

Complaints and appeal procedure for partner organisations

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1. Purpose

It is the aim of Kerk in Actie to be a reliable and transparent organisation. This means that Kerk in Actie wishes to treat complaints and appeals made by our partner organisations seriously. To this end Kerk in Actie has a clearly defined complaints and appeals procedure. As a member of ACT Alliance, we also adhere to the ACT Alliance Complaints Policy.

2. Definitions

Appeal	An appeal relates to a legally binding decision made by Kerk in Actie, which is deemed financially or otherwise harmful by the recipient. Kerk in Actie's decision may also affect the social and/or political standing of the recipient (e.g. a partner which is informed that the relationship will be terminated and wants to challenge that decision). An appeal is specifically dealt with as an internal procedure (a part of the day-to-day affairs), in which the issue in question is re-examined and reappraised.
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Complaint	<p>A complaint is said to occur when a partner/client of Kerk in Actie is dissatisfied with the quality of the performance or service of Kerk in Actie. This may concern the way procedures have been followed by Kerk in Actie or how the partner felt it has been treated by a member of the staff. It may also concern improper practice or wrongful conduct by staff or anybody who represents Kerk in Actie, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Financial and procedural malpractice including those relating to mismanagement, misappropriation of funds, actual or suspected fraud, abuse of authority and non-compliant behaviour with the Kerk in Actie and ACT Codes of Conduct- HR related matters, such as (sexual) harassment, bullying, aggression, violence and discrimination <p>Under this policy, it will be a disciplinary matter if a genuine complainant were to be victimised.</p>
COO	Chief Operating Officer
DO PKN	Dienstenorganisatie Protestantse Kerk Nederland', the office that serves the PKN congregations in the Netherlands
GIMD	Joint Institute for Social Services (Gemeenschappelijk Instituut voor Maatschappelijke Dienstverlening)
MT	Management Team

3. Responsibilities

CEO

The CEO is responsible for having the initial decision reviewed when a complainant is dissatisfied and has submitted another request. If needed the CEO will advise the Board DO PKN to appoint an independent ad hoc Advisory Committee,

COO

The COO is responsible for decision making and correct handling of the complaint/appeal according to the procedure.

Integrity Officer

The Integrity Officer is responsible to administer the complaint/appeal, carry out the preliminary research, advise the COO Kerk in Actie and coordinate the research and steps that need to be taken further. He/she is also responsible to report to the Kerk in Actie MT every three months and improve the procedures according to new experiences.

External Complaint officer

The External Complaint Officer is responsible to support the complainant in the report made by advising him/her to contact the relevant people, make sure the issue is investigated properly, the necessary actions are taken, and the rights of the complainant are protected.

4. Description

4.1 General

Dealing with complaints and appeals are part of the responsibilities of the COO of Kerk in Actie. The way in which they are dealt with is described in detail in the Complaints and Appeal Procedure below.

Kerk in Actie makes a distinction between “normal” complaints and integrity related complaints. See 2. Definitions for the definition of a complaint. Complaints and appeals are treated according to the exact same procedure. The organisation filing the complaint or appeal will from now on be called “the complainant”.

A complaint or appeal can be made by the following stakeholders and expect a response according to the procedure written in this document:

1. Anyone who participates in or is impacted by projects that are carried out by the partner organisations of Kerk in Actie.
2. The staff of Kerk in Actie (international) partners.
3. Donors, volunteers and others involved in or affected by Kerk in Actie's International work.

4.1.1 Limitations

Every formal complaint will be investigated thoroughly. However, there might be limitations. In case there are any limitations during the process as described below, this will be shared with the complainant.

4.2 Formal complaints and appeals

All formal integrity related complaints and appeals should be submitted in writing or by e-mail to:

- the COO Kerk in Actie, or
- this internal Kerk in Actie address of the Integrity-Staff-member integrity@protestantsekerk.nl, or
- to our external complaints officer at GIMD. You can contact them during Dutch office hours by phone on +31 (0) 88 8008524 or via email: meldpuntgoededoelen@gimd.nl

You can contact the external complaint officer in Dutch, English, Spanish, Portuguese and French and they will reply to your email within 1 workday.

All formal complaints that are not integrity related can be submitted in writing or e-mail to:

- The PO/FO that works with the partner organization
- COO Kerk in Actie
- Integrity-Staff-member at integrity@protestantsekerk.nl

Address of the Protestantse Kerk office: Dienstencentrum Protestantse Kerk Nederland, To: COO Kerk in Actie, Postbus 456, 3500 AL Utrecht, The Netherlands.

4.2.1 Integrity complaint/appeal is submitted to COO or Integrity Officer Kerk in Actie

- a. The integrity related complaint or appeal will be administered by the Integrity officer of Kerk in Actie and shared with the COO Kerk in Actie. The Integrity officer and COO Kerk in Actie are responsible for an adequate process of dealing with the complaint/appeal in a satisfactory way.
- b. The Integrity Officer will send a confirmation of receipt to the complainant within one week after receiving the complaint/appeal.
- c. The Integrity officer will carry out a preliminary investigation and based on the outcome, advise the COO Kerk in Actie whether more investigation is necessary or other steps are required. The COO of Kerk in Actie will decide on the way the complaint/appeal is processed based on the procedure. When necessary, the complaint/appeal will be passed on to a staff member, not involved in the issue, for further investigation.
- d. The latter will reassess the course of events on all its merits and in case of unclear positions/standpoints, speaks to the parties involved, including the complainant. He/she will do so in communication with the Integrity officer, responsible for overall coordination.
- e. The investigator and Integrity officer will give recommendations concerning the decisions to be taken to the COO Kerk in Actie.
- f. The COO of Kerk in Actie or the Integrity Officer will send a decision (clearly founded) to the complainant within two weeks after receipt of the complaint/appeal.
- g. If this timeframe is not possible, the Integrity Officer Kerk in Actie sends a confirmation of receipt to the complainant, specifying the date and the way in which the complaint/appeal will be processed.
- h. The Integrity officer files all complaints/appeals and relevant documentation and reports to the Kerk in Actie MT every three months the number of complaints/appeals and the way they were processed and decided upon.

4.2.2 Integrity Complaint/appeal is submitted to our external complaint officer

- a. When a staff member of a partner organisation of Kerk in Actie or a beneficiary of this organisation submits an integrity related complaint/appeal to the external complaint officer they will first discuss the situation and the steps taken so far. They will notify the Integrity Officer of Kerk in Actie about the report, and he/she will start a preliminary investigation in coordination with the external complaint officer.
- b. The following steps taken are similar to steps 1a - h, however always in communication with the external complaint officer and with the possibility to start an external investigation.

When Kerk in Actie is suspected of victimising the reporter because of the complaint made, the external complaint officer will start a whistleblower procedure.

4.2.3 Non integrity related complaint submitted to PO/FO, COO or Integrity Officer

- a. The complaint will be administered by the Integrity officer of Kerk in Actie and shared with the COO Kerk in Actie. The receiver of the complaint (PO/FO/COO/Integrity Officer) of Kerk in Actie is responsible for an adequate process of dealing with the complaint in a satisfactory way.

- b. If the complaint cannot be answered/resolved in less than a week the receiver of the complaint will send a confirmation of receipt to the complainant within one week after receiving the complaint.
- c. The complaint will be investigated by the receiver (PO/FO/COO/Integrity Officer). The outcomes will be shared with the COO and Integrity Officer. The receiver of the complaint will send an answer regarding the complaint to the complainant.
- d. The Integrity officer files all complaints and relevant documentation and reports to the Kerk in Actie MT every three months the number of complaints and the way they were processed and decided upon.
- e. If further actions are required, they will be added as improvement point to the ISO improvement plan (Verbeterplan). This way they will be monitored by the quality advisors.
- f. Twice a year all non-integrity related complaints will be shared with the CHS/ISO workgroup for learning purposes.

4.2.4 The complainant remains dissatisfied with the decision

- a. He/she can make a request to the CEO DO PKN to have this initial decision reviewed. This request should be done within 4 weeks after the day the decision has been sent.
- b. The CEO DO PKN will assess if the procedure has been properly followed and makes a limited review of the decision. After this review the CEO DO PKN will send his/her decision to the complainant.
- c. In most cases this will mark the end of the procedure. When the complainant does not agree with the decision of the CEO DO PKN, the complainant may submit an appeal for the second time, within four weeks after this decision. In that case the CEO DO PKN will advise the Board DO PKN to appoint an independent ad hoc Advisory Committee, consisting of 2 aid experts and 1 legal expert.
- d. The Advisory Committee will assess whether the procedure has been followed correctly and will make a limited review of the decision. This review will take into consideration whether the CEO DO PKN has acted within reason with respect to the disputed decision.
- e. The recommendations of the Advisory Committee will be returned to the CEO DO PKN within 6 weeks after receipt of the request for advice by the committee. In principle the CEO DO PKN will follow the advice. She/he can only differ to disagree with the judgments of the Advisory Committee if backed by reasoned arguments.
- f. The final decision and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee will be sent to the complainant within two weeks after receipt of the recommendations. This decision will mark the end of the internal procedure within Kerk in Actie.

The complainant may either be satisfied with (or accept) the final decision or remain dissatisfied with it. If the latter is the case, the complainant is entitled to take the case to the Dutch court.

4.3 Handling of complaints

4.3.1 Confidentiality and anonymity

Integrity cases are always handled with strict confidentiality. Complaints can also be made on an anonymous basis. The confidentiality and anonymity of the reports will be kept to the maximum extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation. The person who reports the case has the right to be protected to any form of disadvantage because of his/her report. How this person can be protected in the best way differs per case and will therefore be decided per case by the COO Kerk in Actie together with the Integrity officer. If necessary, this protection continues after the investigation is finished and could also include support and treatment for the harm done.

The complaint and appeal procedure is designed to ensure fair and impartial investigations. The complainant will never be required to defend themselves directly to the defendant.

4.3.2 False Allegations

Any allegation which proves to have been malicious or knowingly false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offence and repercussions will be made accordingly. Any personal interest should be made known when first raising concerns.

4.3.3 Notification

The COO Kerk in Actie is required to notify and communicate the existence and contents of this policy to the employees of the relevant department and all new employees respectively. The COO Kerk in Actie should also ensure that this policy is made available for long-term partners and beneficiaries and that it is their responsibility to report any wrongful conduct of Kerk in Actie staff in the execution of a partnership agreement.

4.3.4 Complaints procedure for staff

Kerk in Actie staff subject to this procedure who believe that his/her rights are violated can make a formal complaint in accordance with the Protestantse Kerk HR Complaints procedure.

4.3.5 Registration and filing

The following output documents need to be filed in a digital archive:

- Original notification by complainants and all following documents and correspondence by Integrity Officer will be saved for at least 3 years.
- Per reported complaint or appeal an (online) folder will be created. The original notification and all following documents and correspondence will be saved in this (online) folder.
- Involvement CEO DO PKN: by Secretary CEO for 3 years.

4.4 Closing of the complaint

A filed complaint ends when:

- a. Kerk in Actie has dealt with the complaint as stated in this procedure
- b. after mediation and/or consultation with the complainant, the complainant feels no further need to have the complaint considered
- c. the complainant withdraws the complaint

The Integrity Officer will inform the complainant that the complaint will be officially closed.

5. Risk analysis

For each process the possible risks will be described. The aim is to eliminate the risk or reduce it to an acceptable level. The implementation is described in procedure P02 - Risicomanagement (Risk Management). The risks are described in form F02 - Risico analyse (Risk analysis).

6. Materials and methods

None

7. References

ISO 9001:2015, Partos ISO 9001:2015 and CHS

8. Attachments

None

9. Changes

Revision	Date	Changes
01	01-2021	First issue
02	04-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Procedure owner set to Integrity Officers- <i>Manager Kerk in Actie</i> changed to COO Kerk in Actie- <i>Director DO PKN</i> changed to CEO DO PKN- Added COO, DO PKN, GIMD and MT to 2. Definitions- 3 Added responsibility CEO- Added 4.1.1 Limitations- 4.2.1 - Added step B- 4.3.5 - Updated
03	08-2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 4.1 - Added distinction between "normal" complaints and integrity related complaints- 4.2 - Added paragraph how not integrity related complaints can be submitted- 4.2.1 - Integrity (related) added

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4.2.2 - Integrity (related) added - 4.2.3 - New paragraph added - Non integrity related complaint submitted to PO/FO, COO or Integrity Officer - 4.3.1 - Added integrity to first sentence (Integrity cases are always handled with strict confidentiality.)
04	07-2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4.2.1 - Added Integrity Officer to step F - 4.2.3 - Added step E - 4.3.1 - Added paragraph regarding that the complainant will never be required to defend themselves directly to the defendant - Added 4.4 - Closing of the complaint