



Management of Complaints

PR 06 - 01



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1. Purpose

The purpose of this internal procedure, issued by the Director of the Institute for Accreditation of the Republic of Macedonia (hereinafter: IARM) pursuant to Article 23 of the Statute of IARM, is to establish a framework for managing complaints received from accredited bodies or other sources, and refers to the work of IARM, accredited bodies or other entities.

2. Definition (in accordance with MKC EN ISO/IEC 17011:2006)

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, other than an objection, from any person or organization to the accreditation body and relates to the activities of the accreditation body, or the accredited conformity assessment body.

The complaint is an official written request submitted to IARM in which accredited bodies, bodies under accreditation procedure or other interested parties may express dissatisfaction in cases when:

- they are not satisfied with the non-conformities or requests for corrective measures submitted by the assessment commission during the assessment;
- they are not satisfied with the work of IARM;
- they are not satisfied with the activities of the accredited bodies;
- a body illegally invokes accreditation from IARM, or illegally uses the IARM logo.

The complaint shall be submitted to IARM, in person or by mail, archived and immediately submitted to the quality manager and the Director of IARM.

The quality manager shall record each complaint in the form OB 06-01 and assign it a “complaint registration number” according to the archive number. The same form shall record the overall course of activities undertaken in relation to the complaint.

3. Procedure

General

Based on the information received, the quality manager shall fill in the complaint description field. The quality manager, in cooperation with the Director and the respective head of department/unit, shall make an analysis, in order to resolve the complaint and to conclude what the complainant will receive a response. If the complaint refers to the work of the assessors, item 3a shall be applied.

The analysis shall include verification of compliance with the requirements of the IARM quality system, standards and documents of EA, ILAC, IAF, review of records for accreditation procedures, review of documentation of accredited bodies, as well as review of documentation submitted as evidence by the complainant (if any such documentation exists). If necessary, IARM shall request additional explanations from the legal service or perform other activities.

In order to ensure independence and objectivity in resolving complaints, persons to whom the complaint refers directly or indirectly as well as persons directly or indirectly related to the complainant shall be excluded from the procedure.

The final decision regarding the complaints shall be in the competence of the Director of IARM.

a) Complaint about the work of IARM

Anyone can file a complaint regarding the work of IARM. Accredited bodies may file a complaint for any stage of the work performed by IARM (for example, incorrectly submitted invoice, complaint concerning the cost of IARM services, delays, lack of information, assessors' conduct, although their behavior did not affect the assessment results, etc.).

When reviewing the complaints related to the work of IARM, the circumstances that are the reason for the submitted complaint shall also be considered and it shall be ordered to take corrective, if necessary, preventive measures or the complaint can be rejected as unfounded.

In case the complaint is related to the work of the IARM assessors, the Personnel Assessment Committee shall be included in the analysis.

IARM shall notify the complainant in writing about the undertaken measures within one month from the day of submission.

b) Complaint about the work of accredited bodies

The Quality Manager shall conduct the procedure for resolving complaints related to the work of accredited bodies. The quality manager shall submit the complaint regarding the work of the accredited body to the accredited review body whereas it shall not submit contact information for the complainant. The accredited body shall inform IARM of its findings regarding the complaint and of the measures it plans to take or has taken. The Quality Manager, in accordance with the analysis of the complaint, shall give recommendations to the Director of IARM, whereby he/she can:

- propose to the Director of IARM to reject the complaint as unfounded;
- ask the accredited body to take corrective measures in a certain period of time;
- propose to the Director suspension or revocation of accreditation.

When determining the merits of the complaint, the persons involved in the analysis of the complaint, if necessary, shall check the fulfillment of the accreditation requirements through:

- requesting additional documents and information from the accredited body;
- assessment of the documentation of the accredited body;
- performing regular and extraordinary supervisions in the shortest possible time.

IARM shall notify the complainant in writing of the results of the analysis of the complaint. When the merits of the complaint can be established without supervision, IARM shall notify the complainant of the decision regarding the same within 2 months from the day of receiving the complaint. When supervision is required, IARM shall notify the complainant within 1 month from the day of the performed supervision.

c) Complaint about the work of non-accredited bodies

Complaints regarding the work of non-accredited bodies may refer to the work of non-accredited bodies which, directly or indirectly, declare to be accredited for a certain area by IARM or another national accreditation bodies, which are members of European or international accreditation associations. Non-accredited bodies are testing and calibration laboratories, certification and inspection bodies, i.e. legal and natural persons not accredited by IARM or accredited, but not for the area to which the complaint refers.

Clients of accredited or non-accredited bodies, the accredited bodies themselves, as well as other interested parties may submit a complaint to IARM regarding a certain abuse of the work of non-accredited bodies.

If the complaint refers to invoking the accreditation by IARM of a non-accredited body, IARM shall determine its merits. If there is a reasonable doubt that the complaint is well-founded and accurate, IARM shall request clarifications from the non-accredited body and shall not submit the contact information of the complainant, if necessary, and may organize and hold a meeting with the management representatives of that body. At the eventual meeting, IARM shall present its position

and propose corrective measures. If the corrective measures are not fully implemented, then IARM shall take other measures (for example, reporting to the responsible inspection bodies, reporting to the competent court, etc.).

When the complaint refers to a non-accredited body seeking accreditation from another national accreditation body, which is a member of European or international accreditation associations, IARM shall determine the merits of the complaint in cooperation with that national body and shall initiate related activities.

In the procedure for resolving the complaint, which refers to the work of non-accredited bodies, it is necessary to carefully and individually review all the evidence on which the complaint is based.

IARM shall inform the complainant about the undertaken activities within 2 months from the day of receiving the complaint.

4. Final activities

Investigating and deciding upon complaints shall not result in discriminatory actions against the complainant.

The Director shall review the complaints at least once a year.