

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Friend of the Sea works to ensure credibility for its conduct. Therefore, complaints and appeals concerning the Friend of the Sea Project are important in our policy, as they help us to incorporate transparency, participation and fairness in our activities. According to the procedure described below, stakeholders and applicants can complain at any time about Friend of the Sea's governance, scheme management, executive functions and standard-setting process.

- Complaints about certified companies, as well as appeals of non-compliances to certification decisions in relation to the Standards valid at the time of the audit, shall initially be addressed to the relevant certification body who will be required to investigate the complaint under its own accredited systems and procedures. If the relevant certification body was unable to satisfactorily address the complaints and appeals of non-compliances, these can be submitted to Friend of the Sea.
- To ensure impartiality, Friend of the Sea shall forward any complaint involving its Board of Directors to INMEDIAR (<https://www.inmediar.it/>) who will be required to investigate the complaint under its own procedures.
- **Those interested in registering complaints and appeals regarding Friend of the Sea's activities must take into account the following:**
 1. To be accepted and classified as a complaint, a submission shall be:
 - Submitted through the [Complaints and Appeals Form \(CAF\)](#), which is available on the website;
 - Sent via email to info@friendofthesea.org;
 - Filled out in English;
 - Filled out in all its parts;
 - Accompanied by evidence.

2. If the complaint submission does not contain sufficient evidence, Friend of the Sea has the right to return it to the submitting party and request further information.
3. Within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, Friend of the Sea shall acknowledge receipt and inform the complaining party whether there is sufficient evidence to process the complaint or not. Incomplete complaints may be resubmitted at any time, at the discretion of the claimant.
4. If there is sufficient evidence to process the complaint, the CAF shall be forwarded to the Advisory Board with all the evidence attached. The Advisory Board has 15 working days to analyze the case and express its opinion to the Board of Directors.
5. If the Advisory Board considers that further investigation is necessary, Friend of the Sea has the right to organize a Commission to review the complaint, which shall be done within a maximum of 15 working days. Thus, Friend of the Sea can invite employees, associated working groups or external experts to compose such Commission. Once formed, Friend of the Sea shall make available all information received from the complainant to the Commission, which has 15 working days to analyze the case and express its opinion to the Board of Directors. If an additional investigation is not required, this step is ignored.
6. The Board of Directors shall take a decision based on the recommendations of the Advisory Board and the Commission (where appropriate) within 10 working days of receipt.
7. The complaining party shall be notified, in writing, within 5 working days after the decision has been taken.
8. At the end of the process, a summary of the complaint and subsequent actions shall be available on the official website, in the section “[Previous and Pending Complaints](#)”.
9. Throughout the investigation, Friend of the Sea shall keep the complaint party informed of the progress in evaluating the complaint.