

Complaints and Appeals

Procedures and responsibilities

Fair Stone e.V.

Fair Stone is aware that, as with any programme or activity, there may be issues of non-conformity or non-compliance from time to time.

To deal with these matters, Fair Stone wants to outline the complaints and appeals mechanisms which are in place to respond to such situations.

We encourage stakeholders to forward information on any suspected activities to the Fair Stone Headquarter in Germany. As the Fair Stone Standard is quite small, national branches need not be contacted in cases of complaints.

In addition to correcting any such issues, this process will also be used to provide an opportunity to implement corrective and preventive measures and to improve the overall Fair Stone services with the feedback of interested stakeholders.

There are two different mechanisms in place, and the correct procedure to lodge a complaint is outlined respectively:

1) Complaints and Appeals against Decisions or Activities of Fair Stone or any of its Partners

Any stakeholder can lodge a complaint or appeal against Fair Stone, a Fair Stone Partner or any other entity part of the Fair Stone supply chain network about its compliance with the requirements.

The following basic steps should be followed:

- Complainants outline their concerns in a letter or an email to the Fair Stone Headquarters (info@fairstone.org, Fair Stone e.V., Schuhstr. 4, D-73230 Kirchheim Teck) accompanied by supporting documentation. The information provided must be verifiable as accurate and correct to allow adequate follow-up.
- Where a complaint is accepted as justified and cannot be solved in a satisfactory manner for all parties concerned, Fair Stone calls for an extraordinary meeting of members. Members of association must not have a vested interest in or conflict of interest with the subject matter. During the meeting of the members, a task force is created consisting of 2-3 members.

- The Task Force investigates the matter and proposes a solution. Such investigations should take no longer than one month unless on-site investigation is required.
- The members of the board and the remaining members of the association makes a decision on the complaint or appeal, based on a written report by the Task Force.

2) Complaints or Appeals against Certified Entities, their Respective Certification or Accreditation Bodies

Fair Stone firmly believes that mandatory third party audits are of utmost importance to the long-term credibility of any certification system.

Consequently, Fair Stone does not conduct audits itself or offers internal auditors, but has implemented certification and accreditation procedures to ensure the utmost credibility of the certification process. Fair Stone only works together with reputable auditing companies such as TÜV Rheinland or QS Zuerich.

Complaints against certified entities must therefore be dealt with by the respective complaints and appeals procedures put in place by the auditing companies. Issues that remain unresolved at this level should be raised with the respective complaints and appeals mechanisms of accreditation bodies.