

Arbitration Rules – Procedure for Handling Objections and Complaints

1. Purpose and Area of Validity

The certification center has created a completely independent objection and complaint center, separate from the certification procedure itself, expressly for handling objections to certification decisions and complaints.

These procedural instructions describe the procedure for accepting and assessing objections and complaints as well as issuing decisions on objections and complaints. The objective is to settle all complaints and objections as amicably and constructively as possible while expending a minimum of time and cost.

2. Definitions According to DIN EN ISO/IEC 17024

The certification procedure and the procedure for handling objections to certification decisions and complaints is derived from DIN EN ISO/IEC 17024, which defines objection and complaint as follows:

2.1. Objection

Demand of an applicant, candidate or certified person to review the decision reached by the certification center relating to his/her pursued certification status.

2.2. Complaint

Expression of dissatisfaction, in a different sense than objection, by any person or organization to the certification center relating to the activities

- of the certification center or
- of employee(s) of the certification center
- of the certified person

to which an answer is expected.

3. Submission of Objections to Certification Decisions and Complaints

3.1. Form

3.1.1 Objections

Objections are to be submitted in writing, i.e. they are to be signed personally by the objector. The use of the form provided for download on the WebPortal is suggested, but not mandatory.

3.1.2 Complaints

Complaints can be submitted without a form. The use of the form provided for download on the WebPortal is suggested, but not mandatory.

3.1.3 Filing Objections to Certification Decisions

The objection period is **20 business days (five weekly working days)** after

- Receipt of the certificate, notice of recertification, or
- Notification that certification/recertification could not take place, or
- In the case of withdrawal of the certificate, the request to surrender the certificate.

To ensure receipt, the objection should be sent by registered mail.

The date of receipt of the objections at the certification center is decisive for compliance with the objection period. The date stamped by the post office applies. Timely advance transmission by email or fax is permitted as long as the original documents are subsequently received at the certification center within a week.

3.1.4 Filing Complaints

Filing complaints has no time limit.

3.2. Content

3.2.1 Minimum Content of Objections to Certification Decisions

Objections must show the following minimum content:

- Personal details of the objector incl. contact information
- The certification decision to which the objection is filed
- Circumstances giving rise to the objection/reason for the objection

3.2.2 Minimum Content of Complaints

Complaints must show the following minimum content:

- Personal details of the complainant or organizational complainant incl. contact information
- Circumstances giving rise to the complaint/reason for the complaint

4. Processing of Objections and Complaints

4.1. Acceptance and Confirmation of Receipt

4.1.1 Objections to Certification Decisions

The certification center records the receipt of the objection using the form “Complaint and Objection Settlement” and creates a file for the procedure, which is promptly forwarded to the responsible arbitrator of the objection and complaint center. The objector or complainant likewise promptly receives confirmation of receipt.

4.1.2 Complaints

Upon receipt of a complaint, the certification center verifies whether the complaint relates to certification activities for which the certification center is responsible.

If this is the case, the certification center records the receipt of the complaint using the form “Complaint and Objection Settlement” and creates a file for the procedure, which is promptly forwarded to the responsible arbitrator of the objection and complaint center. The complainant likewise promptly receives confirmation of receipt.

Otherwise, the certification center notifies the complainant that his complaint does not relate to activities of the certification center and thus cannot be processed by the certification center.

4.2. Decision Process

4.2.1 General

Submission of, examination of, and decision-finding on objections and complaints do not result in any disadvantage for the objector/complainant.

The arbitrator is involved neither in certification decisions nor in other tasks of the certification center. Moreover, the arbitrators are professionally qualified.

The decision process, up to the finding on the decision, should normally not exceed four weeks from the receipt of the objection/complaint.

4.2.2 Decision Process in the Objection Procedure, Formal and Substantive Examination, Interim Decision

The arbitrator reviews the objection with the utmost care.

If the objection is technically unwarranted (e.g. did not timely arrive within the intended period), an immediate response is sent to the objector.

In all other cases, the arbitrator consults the certification center documents decisive for the objection and reviews all the important particulars and circumstances that led to the objection.

When considering the merits, the arbitrator should include in particular the interests of the objector.

If the arbitrator sees several possible measures for relief, the objector is to be notified of these in advance and an amicable solution achieved.

All steps are to be documented in the file using the above-named form.

4.2.3 Decision Process in the Complaint Procedure, Substantive Examination, Interim Decision

The arbitrator reviews complaints with the utmost care. If the complaint relates to a certified person, this person is to be notified at an early stage.

After receipt, the complainant receives a brief intermediate reply concerning the progress of the procedure. If the complaint is evidently unwarranted, an immediate response is sent to the complainant.

In all other cases, the arbitrator consults the certification center documents decisive for the complaint and reviews all the important particulars and circumstances that led to the complaint. The arbitrator consults the persons or organizations involved and initiates contact with the complainant.

All steps are to be documented in the file using the above-named form.

4.3. Decision Finding

The arbitrator reaches a decision on the legitimacy of the objection/complaint. If the arbitrator finds that an objection/complaint is reasonably justified, he establishes contact with the certification center management and orders corrective or remedial measures. The specific implementation is the responsibility of the personal certification center.

In finding a decision, not only the facts determined are to be taken into consideration, but also previous decisions with similar circumstances.

The goal is to achieve a solution that is satisfactory to all sides as quickly as possible.

5. Notification of Decision, Implementation, Documentation

5.1. Notification of Decision

The objector/complainant is to be promptly notified of the decision reached, together with the basis for decision, in text form.

5.2. Implementation of the Decision

The certification center arranges for the implementation of corrective and/or remedial measures. Moreover, the certification center reviews what measures should be adopted to prevent objections/complaints of this type in the future and implements these measures.