parties are stored for a duration of five years after the end of the complaint resolution. Data will then be deleted. Upon request, the PEFC SK may provide data subjects with information about the personal data it holds. Complainants and concerned parties have the right to access or verify their personal data and to have them modified, transferred, corrected or deleted at any time. If the complainant or concerned parties would like to exercise one of these data protection rights, they can contact PEFC SK at [info@pefc.sk](mailto:info@pefc.sk).
- 10.3 By submitting a complaint, the complainant agrees to this data treatment procedure.

