

COMPLAINTS

This document has been approved by the Director. The signed original is kept by the Administrative Office.

0 GENERAL

0.1 HISTORY

- Edition 0 – 07 January 199– - Complaints by clients of certified organizations
- Edition 1 – 01 September 2003 – Complaints about certified organizations
- Edition 2 – 31 March 2008 – Complaints about certified organizations
- Edition 3 – 5 March 2010 – Complaints about certified organizations
- Edition 4 – 15 January 2012 – Complaints about certified organizations
- Edition 5 – 30 November 2015 – Complaints
- Edition 6 – 6 April 2017 – Complaints
- Edition 7 – 19 January 2023 – Complaints
- Edition 8 – 13 September 2023 – Complaints

0.2 REFERENCES

- IGQ Quality Manual

1 SUBJECT

This document establishes the criteria and the procedure to handle complaints received by IGQ about certified organizations or certified products, for example coming from customers of certified organizations, or complaints about the certification, inspection, verification and validation activities of IGQ employees and auditors, coming from customers of IGQ.

2 APPLICATION

This procedure is to be applied to complaints relating to the management system or to the products of an organization certified by IGQ, to verification declarations issued by IGQ and to complaints relating to the actions of IGQ employees and auditors.

IGQ investigates every complaint or communication exclusively for what concerns its certification, inspection, verification and validation activities. IGQ may not be called upon to settle client-supplier disputes or take part in client-supplier disputes.

3 COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM OR TO THE PRODUCTS OF A CERTIFIED ORGANIZATION OR VERIFICATION DECLARATION

Whenever a complaint is received about the certified management system or the certified product **or to the declaration of verification of an environmental assertion issued to a client company**, the Certification Manager evaluates in the first place the reliability of the complaint.

3.1 *Reliable complaint*

In the case of a reliable complaint, for example a complaint received by a customer of a certified organization, or in any case a formal complaint written by a party willing to take full responsibility, the Certification Manager proceeds as follows:

- within 5 days of receiving the complaint contacts the complainant to confirm that the complaint has been received and that it will be kept in due consideration; if necessary the Certification Manager takes the opportunity to collect additional information on the circumstances leading to the complaint, including whether the complainant wishes to maintain the confidentiality of his identity, which in such case will be maintained;
- contacts the **client** company to inform about the complaint received and to collect any further information from the certified organization about the circumstances leading to the complaint.

Through these contacts the Certification Manager collects the information necessary to determine the following actions.

In cases of particular urgency or gravity the Certification Manager, after consulting with the Management, may arrange for an extraordinary or short notice audit to the certified organization **and connected to the service or product subject to the complaint**.

In such cases the Certification Manager provides the audit team with all the necessary information, and asks the lead assessor to evaluate the validity of the complaint, verifying the conformity of the certified management system or of the certified product in the light of the additional information provided by the complainant. In the case of product certification, if necessary, the extraordinary audit may require the execution of additional tests and inspections.

In case IGQ is informed of complaints or reports from the control bodies of the Public Administration the Scheme Manager will submit the matter to the relevant Certification Commission.

In cases of lesser gravity or urgency, the Certification Manager arranges for the same activities to be carried out at the earliest programmed audit.

If the extraordinary or programmed audit lead to non conformities, the relevant procedure is followed.

In the case of non conformities the Certification Commission is informed of the outcome of the audit and decides about maintaining, suspending or withdrawing the certification. IGQ also informs the complainant about the conclusion of the complaint process

and, where possible without breaching the confidentiality requirements, about the actions taken and their outcome.

If the complaint or report relates to environmental assertions, IGQ proceeds as indicated in the reference procedures of the specific scheme.

In all cases IGQ also informs the complainant of the conclusion of the complaint process and, where possible without breaching confidentiality requirements, of the actions taken and their outcome.

3.2 Unreliable complaint

In the case of an unreliable complaint, such as a verbal communication by a party willing to remain anonymous, the Certification Manager proceeds as follows:

- within 5 days of receiving the complaint, and if the identity of the complainant is known, contacts the complainant to inform that the complaint has been received and that it will be kept in due consideration, limited to the provisions of the procedure for this type of complaint;
- provides the audit team in charge of the earliest programmed audit of the information necessary to verify the conformity of the management system or of the product in the light of the additional information provided by the complainant.

If the complainant wishes to remain anonymous the anonymity of the complainant is protected.

4 COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE ACTIONS OF IGQ EMPLOYEES AND AUDITORS

When IGQ receives a complaint or report relating to the work of its collaborators from an IGQ customer, the complaint is handled by the Management. In the event that the subject of the complaint is the Management itself, management is entrusted to another internal function. The complaint is managed through the following steps:

- within 5 days from the date of receipt of the complaint the Management contacts the complainant to collect all the necessary details;
- contacts the IGQ employees and/or auditors against whom the complaint has been addressed and asks all the explanations needed to clarify the incident that gave rise to the complaint;
- in the event that the complaint is valid, defines the necessary corrective actions to prevent the recurrence of similar complaints;
- contacts the complainant to inform him of the actions taken as a consequence to his complaint.

In any case, the Management is required to reply in writing to any written complaint received. The Management also ensures that no retaliation or discrimination against the complainant is implemented by IGQ staff following the complaint.

Corrective actions may include, in cases of complaints that show repeated and unequivocal failures to comply with the rules of professional ethics, the removal from all duties of the employees or auditors against whom the complaint has been addressed.

Where, in the opinion of Management, the individual complaint is caused by incompatibility of a personal nature which affect the successful conduct of audit activities, the Management ensures that such incompatibilities are taken into account for future work or audit assignments.

Finally, in cases where complaints or reports highlight situations of discomfort on the part of customers, they are brought to the attention of the employees concerned, during regular personnel meetings and/or auditor meetings, to discuss and analyze the causes of discomfort and implement, where possible, measures of improvement of the behavior with clients.

5 RECORDS

Records of all complaints and communications received, as well as of the consequent actions undertaken by IGQ are kept in the certified organization folder as well as in the complaints archive.