

Annex 12: EQUASS Complaints procedure

Types of eligible complaints

Complaints need to be submitted in written form. Expressions provided by other means will not be treated as a complaint.

Nr	Type of complaint
1	Complaint about the performance of an auditor
2	Complaint about the performance of a Local License Holder
3	Complaint about the performance of the EQUASS office
4	Complaint about not respecting the audit process
5	Complaint about not respecting audit procedures
6	Complaint about the quality of the audit application
7	Complaint about the quality of the audit report
8	Third parties dispute that a service provider deserves an EQUASS certification
9	Complaint about the performance of the EQUASS consultant
10	Complaint about the performance of the EQUASS trainer

Actors	Description of the EQUASS Actors:
Applicant	Organisation that applies for EQUASS Certification
EQUASS-office	The persons who is responsible for managing / leading the EQUASS organisation.
Local Licence Holder (LLH)	National organisation entrusted with the responsibility to operate the EQUASS assurance audit process and to distribute EQUASS Assurance in a given country.
EQUASS Auditor	Qualified person trained in checking whether organisations comply with the EQUASS requirements. Auditors are appointed by the EQUASS Awarding Committee.
EQUASS consultant	Qualified and recognized person trained in consulting and advising organisations how to comply with the EQUASS requirements. EQUASS consultants are recognised by the EQUASS organisation based on their attendance and performance of the EQUASS Consultant training.
EQUASS Awarding Committee	Committee of various European sectorial stakeholders representing: service users, service providers, social partners, funders and policy makers. The EQUASS Awarding Committee approves the requirements, procedures and the awarding criteria of the EQUASS certification programs.

Note: Disagreement with non-certification is not an eligible complaint. This should be expressed in an appeal. The appeal procedure is different from the complaint procedure.

Types of eligible complaints	Who can complain?	Term / deadline	Complain to whom?	Response time	Type of Response
1 - Complaint about performance of the auditor	The director of the applicant or the person that signed the application.	30 days after letter with feedback on audit.	To the EQUASS Office or LLH who will transmit the complaint to the EQUASS Office	Confirmation of receipt within 10 days. Full response within 30 days of confirmation of receipt.	Result of the investigation by the EQUASS Office, in consultation with the Auditor and the Awarding Committee. The perspectives and explanations of both the auditor and the applicant will be synthesized for the decision of the Awarding Committee. A letter will be sent to the applicant, and the auditor, explaining which issues are legitimate, which ones are not, and what concrete actions have been taken following to the complaint.
2 - Complaint about performance of a Local License Holder	The director of the applicant or the person that signed the application.	No deadline	To the EQUASS Office	Confirmation of receipt within 10 days Full response within 30 days of confirmation of receipt.	Result of the investigation of the EQUASS office. A response will be issued explaining which issues were justified, which ones were not, explaining which concrete actions have been taken following the complaint. The outcome of the complaint is being notified to the Awarding Committee.
3 - Complaint about the performance of the EQUASS Office	The director of the applicant or the person that signed the application.	No deadline	To the EQUASS Office or LLH who will transmit the complaint to the EQUASS Office	Confirmation of receipt of complaint within 10 days. Full response within 30 days of confirmation of receipt.	Result of the investigation by the EQUASS Team Leader. Responses explaining which issues were justified; which ones were not; explaining which concrete actions have been taken following the complaint.
4 - Complaint about not respecting the audit process.	The director of the applicant or the person that signed the application. The auditor who is assigned to carry out the audit.	30 days after letter with feedback on audit.	To the EQUASS Office or LLH who will transmit the complaint to the EQUASS Office.	Confirmation of receipt within 10 days. Full response within 30 days of confirmation of receipt.	Result of the investigation by the EQUASS Office. In case the complaint is linked to a non-certification and is justified, a re-audit shall be organised by the EQUASS Office free of charge. Response explaining which issues were justified, which ones were not, explaining which concrete actions have been taken following the complaint.
5 - Complaint about not respecting the audit procedures.	The director of the applicant or the person that signed the application. The auditor who has been assigned to	30 days after letter with feedback on audit.	To the EQUASS Office or LLH who will transmit the complaint to the EQUASS Office.	Confirmation of receipt within 10 days. Full response within 30 days of confirmation of receipt.	Result of the investigation by the EQUASS Office. In case the complaint is linked to a non-certification and is justified, a re-audit shall be organised by the EQUASS Office free of charge.

Types of eligible complaints	Who can complain?	Term / deadline	Complain to whom?	Response time	Type of Response
	carry out the audit.				Response explaining which issues were justified, which ones were not, explaining which concrete actions have been taken following the complaint.
6 - Complaint about the quality of the EQUASS application.	The auditor who has been assigned to carry out the audit.	5 working days after receiving the application.	To the EQUASS Office or LLH who will transmit to the EQUASS Office.	Confirmation and response of receipt within 5 days.	Result of the investigation of the EQUASS Office. In case the complaint is justified, the audit will be cancelled. Response explaining which issues were justified, which were not, explaining which concrete actions have been taken following to the complaint.
7 - Complaint about the quality of the audit report.	The director of the applicant or the person that signed the application.	30 days after letter with feedback on audit.	To the EQUASS Office or LLH who will transmit to the EQUASS Office.	Confirmation of receipt within 10 days. Full response within 30 days of confirmation of receipt.	Result of the investigation of the EQUASS Office. In case the complaint is justified, the auditor will be asked to rewrite the audit report while taking the complaints into account.. Response explaining which issues were justified, which were not, explaining which concrete actions have been taken following to the complaint.
8 – A third party dispute that a service provider deserves an EQUASS certification	All stakeholders (clients, employees, national – regional – local authorities, funders, other relevant partners)	As long as the certification is valid	To the EQUASS Manager or LLH who will transmit to the EQUASS Manager	Confirmation of receipt within 10 days. Response within 30 days of confirmation of receipt.	The EQUASS Manager advises the Awarding Committee of the presence and nature of the complaint. The EQUASS Manager does an initial inquiry (via phone and e-mail) with the certified organisation, auditor, and LLH. Report to the complainant within the deadline with one of the following options: The allegations are not justified, not strong enough, not sufficiently proven or not related to EQUASS, so the certification is maintained and the case closed. There are serious allegations and/or strong indications that a certified organisation violates the EQUASS principles and criteria, an investigation or re-assessment could be asked from the Local License Holder or directly conducted from the EQUASS Manager. The consequence can be the withdrawal of the certification

Types of eligible complaints	Who can complain?	Term / deadline	Complain to whom?	Response time	Type of Response
					The EQUASS Manager requires an additional 30 days to perform its investigation of the allegations.
9 – Complaint about the performance of the EQUASS consultant	The director of the organisation that has been consulted by an EQUASS recognised Consultant	30 days after the consulting activities of the EQUASS consultant.	To the EQUASS Office or LLH who will transmit the complaint to the EQUASS Office	Confirmation of receipt within 10 days. Full response within 30 days of confirmation of receipt.	Result of the investigation of the EQUASS Office, in consultation with the Consultant. The perspectives and explanations of both the consultant and the director will be synthesized for the decision of the EQUASS Office. A letter will be sent to the director, and the consultant, explaining which issues are legitimate, which are not, and what concrete actions have been taken following to the complaint.
10 – Complaint about the performance of the EQUASS trainer	The individual who has participated in one of the training events organised by the EQUASS office.	30 days after the training organised by the EQUASS Office	To the EQUASS Office or LLH who will transmit the complaint to the EQUASS Office	Confirmation of receipt within 10 days. Full response within 30 days of confirmation of receipt.	Result of the investigation of the EQUASS Office, in consultation with the Trainer. The perspectives and explanations of both the trainer and the participants of the training will be synthesized for the decision by the EQUASS Office. A letter will be sent to the participant, and the trainer, explaining which issues are legitimate, which are not, and what concrete actions have been taken following to the complaint.