



Procedure for Complaints and Appeals Resolution related to FSC® Certification at TÜV SÜD Czech

1 Introduction

The FSC Certification Body at TÜV SÜD Czech s.r.o. (below TÜV SÜD) is accredited by Assurance Services International GmbH (ASI) to carry out FSC Chain-of-Custody (CoC) certifications worldwide.

In order to ensure that a fair and transparent certification process, this procedure describes how clients or stakeholders can submit complaints, appeals to TÜV SÜD Czech and how such complaints and appeals are dealt with. The aim of the procedure is resolve any issues in the context of FSC COC certification of TÜV SÜD Czech, and to improve the certification procedures to avoid such issue in future.

In case complaints are related to activities of TÜV SÜD clients, we encourage the complainants to first contact the client directly and use their complaint system, to settle the dispute already on this level if possible.

2 Definitions

Definitions applied in this standard are based on FSC standard FSC-STD-20-001.

Appeal: request by a TÜV SÜD client to the certification body for reconsideration of a decision it has made relating to that client.

Appellant: individual or organization filing an appeal.

Complaint: expression of dissatisfaction (other than an appeal) by any person or organization presented to TÜV SÜD relating to the FSC activities of TÜV SÜD and/ or the FSC activities of their clients.

Complainant: person or organization filing a complaint.

Dispute: Umbrella term for appeal and complaints.

3 Procedure for Complaints and Appeals

3.1 Submission of complaints and appeals

The FSC Quality Manager of the FSC certification body at TÜV SÜD Czech is responsible for coordination of complaints or appeals. Complaints and appeals shall be sent in writing (by e-mail, fax or letter) to:

TÜV SÜD Czech s.r.o.
Quality Manager of FSC Certification Body
Novodvorska 994/138, 142 21 Prague 4,
Czech Republic
Email: quality.cz@tuvsud.com,
phone. +420 239 046 800,
FAX +420 239 046 805

The complaint or appeal shall to include:

- a clear description of the complaint or appeal;
- objective evidence to support each element or aspect of the complaint or appeal;
- the name and contact information of the submitter;
- a clear statement if the complainant wishes to stay anonymous in relation to the certificate holder against whom the complaint is directed.

In case of appeals, the appellant must file its appeal within 14 calendar days after notification of the decision.

3.1 Steps for Processing of Appeals and Complaints

Step 1: Within five (5) business days, the FSC Quality Manager of TÜV SÜD Czech shall acknowledge in writing (email, fax or letter) the receipt of the complaint or appeal. In the response to the appellant or complainant, the FSC Quality Manager of TÜV SÜD Czech confirms whether the complaint or appeal relates to certification activities for which the FSC CB of TÜV SÜD is responsible. If the appeal or complaint is not related to FSC certification activities of TÜV SÜD, there will be no further follow-up. This decision can be appealed again by using this procedure.

Step 2: Once the complaint or appeal is received, the FSC Quality Manager shall appoint a team to follow up on the appeal or complaint. The team shall consist of persons that have not been involved in the matter so far. If applicable and possible, the team shall include an appointed FSC Lead auditor, and a person with country specific knowledge. The “team” can also consist of only one person. The Quality Manager or persons of the “Certification Council” shall not be part of the team, if they approve the report (see step 4)

In case the FSC Quality Manager has been involved in the matter of the dispute, the responsibility to follow-up on the dispute is forwarded to the “certification council” of TÜV SÜD Czech.

The appeal or complaint and all relevant information and decision are recorded in the TÜV SÜD Czech IT system (ESE).

The complainant or appellant is informed of the progress in evaluating the complaint or appeal during the whole process. Information can also be obtained by the complainant or appellant on request.

Step 3: within two (2) weeks of receiving a complaint or appeal the FSC Quality Manager of TÜV SÜD Czech provides an initial response, including an outline of the certification body's proposed course of action to follow up on the complaint or appeal, and the team for the follow-up. In case of any perceived conflicts of interest with the team member, the complainant or appellant shall identify this and the team may be changed.

In case the appeal or complaint require for in-depth investigation; the team appointed in step 2 shall:

- Review the complaint or appeal and the related evidence submitted.
- Collect any additional information necessary to assess the appeal or complaint
- If required conduct interviews with stakeholders, or onsite assessment
- Prepare a written report and submit it to the FSC Quality Manager or Certification Council

The costs for such an investigation shall be estimated upfront and communicated to the appellant or complainant. While TÜV SÜD aims for a fair and transparent assessment

process, the costs for the process cannot be borne by TÜV SÜD alone. TÜV SÜD reserves the right to charge cost for the investigation depending on the nature of the appeal or complaint,

Step 4: A written report of the team related to the appeal or complaint is presented to the Quality Manager (or Certification Council). The Quality Manager (or Certification Council) reviews the report and approves or rejects it. This decision includes:

- Description of the investigation that TÜV SÜD conducted, evidences gathered and verified and the conclusions drawn by the investigation team;
- If applicable, Corrective Actions that were implemented, or are to be implemented, whether at TÜV SÜD or TÜV SÜD's clients;
- Information if TÜV SÜD considers the appeal or complaint as resolved (closed) based on the information included in the report.

Step 5: Within three (3) months of receiving the complaint or appeal the report from Step 4 and the decision of TÜV SÜD is communicated in writing to the complainant or appellant.

Step 6: the complainant can refer its complaint to ASI in case:

- The complainant disagrees with the response from TÜV SÜD, or
- the issue has not been resolved through the full implementation of TÜV SÜD's procedures, or
- The complainant is dissatisfied by the way TÜV SÜD handled the complaint.

For filing complaints at ASI, the respective process ASI-PRO-20-104-Complaints shall be applied. Further information can be found on the ASI website: <https://www.asi-assurance.org/s/complaints>

As the ultimate step, the complainant may follow the FSC complaint procedure as laid out in the respective FSC procedure (FSC-PRO-01-008): <https://connect.fsc.org/participate/complaints>

4 Further Topics

- 4.1 According to FSC requirements, all complaints brought forward to TÜV SÜD are registered with FSC.
- 4.2 Anonymous complaints and expressions of dissatisfaction that are not substantiated as complaints are treated as "stakeholder comments" by TÜV SÜD and address during the next audit at the certificate holder.
- 4.3 TÜV SÜD responds to complaints and appeals in the same language that is used in the public summary certification report, or shall agree with the complainant on the language used. Most commonly this would either be English, or the language of the appellant or complainant.
- 4.4 During the process of dispute resolution, all original decisions of the TÜV SÜD Czech remain in force until the complaints or appeal is settled by TÜV SÜD Czech or another appointed authority.
- 4.5 This Procedure is a public document and available for downloading at <http://www.tuvsud.com/cz> and shall be sent to anybody upon request.