

FTA External Grievance Mechanism

1. Introduction

The Grievance Mechanism is a non-judicial mechanism by which the FTA secretariat aims to ensure fair, timely and objective resolution to a grievance.

It provides a platform for individuals and organisations to submit a grievance if they feel they have been negatively affected by FTA's activities.

It draws upon the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework](#) for non-judicial grievance mechanisms.

2. Scope

The FTA secretariat will accept grievances that fall within the defined FTA Grievance Mechanism scope, which outlines who can lodge a grievance and what the content and form of said grievance should be.

Content: A grievance¹ should be:

- a. a statement about a perceived or real wrong or unfair treatment,
- b. related to FTA services², their members and/ or service providers and
- c. factual and evidence-based.

Form: The grievance should be lodged through the FTA website's [Grievance Form](#). The submission should be as complete as possible and in English, unless otherwise agreed by the FTA secretariat, and should include any supporting documentation. The grievant should:

- a. Provide sufficient information to demonstrate the relevance to the FTA of the stated grievance;
- b. Suggest a remedy which is agreeable to the grievant or the affected parties;
- c. Add supporting evidence when possible; and
- d. Reference any reasonable attempt to resolve the issue directly with the individual/organisation who is the source of their grievance.

Grievances can be lodged by:

- a. FTA members³ and their business partners;
- b. Workers/employees (that belong to the FTA members' supply chains);

¹ This is different than a complaint which is general expression of dissatisfaction;

² FTA services refer to any service provided by FTA secretariat, FTA National Contact Group Coordinators and Country Representatives in any of the regions or sectors where FTA is active; ³ Commercial entities (e.g. brands, retailers, importers) and associations that have signed the declaration of membership and have not been terminated or excluded;

- c. Service providers³;
- d. Stakeholders⁴, including third parties with explicit authority⁵ to represent a grievant.

The FTA secretariat reserves the right not to accept or to close a grievance investigation if:

- a. The grievance is out of scope (in content, in form or in type of grievant);
- b. Insufficient information is given to pursue an investigation (e.g. general, unspecified, and therefore un-actionable);
- c. Information requested by the FTA secretariat is not submitted in due time;
- d. Legitimacy to represent affected individuals or communities is not explicit and proven.

Confidentiality and data protection:

The FTA secretariat owes a duty of confidentiality to the grievant. All communication and procedural steps towards remediation will not disclose any sensitive or personal information. A grievant's personal details will only be made available to FTA secretariat employees or agents involved in the grievance process. FTA complies with all obligations applicable under the [EU General Data Protection Regulation](#).

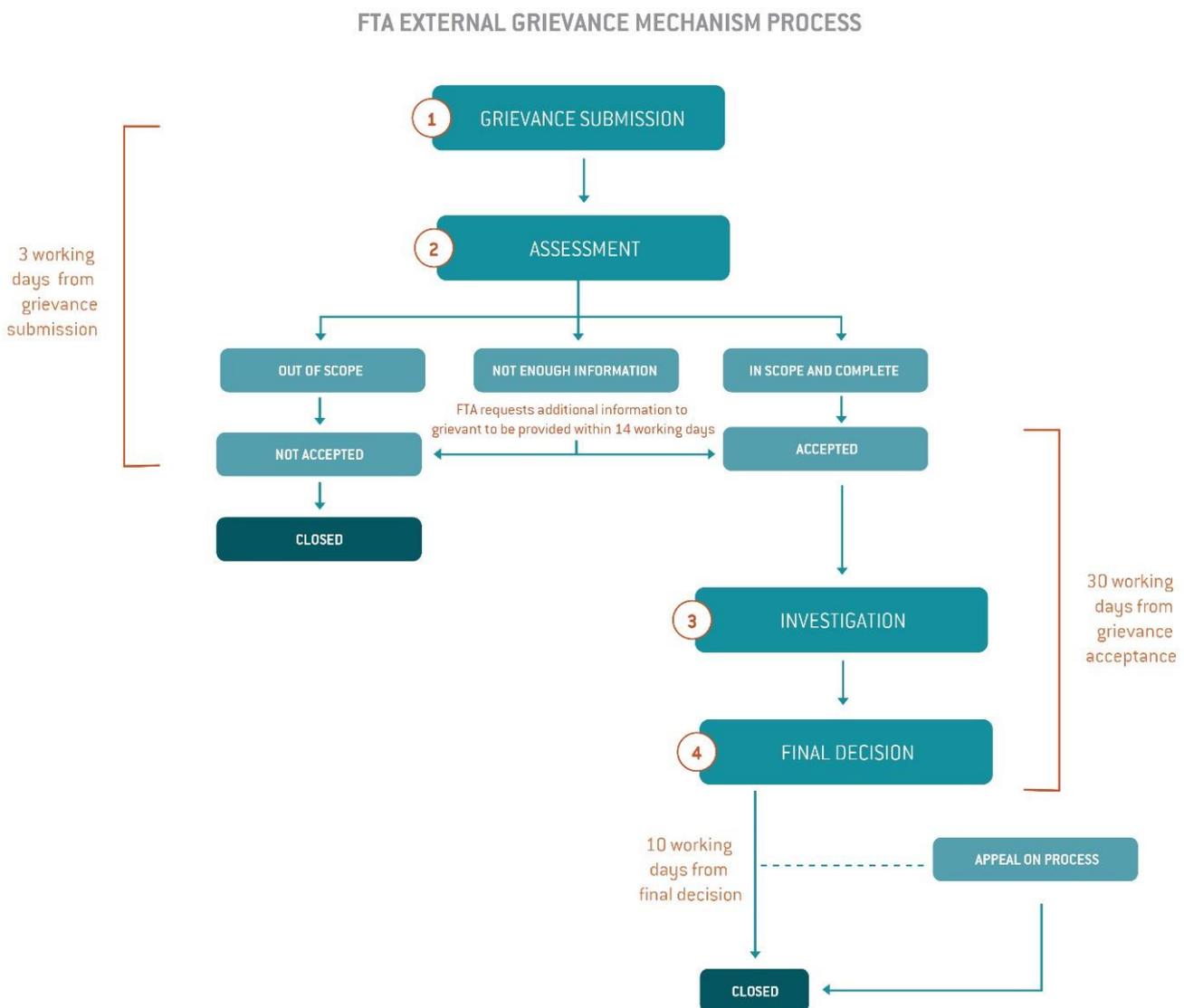
³ A company with which FTA works to support the activities of FTA (e.g. auditing company, training company, consultant);

⁴ Individuals, communities or organisations that are affected by and/or may affect FTA's operations, activities, markets, industries, and outcomes;

⁵ FTA secretariat reserves the right to determine the concerned third parties as legitimate to represent those individuals or communities affected

3. Procedure

The key steps of FTA External Grievance Mechanism procedure are summarised in flowchart and described below.



Step 1: Grievance submission: The grievant shall submit the grievance to the FTA secretariat through the [Grievance Form](#) on the FTA website. This form includes two blocks of information:

1. **Grievant's details:** including first name, last name, email address, organisation/ company name, type of grievant and country.
2. **Grievance details:** including who the grievance is being submitted against, country of issue, reason of the grievance, previous attempts to solve the grievance and preferred remedy.

Step 2: Assessment:

Within 3 working days, the FTA secretariat will assess if the grievance falls under the predefined scope and decide whether or not the grievance is acceptable. The secretariat may contact the grievant for more details to be able to assess the acceptability of the grievance. If the grievant does not provide the requested information within **14 working days**, the grievance will be not accepted, and the case will be closed.

- a. **If the grievance is accepted**, the grievant will receive a formal acknowledgement and details of the next steps in the procedure.
- b. **If the grievance is not accepted**, the FTA secretariat will inform the grievant of the reasons why the submitted grievance does not fall within the Grievance Mechanism's scope. No appeal of the non-acknowledgement is possible.

Step 3: Investigation:

Within 20 working days of the date the grievance is accepted, the FTA secretariat will proceed to look into the circumstances of the case, speaking with the parties involved, and conferring with relevant stakeholders. The grievant may be contacted to contribute additional information.

Step 4: Final Decision:

Within 10 working days of the date the investigation has been concluded, the FTA secretariat will outline investigation findings, define remedial actions and communicate them to the grievant. The final decision should be reasonable, proportional to the grievance and consider cultural norms. It will become final by the 10th working day after its communication to the grievant, unless the deadline is interrupted by an appeal on the way the FTA secretariat has handled the grievance.

No appeal on the final decision is possible.

4. Monitoring and evaluation

Three months after the closure of the case, the FTA secretariat may contact relevant parties (if relevant), to verify that they have acted according to the agreed remedial actions.

The FTA secretariat will review the External Grievance Mechanism process where necessary to continuously improve the grievance handling procedure.

Consolidated statistical data on grievance cases will be posted on a quarterly basis on the FTA website.

Liability Disclaimer

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